



Dear Cassie

Lisa Burstein

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What if the last place you should fall in love is the first place that you do?

You'd think getting sent to Turning Pines Wilderness Camp for a month-long rehabilitation "retreat" and being forced to re-live it in this journal would be the worst thing that's ever happened to me.

You'd be wrong.

There's the reason I was sent to Turning Pines in the first place: I got arrested. On prom night. With my two best friends, who I haven't talked to since and probably never will again. And then there's the real reason I was sent here. The thing I can't talk about with the guy I can't even think about.

What if the moment you've closed yourself off is the moment you start to break open?

But there's this guy here. Ben. And the more I swear he won't—he can't—the deeper under my skin he's getting. After the thing that happened, I promised I'd never fall for another boy's lies.

And yet I can't help but wonder...what if?

Dear Cassie Details

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From Reader Review Dear Cassie for online ebook

Heidi says

Three stars: A revealing and honest look at a teenager in peril.

Cassie refuses to think back to what happened on prom night and the bad path her life has taken since then. She has closed her heart off and she won't let anyone in. Not after what Aaron did. She is going to suck it up and somehow get through the next thirty days at Turning Pines. Cassie knows it is going to be tough, and it will likely be one of the worst experiences of her life, but the alternatives are worse. What she doesn't count on, is finding someone there who just might be worth letting in. Can Cassie deal with her past and open her heart?

What I Liked:

*I had no illusions going into this one like I did last year when I read *Pretty Amy*. I was expecting *Pretty Amy* to be a light, fluffy read all about going to prom, what I got was a tough look at three teenage girls making bad decisions due to their lack of self worth. This time, I knew that Cassie's story would be even more raw and I was right. This is not an easy novel to read, probably why I don't review more contemporary, it was tough at times and it stressed me out, but through it all, I saw a girl struggling to find herself and prove that her life mattered. Cassie's journey of self discovery takes place during a month long stay at Turning Pines which is one of those rehab camps where they send juvenile delinquents. It is not a fun place to stay by any means and it was an eye opening experience to read this one. If you ever wondered about the type of people who are sent to these camps and what they undergo read this book.

*Cassie is a touch character to like. On one hand she is smart and funny, some of her lines are so sarcastic that they made me laugh, but on the other hand she is so closed off and damaged that it is hard to get the full picture. She is a girl who has never really been shown kindness in her life, except from her brother. Her father serves in the military so he is always gone, her mother is consequently always drunk because she can't deal with his absence. Cassie has never been cuddled and loved and told that she mattered. So she is angry to the point of being combative and she doesn't know the first thing about love and trust. The one time she lets a boy in, she suffers some catastrophic consequences which shatter the fragile trust she established. Now she is broken, gutted if you will, and trying to survive each day at the camp. During her stay, Cassie slowly analyzes all the bad that happened to her, comes to terms with it, and she begins to take those tentative steps to trust and hope and believing she is worth it. Keep in mind her self discovery is harsh and brutal at times and gut wrenching, but in the end I am glad I went on the journey with Cassie.

*I appreciated that this book dealt with some very challenging topics such as pregnancy and abortion and the devastating aftermath. Cassie's experience is painful, scarring and revealing.

*This is one of those contemporary novels that will stick with me because it is so honest and it doesn't hold back. Cassie puts forth a tough exterior. On the outside she is a girl who smokes, curses and makes bad choices and doesn't seem to care what the world thinks of her, but on the inside she is scared, alone and desperately wanting to be loved. Even though she wouldn't want it, I wanted to hug her.

And The Not So Much:

*I was a bit frustrated at times that some of the more interesting aspects were glossed over and not fully fleshed out. For instance, I wanted to know more about what happened with Aaron. How did Cassie tell him what happened and how did she break it off with him? I would also have liked to know more about her home life to see how she ended up the way she is. What was her relationship like with her father when he was home? I was also disappointed that there wasn't a bit more on what happened with Amy and Lila. Finally, I wished there was an Epilogue to see how Cassie is doing down the road. Did her stay at the camp make a difference?

