

Dear Interviewer:

When it first appeared in 2007, Amy Silverstein's award-winning memoir **SICK GIRL** garnered rave reviews and ignited controversy. With wit and keen insight, Silverstein set the record straight with her unprecedented, eye-opening account of heart transplantation. A surprisingly irreverent and occasionally fierce narrator, Silverstein takes readers beyond the point where TV cameras often leave, past the miraculous surgery and into a post-transplant life that is as compelling as it is enlightening.

Silverstein's bold, unforgettable self-portrait forever changed readers' perspective on life, health, and medicine and made Silverstein an overnight spokesperson in the ongoing debate on patient rights, the omnipotent power of doctors, and the nuances of living with chronic illness. Now in paperback, **SICK GIRL** (Grove Press; Paperback; October 2008; \$14.00) is a riveting and wryly humorous look at full-throttle life-threatening disease, a "crazy kind of amazing" medical miracle, and a sweet love story. In a new Afterword, Silverstein discusses the deliberation **Sick Girl** sparked, addresses her critics, and shares her thoughts after "removing the mask from the miracle."

Try to imagine the surreal plunge—you are a vibrant, energetic 24-year-old woman, a Phi Beta Kappa type-A student at NYU law, happily juggling a new romance and a heavy work load, when suddenly you find yourself blacking out, temporarily blind, and suffering from a 60-year-old man's ailment—a failing heart. It's heart transplant or die. Then, you face a new, unrelenting danger: transplant-related death. The medicines that keep your body from attacking your new heart are also poisons, and you must white-knuckle your way through innumerable heart biopsies. Further, your heart—if not rejected—comes with a ticking ten-year life expectancy. Are you happy to be alive, or maybe...not so much?

Fully conscious as the defibrillator paddles descend to shock her diseased heart back to a more stable rhythm (leaving reddish outlines in the shape of children's shoes on her chest), Silverstein journeys back from death, marries (taking her dose of cyclosporine mid-reception), and passes the bar exam (bleeding heavily through all 6 hours—her meds wreck her menstrual cycle). She wonders, can she wear the beautiful sparkly earrings her husband, Scott, bought her enough times in the 8 years she has left to make his purchase worth it?

A witty and thought-provoking speaker, in an interview **SICK GIRL** author Silverstein can discuss:

- The pressure felt by the chronically ill always to smile and harbor unwavering optimism;
- Heart transplantation as more than just a simple miracle—an eye-opening, firsthand account of the nuances and complexities of heart transplant life through the eyes of a 20-year recipient;
- The duality of living sick, scared, and exhilarated—the conflict between deep appreciation for her astounding good fortune in being alive and how tough it is to live in a heart-transplant body;
- The complex dance of patient-doctor communication, evasive white lies and frank discussions, alike;
- The terrible price paid for dumbing herself down, the miscalculation of risk, and how smart, savvy patients create themselves;
- How it is to wait for a donor organ; the mind-twisting honor of being high enough on the list to have a good chance of getting an organ; the Catch-22 position of being so sick that you soar to the top of the waiting list, knowing you achieved this status because you are also the most likely candidate to die first; the emotional aspect of the fair and regulated distribution of organs;
- Today's cutting-edge medicine as best-guess treatment, and more.

Mystifying her doctors, Silverstein's transplant has surpassed its "warranty date" by ten years. Experiencing an unheard-of longevity without additional transplants, at 20 years post surgery, her pioneering portrayal of the stark honest truth about the post-transplant challenges she lives alongside the apparent miracle of heart transplantation has been an inspiration to many people—sick and well—across America. We look forward to speaking with you about the provocative voice of Amy Silverstein and **SICK GIRL**.

Best,
Sandi Mendelson