



Dear Catastrophe Waitress

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Mark thinks he has found The One in college. When Raquel abruptly takes off for Los Angeles to become a rock star, Mark tries to be happy for her—until ROCK-L's first single sweeps the airwaves—a song about Mark's stamina entitled "Two Minute Man." And Mark's life is never the same again.

Philippa doesn't really think twice about cheating on her punk rocker boyfriend, Trevor. After all, she's going to break up with him anyway. He mooches off her, treats her badly, and writes stupid songs about her breasts. Then Trevor's band makes a splash with its one and only song sensation, "Philippa Cheats." And suddenly Philippa is the most infamous ex-girlfriend in all of London.

Thus Philippa and Mark find themselves adrift, both single and living in Boston, still reeling from the impact that three minutes of music had on their lives. When these two minor-key souls meet and form a major chord, they will have to overcome the sneaking suspicion that each will betray the other . . . possibly with a song.

"Brendan Halpin adds weight to his funny moments and lightness to his sad ones . . . [reminding] us that comedy and tragedy aren't opposites at all."

—Carolyn Parkhurst, author of *The Dogs of Babel*, on *Donorboy*

"The author's greatest gift: his pitch-perfect ear for dialogue."

—*People*, on *Long Way Back*

Dear Catastrophe Waitress Details

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From Reader Review Dear Catastrophe Waitress for online ebook

Jules Vilmur says

Ten minutes ago, I am sitting out on my porch weeping like a baby and crushing this book to my chest, and then I come inside and read some chick's scathing review, and suddenly, I can't think to write all the things I wanted to write a moment ago, because my head is full of arguments against each of the arguments she made for hating it.

And I have to take a bit to collect myself before I can come back to the computer all collected-like and say that I don't care if it means that I'm some uncultured sap, whose into 'predictable drivel', but "Dear Catastrophe Waitress" is one of those rare books that somehow loved me back.

B. Hale says

Hmmm...Phillipa came off as a intelligent idiot. Even though she had half-a**ed parents, she pretty much got to do whatever she wanted, and her rich dad carried her financially. Like in Phillipa's case, I never understand why people CHOOSE to harm themselves and do dangerous things when they are unsure of life...or bored. Phillipa resorted to drinking, drugs and dating random guys because she was bored and lost. And gosh! How annoying was it that every ten minutes her big boobs were mentioned? Like seriously, we got the message the first billion times, lbs. Now Mark was...I just felt so sorry for him, he was such a sweet guy but he kept being drawn in and duped by these women that he would spend years of his life with them thinking it was going somewhere only for them to up and leave. However, how weird was it that it seemed like he was constantly masturbating, I mean sure he was going very long periods without but I felt the author should have kept that information limited. Back to Phillipa, I felt bad for her too because she literally had to kill herself off (figuratively), cut ties with her family, friends and change her name just to be able to make better decisions regarding her life...and she had to get pregnant by a maniac in order to gain clarity...Ooh, I loved how the author wrote though, like when Phillipa thought about something dealing with another character, the author put whether or not Phillipa was right about her thoughts or/and what actually happened, so that was pretty cool. Ummm, i'm glad Mark didn't turn into an a-hole like he so desperately wanted to and had every right but that just showed how much of a great guy he is. I was pleased to see that he finally got what he wanted in Phillipa (Stacey rather) because that one intense sex scene is one I won't be forgetting anytime soon, lol. Back to my thoughts, I was freaked out when Phillipa's daughter started acting like her maniac father even though her mother left him when she was barely pregnant, it just reminded me how much of a role genetics play because the girl was just like her dad, an angel in public and a demon behind closed doors.....she was just so angry at her mother, and had absolutely no reason to be...so hopefully she continues getting the help her dad didn't apparently get. What I usually look forward to in books is the friendships and with Phillipa they were scarce. Not counting her drug buddies, one she had to leave in her past life and her new one was great, but not enough for me to really thrive on, Phoebe, I believe her name was offered her the basement of her new townhouse right after she got married and I saw that as a very sweet and generous thing for her to do...Umm, with Phillipa's previous life and family, I see that some people are just better off without them I suppose. Oh yeah and how easy was it for her to get herself on track like for real she opened a business and became quite successful pronto. I know it's just a book but dang the only struggles she had

were the ones she created for herself. But still, Dear Catastrophe Waitress is a very interesting read.

saradevil says

One of those men who should not be writing the perspective of women.