*This is not a read for everyone. Do not go into this expecting to find a huge change in Cassie, nor don't

expect a fully blossomed romance. The romance is subtle and not fully developed, which is a good thing because of Cassie's inability to trust anyone after what happened to her. Cassie's metamorphosis can't be likened to a caterpillar into butterfly. It is more like a girl who is coming to terms with what happened and fearfully grasping at a bit of hope for something good in her future, but by no means is she out of the woods. I liked though, that Ms. Burstein kept it real and didn't have Cassie do a complete turn around.

*Keep in mind, even though this book is Young Adult, it is for mature readers only. There are some very tough topics in this one such as abortion. There is plenty of foul language as well.

*I struggled a bit with Ben. He is so kind and sweet and he continues to dig at Cassie's tough girl exterior despite the horrid way she treats him. I wanted to know why he was so persistent. What did he see in Cassie that would make him keep pushing? I was also a bit confused on why he was at the camp in the first place. Why would he take the fall for his brother. Finally, I didn't like his stunt at the end. It was ridiculous and stupid.

*The other issue I had with this one was that the kids at the camp were constantly sneaking out and getting away with things. I was expecting the camp counselors to have better control of the situation and I didn't buy that the kids weren't more closely monitored.

Dear Cassie is a good follow up to Pretty Amy. In fact, I much preferred Cassie's voice to Amy's since Cassie doesn't sit around and feel sorry for herself and she is more in your face. This book takes a harsh look at a teenage girl floundering with the pressures of today's society as she tries to find herself and learn her own self worth. The story is raw and gritty and it isn't easy, but in the end, I enjoyed watching those first hesitant baby steps that Cassie takes to hopefully what will be a brighter future. This book isn't for everyone, but if you are someone who enjoys realistic, gut wrenching reads, get this one.

Favorite Quotations:

"The "cabin" looked like a shack built by a homicidal maniac---you know, the place he keeps his blood-splattered murder tools and rotting corpses. The door creaked as Rawe opened it---that a room you enter and may never leave creak."

"I already knew what I was capable of, and I wouldn't want to be in a cabin in the woods alone with me."

"Rawe said that if we knew where we came from, it would be easier to see how we'd ended up where we'd ended up. The crap not falling far from the butthole and all that."

"I would have liked to be drinking stolen beer from the cooler, but after the arrest, my mother did a sobriety check every time I came home. Which was beyond ironic, considering my mother's breath could have gotten me drunk."

"You look like a naked, upside-down female synchronized swimmer in need of a wax," I spit through the water. "Desperately."

"Um, maybe," I said, even though I was positive if I kneeled down to pray, the sky would open up and lightning would fly out like octopus arms and burn me to a crisp. I didn't deserve to pray. Not that anyone but my brother knew it, but I didn't deserve anything except to go take a crap in a pit toilet."

"If this is what I am now---a girl who used to know who she was, who used to be able to make people afraid of her, but is now only scared of herself. Of what she will do if she lets one more boy in."

"They probably had the kind of parents who would always tell them they were awesome, even when they sucked. I had the kind who told me I sucked when I sucked."

"You ned to live this life." she whispered. "You can live it with regret, or you can let it go."

A big thanks to Entangled Teen for providing me a review copy in exchange for an honest review. All opinions are my own and I was not compensated for this review.

Posted@ Rainy Day Ramblings.

Bailee says

Dear authors who seem determined to make me cry,

I should boycott your books and refuse to buy them because they make me vulnerable. I should refuse to give them good ratings and reviews because they frighten me sometimes with how real they are. But in the end, that just seems impossible to me. It's like I can't help but love the books because I am so invested and involved in the story. Yet I hate the way they seem to make me feel. Just thought I'd let you know.

Sincerely, Bailee

The first thing that caught my attention about this book was the cover. I used to play around with pictures, adding text that was almost invisible on the image but still you could see the basic outline and maybe read it if you stared at it long enough. When I saw this cover, that was all I could think about and I knew right away that I loved this cover without a doubt in my mind. Then I was certain that if I could love a cover just by looking at it, studying it, I knew that the story just might capture me as well. I actually debated about whether to request the title or not for awhile and then decided that there was no way that I couldn't. I loved the cover too much not to. So here I am, dry tear tracks on my cheeks (thank you very much, Lisa Burstein, you've made it onto my list) and determined to give this book the review it deserves. Although, I know that I probably won't make you cry over it.

Dear Cassie by Lisa Burstein is a heart wrenching story of Cassie, a girl who probably punishes herself more than anyone would think she deserves. In her life, all she had was her brother and her two best friends to depend on but by the time everything went down, all she had was her brother. One of her best friends served her up on a platter for a lesser sentence for a crime they all committed and it is was all because of a boy, one who didn't deserve either of them. This boy destroyed Cassie's world and was the final nail in her coffin. Now forced to spend one month in a wilderness rehab, she must face the demons that she hid away under the walls she built around it and the guy who just might be worth her trust. The only solace she can find is in this Assessment Journal as people betray and hurt her constantly. She knows without a doubt that she deserves all of the punishment they give her, in fact she punishes herself just to teach herself that she isn't worth anything. She isn't worth forgiving. But people are determined to help her see beyond her faults and realize that she can forgive herself despite everything that has happened. Will she be able to forgive herself? Can she move beyond the things that weigh her down? Will she allow herself to be happy?

I'm only going to talk about three characters. I do this sometimes but it's mostly because I want to keep a lot of the plot hidden. There are so many characters I am literally bursting at the seams to tell you about but I know that it could potentially spoil some important things that you have to discover through Cassie's eyes. Three characters I selected are by far my favorites, whether it's because of the role they play or just the person that they are. I sense that in a way, I wish I had these sort of people in my life and that's why I love them so much. Screwed up and all, I love them.

Cassie, oh Cassie, is a beautiful example of a person being eaten alive by guilt from the inside out. I knew that she had been through something from the moment I picked up the story to read and it reminded me a lot of how I, myself, and friends have acted when faced with something from our pasts. She deflects people's attempts to become friends all the while desperately wanting to connect with them but feeling unworthy of it. It's hard to read her suffer through her forced rejections, her self-hate, and guilt because it stirs so many different emotions for me. It makes me think of my own problems that I refuse to forgive. It makes me ache because I feel for her in a way that I would for one of my best friends. She faces every sort of up and down

possible. She knows instinctively that she may be at this rehab facility for one thing but she deserves it for an entirely different reason. But in her darkest moments she doesn't think that their punishments are enough. She continually punishes herself because she cannot forgive herself. Her biggest character growth of the novel actually happens over the course of the chapters, showing how slow trust really takes to form in the real world. I like that she is so real. I like that what she experiences is so real too.

Ben is the guy who challenges everything that Cassie believes about the male gender in general. He is also being sent to the wilderness rehab facility but for an entirely different reason that you'll discover once you read the book. From the moment he met her, he seemed to be attracted like a moth to a flame and perhaps the relationship between the two of them is more akin to that analogy than I care to admit. He is the type of guy that you wouldn't mind introducing your parents to, the kind that makes you laugh when you want to cry, and the guy that seems to know when to push you and when to leave it alone. He is flawed like so many guys are in real life and there is just something that is so real about him. Unlike paranormal romances or fantasy novels, he seems attainable. In a world where girls dream about having a vampire boyfriend, I dream about meeting a guy like Ben who is perfectly flawed.

Troyer may sound like a boy's name but really it is a girl character's last name and I am not spoiling her first name. You'll find out. She is probably the greatest sort of best friend character that I have ever read about and the best thing about her? She doesn't say a single word. She manages to capture your heart and your attention by simply existing. She manages to be everything that Cassie needs when she needs it. Even when people push her around, she shows her dislike in her own silent way which earns her the title of most interesting by a land slide. Not to slight Ben or Cassie but they just don't write 'em like Troyer every day. Typically best friends are the chatty, energetic, overly excited type and it threw me for a loop when suddenly I was faced with a girl who didn't (couldn't or wouldn't, you'll find out) speak at all. Suddenly all of my previous ideas of the perfect best friend character was shifted in a moment's notice.