Summer says

Man, what is up with novels about music and where are the good ones -- other than High Fidelity? Even Lethem can't do it. This book, like all of the books I can think of who try to capture musicians / a music scene, felt flat and cliched. Sigh.

Anna says

Oh, how I ended up loving this book! It's totally a 5-star read because it felt so real and brought out such emotion in me. I ended up crying and it just got me thinking about my own identity and my relationship with my mom in particular. But really it's just an interesting story about time and how people change and hopefully learn from their mistakes and experiences.

I decided to read this without really knowing much about the book except that I'm Goodreads friends with the author... so I wasn't sure *what* to expect. At first it was kind of difficult to get into the third person narration because my gut told me that I wanted Mark and Philippa to tell their own stories (since the chapters alternated between them anyway). But I got used to that style of writing and came to appreciate the little bits of dry humor that were thrown in here or there, usually in the form of a parenthetical that would fill you in on what *really* happened, not what the character necessarily *wanted* to have happen. I kept wondering, too, when their paths would cross and for a while the stories seemed a bit *too* self-destructive for my taste. But it was impossible to put the book down, so clearly it was working its charm on me! Then when I got to about the halfway point I was absolutely hooked.

I liked the two main characters but what really stuck out to me was Stacey and Kelly's relationship. I thought that was so well written to the point where I felt like I was in the room with them, experiencing all of their little disagreements. I thought it was great that they actually went to see Karen Behavior. Their relationship could not have been more honest and truthful.

I was very happy with the way the two main characters came together in the end. I thought they both had grown so much throughout the 300+ pages and they weren't perfect but they sure were very likable in the end. It was really easy to see bits of me, people I've dated, and our flawed relationships in this novel. I don't think this is a light read at all so the funky cover is a bit misleading. But if you want to be entertained, challenged, and totally sucked into a book, this is perfect for you!

Robin says

This book is amateurly written and was too predictable for me. I'd recommend High Fidelity or The Art of Mix Tapes.

Rachel Pollock says

Things i loved about this book: the plot hook, the entire first half, the structural concept, the narrative voice in the first half, the parenthetical asides in the first half expressing the interiority of supernumerary characters, the fluidity of the timeline in the first half...see a pattern? It almost felt like someone else wrote the second half of the book, because a lot of what i loved about the writing in the first half disappeared and the voice became a lot more rote and repetitive.

Still, i read it in two sittings.

ETA: Oh, and! This is a nitpicky copy-edit/layout thing, but i found it confusing that, in the first half, Mark's storyline had actual dates on the chapters/sections, but Phillipa's only did sometimes, and that convention disappeared. I would have found the whole timeline easier to parse if that date-heading convention had been made an actual universal convention throughout the novel.

Michelle Sallay says

I really enjoyed this, even though it is not a book I see myself wanting to read again. I also don't really see that many people other than myself liking it. I don't know why, but maybe it is because I felt like the book was speaking a language that only I understood. It is very detailed and delves deeply into each main characters romantic past. I think many readers would find the extra details tedious because they want the main characters to meet already and get on with the story. But I think the whole point of this book is that we are our past relationships, and it explores how we let past romantic entanglements define us.

Overall though, I just like Halpin and the way he write.

Some language and pretty straightforward sexual talk and situations.

Aimee says

"Dear Catastrophe Waitress" is exactly the type of book I have been looking for! Not only did I have trouble putting it down, but it is about characters in their 20's! YAY! Maybe I just haven't been searching hard enough, but I have been having a difficult time finding books with characters in their 20s.

Here are some real reasons to read the book. I loved the two main characters. Yes they had their problems, but they were realistic. It's the story of two people just trying to find their way in a cruel world. Yes this book deals with serious issues, but it is also really funny. One of the main characters actually dresses in a purple suit and sings songs about poop to children, which sounds completely juvenile, but it ends up being a cute

addition to the story. I like when characters don't take themselves too seriously!

Matthew says

It took me forever to read this, even though it's a pretty quick read. Twenty years go by pretty quickly in the first half and then the second half is very slow-moving... I'll be posting about it on my blog soon. (Today even, maybe.) It's very Run Lola Run meets Nick Hornby, but more wholesome than that. It's worth checking out, and much better than I thought it would be when I picked it up at the library based only on the title--my least favorite Belle and Sebastian song.