So here's my review and that's all I'm spilling, seeing as I've already spilled enough... tears, that is. I really want you all to read and fall in love with this story like I did. It's raw story, full of emotions that can sometimes be unbearable but in the end it is worth it all. I wouldn't change this in the slightest. It deserves to be recognized because it's a beautiful story. A worthwhile tale that shouldn't be forgotten least of all by our generation.

Laurynne Gouws says

I received a copy of this book in exchange for a fair and honest review. I had the luck of getting to review *The Next Forever* a while back and that was when I discovered the amazing way Lisa Burstein is able to hook you and stuck you right into her books.

I praised *The Next Forever* and I was certain that *Dear Cassie* would be just as great. How did I know this? Well, it's not so much the story that's being told, that has the effect on you... it's has more to do with Lisa Burstein's ability to create amazing characters with her top notch character development, never mind the fact that she can hook you in real deep with the emotional aspects of her tales. I can't say I've never heard of the stories being told, but I can say that from the sniffs and shy smiles I've experienced during both books I've read so far - she sucks you in and boy are you in deep.

Lately, I've been feeling as if I've outgrown young adult... I mean... about time right, since I'm thirty and all lol... but I didn't even realize that this was a young adult at all. It's definitely clean and nothing goes over the young adult mark... but I feel as if maybe it was because Cassie didn't seem like a 17 year old... Ben seemed

older too... So I didn't feel as if I was reading about kiddies... except maybe that the hottest thing that actually happened was kissing and the worst shocker was the 'F' word... but overall, it was a mature young adult read.

We follow Cassie... as you probably could have guess... and the book starts out as a diary of sorts, each chapter representing a new day in her correctional 'camp' hell.

There's a secret, but when is there never one... if you are smart enough, you click it pretty soon. The path leading up to the reveal of the 'secret' is vague but not irritatingly so. I liked that. I hate it when authors play cat and mouse with your mind... for pages and pages and then when it breaks, it's not even as dramatic as they made it seem. So in *Dear Cassie*, I rather liked the way 'it' was brought up, but wasn't mentioned page after page.

What I didn't like, and one of the reason's I'm rating it a four, is because it did seem to have a lot of irrelevant mumbo-jumbo. Especially, if I consider the way it ended - another reason for the four... there was so much to be told within this book, that the ending just suddenly pounced on your and you are left going - that's it? And then going back to see if you didn't miss something, since the entire book was so descriptive and informative, how come the ending didn't go that way?

“What’s his name?” Nez whispered. “Asshole,” I whispered back. “Wick,” Rawe said, her voice exploding out of her like a volcano, “if I say your name one more time . . .” “Jeez Louise,” Nez whispered. “You better make this one.”

Cassie Meet's Ben at 'the camp from hell' and much to Cassie's constant ability to push him away, he hangs tight and keeps trying to break through her shell. It's very sweet... - It's just very sweet, nothing more. I can't say I felt electric currents running across the pages, but it was determined and... sweet - There I go again :)

Stacia (the 2010 club) says

Note : *Dear Cassie* is a companion/follow-up to the book *Pretty Amy*. I hadn't read PA first and got along fine without having read it, but there was one situation carried over from PA which was never fully recapped and I'd liked to have known more about that situation.

This could possibly be top 5 for endings which have made me say : wait, what?

There was no cliffhanger, and I wouldn't even really call this an open ending. In a sense the ending was good enough. Ben's stunt was ridiculous but it was also a definite attention-getter! However, what happened after the stunt...

it was just...ODD. Pleasantly odd, but still odd.

2.5 stars. As far as "issues" or "troubled teen" books go, this wasn't a standout for me and I've read better. If you're looking for a John Green type of cry-fest, you won't find it here. I failed to get emotional about much of anything.

BUT - there is a BUT here. It appears that everyone else is loving this book but me. There is a good message at the heart of the matter and the message is this :

You need to forgive yourself.

Cassie has lived through a lot and you can tell that she made some decisions without really thinking through how they would have an effect on her in the end, so she's suffering regrets after the fact.

This is not technically a love story, so don't be fooled by the cover. While there is a love interest and a budding romance, the point is not about Cassie finding love with another person - it's about her learning to love herself again. In a way, I think that was the best part of the story. I liked how the romantic lead was there merely for support and not used as a crutch or as the reason for Cassie's road to recovery. Ben really was a wonderful character. He was patient, funny, and honest.

If you like to read books in which a character learns more about themselves as they recover from a rough patch in their life, then you'll probably get more out of the book than I did. Sometimes, quiet reflections and lessons learned make for an absorbing read and there are definitely people who will appreciate what the author is doing here.

What didn't work for me was the camp dynamic. I thought there could have been crazier happenings at the camp if it was going to take so long for Cassie to get to a point where she was willing to open up and examine herself. A lot of what happened for a good portion of the book was of absolutely no interest to me.

The following isn't even a complaint but more of an observation. The chapter headings having the f word in them was kind of ridiculous. Yes, most of us swear. Some of us swear a lot. But I always feel like books are trying too hard to be edgy when we're hit over the head with the language in a way that feels forced or positioned. Conversational words feel more natural. Chapter headings - not so much.

Was this worth the read? I don't have any regrets but I can't say that I'll be pondering this book days after the fact, which is what I tend to look for when I read an issues book. Surprisingly, I went through a similar situation as Cassie, but our outcomes were different. Even though *Dear Cassie* didn't really push any of my emotional buttons, there were still plenty of lovely and thoughtful moments inside. If the synopsis appeals to you, I say to give it a shot because you might be on the side of all the people who fell in love with the book.

"I think I can make you happy," he said, his eyes on the sky. "I also think you're funny as hell."
"Thanks," I said, "but I'm pretty sure I've never been happy."
"Exactly."

Totally random, but the first book I wrote (which will probably never see the light of day) has lead characters named Ben and Cassie. :p

This book provided from the publisher through Netgalley in exchange for an honest review. All quotes are from the pre-published copy and may be altered or omitted from the final copy.

Krazybooklady says

We first met Cassie in *Pretty Amy* as part of the trio of friends that broke into a guy's house after they were stood up for prom night, stole his pot, and managed to get themselves arrested with it. Cassie was the "tough guy" of the group, never showing emotion and never really letting anyone in. In *Dear Cassie*, we find out why she is so closed off from relationships and so guarded with her emotions. Besides Cassie's tough childhood and getting arrested with a crap load of pot on prom night, she is also trying to figure out how to deal with a life altering decision she was forced to make after the arrest. Now Cassie is being sent to rehab to try to keep herself out of jail, but she wonders if this will be enough? Will it really help her?

I have developed a love/hate relationship with Lisa Burstein. And I use the word "hate" in a very loose sense because I don't really mean hate. This is the third book I've read by this author. (Well, two books and one novella. Review on the novella coming soon.) I must say that I have been pleasantly surprised that I have enjoyed them so much. On the surface, *Dear Cassie* may look like a typical YA book with a whiny "oh poor me" main character where everything pretty much turns out perfectly even though they complain about their hard life the whole time, but you get so much more than that. Lisa Burstein manages to capture the raw emotions and effectively portray them so that the reader can relate to the character and the situation. Both *Pretty Amy* and *Dear Cassie* take real situations and show how hard it can be to deal with the consequences. I enjoy this type of YA/NA book and wish that I had been able to find these when I was that age. Now for the "hate" part. I rarely find myself so drawn into a character's world that I am disappointed at the end of the book. Not disappointed in the story but disappointed that it was over because I was so drawn into Cassie's world that I want to know what happens next. What is Cassie's next step? I am really hoping we find out in a follow up. Is Lila's story up next? I hope so.

Kate says

Dear Cassie is a companion novel to Lisa Burstein's debut, *Pretty Amy* however you don't need to have read Amy's story in order to enjoy *Dear Cassie*.