Abigail Hillinger says

Okay. I came this close to posting on amazon.com about how terrible this book was, but I decided against it. The writer's karma and all.

But I can't restrain myself. This book was a waste of my money. It had a unique concept behind it: two characters, Mark and Phillippa, were both spurned by their lovers writing hit singles about them. Mark was dubbed "Two Minute Man" by his girlfriend Raquel (ROCK-L in the music world) and Phillippa's loser punk boyfriend wrote an angry song called "Phillippa Cheats". I picked it up, read this, and thought, "Huh. This sounds kind of cool."

No. Not cool at all.

Here's the problem. Or the many. First is that the author, Brendan Halpin, alternates POV between Mark and Phillippa. That can be done if the author can adapt to different genders. Tom Perrotta did a great job in *Election*, for example. Halpin, however, has no clue how the female brain works. Phillippa seems fixated with her own breasts and mentions them basically every page, and sadly, that's a guy thing to do. And when she talks about sex, she sounds like she's what Halpin would want or narcissistically imagine his girlfriends would say about him when performing. The sex scenes are actually almost laughable.

The second is that Halpin can't decide what route he wants to take with Mark. Is Mark a sexually inexperienced boy? Is that why Raquel wrote that song? That question is never answered, and by the time Mark is engaged in sex toward the end, he is suddenly a sex-god. From "Two-Minute Man" to sexual deity? Yeah, I don't think so. But that's only a small glitch. Mark is, for most of the book, a proclaimed "nice guy", the "sensitive guy", the one who gets girls without trying. But he's not--he's calculating, insensitive, callous, and oblivious. I never saw the nice guy. At all. The only time he became nice is when he was wounded over being dumped, or whenever he talked about his sister that died, the only part of the story that had depth. But Halpin seems to be terrified of giving any real meaning so he refrains from giving too much story about the sister and instead focuses on what Mark says about it, which isn't very much.

The third is Phillippa. She gets involved in an unhealthy relationship (abusive, actually) and then finds out she's pregnant. So she fakes her own death to run away with the baby and start over. Um. I don't even think I have to touch that one. Completely unbelievable and the woman she's "reborned" into has absolutely no remnants of Phillippa's personality. And I'm sorry, but personality traits don't just disappear, fake death or not. And I find it really hard to believe that she spent the rest of her life not getting into contact with her

father or the couple of friends who did care about her. It's very tutonic and bland, and frankly, worthy of a page skipping here and there.

And the fourth, again, is the POV rotation. Mark and Phillippa finally meet toward the end, and they tell each chance meeting or encounter through their own eyes. And they're god awful. They each say exactly what the other character has said, only with presumptions of what the other is thinking (and of course, is verified by the other character in the next chapter). It was a waste of words and chapter space. Don't they have editors for this kind of repetition?

I kept hoping it would get better, but it only got worse.

I think my point has been made.

Courtney says

At first I was thrown by the writing style. It's a bit whimsical, telling us things about people we never hear more than a sentence about, but it grew on me. I thought the story was really really great and original. The metamorphosis of both characters was tremendous and yet still real. I quite liked this book.

Melanie says

I absolutely loved this book - it was entertaining, funny, sad, everything a good book should be. Unputdownable. I especially loved the author's trick of letting you know what external "characters" were thinking - CVS clerks, waiters, etc. - versus what the characters were sure they were thinking. Only one quibble, and it's probably my fault for reading so fast - sometimes I felt like there wasn't a clear delineation of how much time just went by, and I would be surprised by how old the characters were. But that's a tiny nitpick. I plan to pick up all Halpin's other books, hoping they're half as good as this one was!

Sandy D. says

Very adult novel by an author whose teen books I love. It's hard for me to review this, partially because there is so much going on in the story, and partially because I now know the author reads these reviews. I did really enjoy it, though the characters (especially Philippa) annoyed me sometimes. I found myself thinking about them a lot after the book ended, which is the mark of a really good book (for me, anyway).

It's told in alternating male/female viewpoints (like some of Halpin's other books), and it is much less cutesy than the cover blurb would have you believe it is. It's basically the story of two damaged people finding each other, and all the failed relationships that led to this. There's a lot of good stuff about parenting, teachers, music, and dealing with abusive drunks in it, with some great sly snarkiness.

Reminds me a bit of the best of Jonathan Tropper and/or Jennifer Weiner.

Kate says

Phillipa is crazy and Mark is a pussy, but I liked the book.