Cassie Wick is struggling to deal with the fallout from the Prom Night disaster. Faced with jail time or a month-long stint at a rehabilitation camp for rebellious and troublesome teens – Cassie chooses thirty days at Turning Pines Wilderness Camp. Her criminal record is not the only problem Cassie's facing. An unplanned pregnancy and a boy who may have just been using her to cover his own behind. And now there's Ben. Ben Claire – the type of boy you can tell is a drummer in a band and considering how they met – Cassie just knows that he has got to have as many issues as she does.

I loved Cassie in *Pretty Amy*. But after reading her own story I fell even harder. She's not pretty. She's angry and frustrated, scared and confused. But she's real. And at Turning Pines with only fellow "inmates", the wilderness and her journal for company – there's nowhere to hide from her thoughts. Her regrets. Stubborn and hurt, Cassie's story was one that I loved reading. I couldn't put it down and read it in one sitting. She's such an engaging narrator. The hurt, confusing and feeling that there's no way out that Cassie experiences is something that I think every teen can relate to in some way or another.

The relationships in this novel were such a pleasure to read. From the bizarre room-mates Nez and Troyer to the counsellors - they all added that element of realism to Cassie's story. Even the often mentioned but never

seen Tim. I loved wanting to know what happened next and how Cassie would react next. And then there's Ben. He may not be a conventional romantic lead but there was something very engaging about him. He's sweet in the oddest way. There's one romantic gesture (you know the one if you've read the book!) that on one hand is the most crazy and ridiculous thing ever but on the other – it's the kind that makes my heart happy.

My favourite books are the ones where the characters grow. They learn from their past and they try. Try to be better even when things seem their most dire. And this book satisfied me in the best way. Cassie grew. By the end of the novel she's not the same person who first entered Turning Pines. And I loved that about her.

Dear Cassie is a beautiful novel about regret and trying to move on. Realistic characters with heart and engaging stories, this is a novel that is both relatable and powerful.

Andrea says

Pretty Amy gave us Amy's version of the Prom night from Hell. The night she, Lila, and Cassie lit up, and went down in flames. The consequences of their actions, and how it changed her. Dear Cassie is Cassie's story, but we quickly learn that getting arrested and going to jail was the least of Cassie's problems. That twenty-eight days at a Wilderness Camp may push Cassie beyond her limits, but it may also save her.

At this point, a pattern has been established: Lisa Burstein is brilliant. I was blown away by her talent with Pretty Amy. Her ability to tap into the innermost thoughts of a troubled teenage girl, and bring that to the surface with her beautiful writing, is shocking. That brilliance continued in The Next Forever, in which she bravely writes an authentic young relationship, and only promises forever a day at a time. In Dear Cassie, Burstein has solidified my opinion that any conversation about must-read books for teens must include her books. They are that important.

I say that not only because they are thoughtful, honest, and bold, but also because she offers an alternative to the "perfect" heroine who finds herself in a troublesome situation. Burstein offers the troubled heroine, a girl that we don't often see in Young Adult fiction. I try, so hard, to take myself out of reviews, and I don't always accomplish that. But I could never remove myself from a review of Burstein's books. She writes about the other girl. The girl who swears too much, smokes, kisses too many boys. Not the vulnerable, meek girl who everyone wants to protect, but the vulnerable, off-putting girl with a tough exterior. I was that girl. My friends were that girl. We were Amy, Cassie, and Lila. There are a lot of girls out there and they need books like Burstein's.

As much as I was prepared, Dear Cassie caught me off guard. Cassie came off as very harsh in Pretty Amy. She is harsh. I identified with Amy and did not think I would have that experience with Cassie. I did. Cassie, though very tough, was so very fragile, and it was beautiful and exhausting to get to know her. She is a girl who uses sarcasm as a shield, who uses the word "f*ck" like a weapon.

"I would much rather have someone holding me at arm's length than trying against all odds to hold me."

Prom night sucked for Cassie, but is not the worst thing that has happened to her by a long shot. During her stay at camp, through physical and mental challenges, Cassie's tough exterior slowly dissolves until she

reveals just how lost and ashamed she truly feels. Through breaking and exposing her vulnerabilities, Cassie unknowingly is being built back up. Stronger.

And there's a boy. Isn't there always? Ben. Ben is attending camp as well, and he immediately annoys and intrigues Cassie. Ben is persistent, and I loved that. But the antagonistic relationship-turned friendship-turned more (?) is not about Ben saving Cassie or vice versa. It is about acceptance, and simply being there beside one another.

As you may guess, Dear Cassie was an intense experience for me. As much as I loved the writing and could have devoured it in one sitting, I had to pace myself. Cassie's intensity was at times too close for comfort, emotionally exhausting. An author that can make you feel that intensely is a treasure. Dear Cassie is a treasure.

Gaby says

Not at all what I first expect from this and I was pleasantly surprised, a very moving book.

Cassie is the one that narrates her story. It all begins with her at the airport waiting for the people who is supposed to take her to the rehabilitation that was dictated by the court due to her arrest on prom night in which she and her friends: Layla and Amy were arrested for drug possession. But there's something that happened after that night, something that Cassie doesn't let herself think of.

But the place they take her is nothing at all of what she expected, she had imagined a sort of spa or anything like that, after all she was going to rehab, right? She ends up in the middle of the forest, Turning Pines Wilderness Camp is essentially that, a camp. And there she'll have to do activities such as hiking, fishing, learn to start a fire, all without the most basic needs such as a flushing toilet; on top, of that they must keep a daily journal when they are supposed to write about what took them there, their fears, their feelings! this place is a nightmare for her.

She's not the only one at the camp, there's two other girls: Nez and Troyer. And there's also a group of boys, in which is Ben. He shows interest in Cassie and tries to get close to her in spite all the times she rejects him, something happened to her and she's determined not to be fooled by Ben, she will no longer fall for boys and their words, she can't allow herself to trust again in anything or in anyone. But against what she wants, Ben starts awakening something in her and she's terrified, and also her staying in this place is causing for her memories and fears to resurface, nothing good can come of that, it will only make everything worse...

I find this book very intense and I mean it on an emotional level, to know and relieve what Cassie went through was overwhelming. This girl has had such a tough life, both her father and older brother are in the army so she rarely sees them and that only leaves her mother, who is an alcoholic and that means she gets zero attention from her. Cassie has quite a character, she's aggressive and is always on the defensive, but that's like her mechanism of survival if you will, if you act cold, cruel and distant is harder for people to hurt you, that time she left her guard down cost her deeply.

Is because of a certain guy that that incident happened, something she doesn't let herself think of but something for which she can't stop hurting herself, even her brother, whom she loves and has always been there for her doesn't know the whole story, she trusts him but even so, she's incapable of speaking certain things in front of him, she keeps it all to herself... not very encouraging, right?

Staying at the camp isn't easy, she doesn't get along with the girls and her instructor isn't any better and then

there's Ben. I totally loved him, he's funny, compassionate, and he doesn't give up, he wants to get close to Cassie and she's very scared of that, she can't allow herself to have feelings for anyone and on the course of the book we get to know what lead her to think that way, why she can't forgive herself or give herself a chance to try to live her life.

To read everything that happened to her was tough and it made me feel so bad for her, and it was hard to read how she can't let things go, she's clinging on all of her sadness and all her mistakes, and you want her to let herself feel, and live and be happy, at least that's how I felt.

I'd really recommend Dear Cassie, I think one can learn about forgiveness and other couple of things through the story. I liked Lisa Burstein's writing, is very fluid and she gave Cassie what I thought is a very realistic voice, so it's easy to relate with her as well as care for her, I wouldn't doubt into picking another one of her books but for now I tell you, give yourself a chance to read this book.

Christina (A Reader of Fictions) says

Dear Cassie is, initially, a very hard book to like. Where Amy in Burstein's debut *Pretty Amy* is weak and sympathetic, Cassie is brash, vulgar and completely uninterested in anyone's pity. At times, *Dear Cassie* hurts to read, and I had a pretty visceral reaction to some of the hatred that Cassie spews at everyone. However, *Dear Cassie* is also the kind of book that slowly changes over time to become something else entirely, depicting an impressive character arc through the alteration in the writing style.

For approximately the first half of the book, Cassie insults everyone, both out loud and in her head, and she swears like a sailor. She slut shames, she makes nasty assumptions, and she generally hates on every single person in the world. While it's fairly obvious Cassie uses this hate as a coping mechanism, as a way of avoiding her own problems, it's not pleasant to read. What Burstein does quite effectively, though, is reflect Cassie's progress in rehab through her writing. As the book progresses, Cassie talks less about others, and sticks much more to the basic facts. She swears less, mostly only in her dialog. Over the course of the novel, her outlook becomes healthier, and that's reflected so well in the narration.

What I am perhaps most glad of is that Cassie had a deeper issue than the arrest that was so central to *Pretty Amy*. Yes, it was the catalyst that sent Cassie's life spinning off the rails, but she had much bigger problems come after. Burstein deals with a larger, darker subject than that, and does so well. Burstein does not try to fully heal Cassie over the course of the book, and she doesn't oversimplify her experiences. In fact, I think Cassie's still trying to bury her past, to forget what she's done at the novel's closing, which is more realistic than being over what she's been through.

I almost DNFed *Dear Cassie*, but pushed on in hopes of the change that I did eventually find within its pages. Like with Cassie herself, the other characters come off as stereotypes of the different kinds of rebellious teens: the slutty one, the tortured one, the hot one, the tattooed one, the jock, etc. It's a regular breakfast club of teen lawbreakers. Burstein does eventually give a bit more depth to the others, but the story really isn't about them. I get that the focus is on Cassie's mental progress, and that this wasn't the kind of camp where they all sit around and talk about their feelings. They're there because they're sort of beyond the point where ordinary behavior, like talking with others, can shock them out of their ways. Still, a bit more development into some of them might have been nice.

What left a bad taste in my mouth, though, is the romance. I do understand the purpose the flirtation served in helping Cassie overcome her issues with boys, but I think they got too serious too fast. I never felt a real

connection between them, and I really don't think she's mentally stable enough for a relationship right now, not to mention a long distance one. On top of that, I'm not entirely convinced Ben is on the level. The romance sort of overpowers the plot towards the end, and that is unfortunate.

Much darker than its counterpart *Pretty Amy*, *Dear Cassie* tackles rough subject matter in an honest, harsh way. Though not for everyone, *Dear Cassie* will appeal to those looking to see more grit in YA writing, those sick of wimpy heroines. Burstein's sophomore novel is daring, and sure to be a hit with the right readers.

Jen Ryland says

I received an e-ARC of this book from the publisher for possible review

Dear Cassie is a companion book to *Pretty Amy*, but you don't need to have read it to enjoy *Dear Cassie*.

The books explore the aftermath of a prom night fiasco, in which three friends, Amy, Cassie and Lila, were stood up by their dates, then arrested for possession of marijuana. In the aftermath of this event, all the girls will have to come to terms with the various personal issues and insecurities that got them to that point. There was a major plot development in *Pretty Amy* concerning Cassie that I wasn't sure I remembered correctly, but having my memory be a little hazy actually made this book that much more suspenseful.

Dear Cassie begins as Cassie's at an airport, waiting to be picked up. A cute ("cutest guy in a boy band cute") guy tries to talk to her and she shoots him down. Of course, they're both headed to the Turning Pines Wilderness Camp, a.k.a. rehab in the woods.

Cassie is dumped in a ramshackle cabin with two other girls, Nez, who talks too much, and Troyer, who doesn't talk at all. The girls are forced to do manual labor day after day and write in their journals. They're encouraged to come to terms with the things that led them to Turning Pines. Nez just wants to sneak out to the boys' cabins, and Troyer wants to give everyone the silent treatment. Cassie doesn't come to terms with anything. She doesn't want to think about Aaron -- the guy who ditched her at prom -- or about what happened between the two of them after that. She uses her sharp tongue and her tough attitude to push everyone away, over and over. Even Ben. But he's pretty persistent. And seems pretty nice. Everyone at Turning Pines has secrets. Secrets that will eventually come out.

Like *Pretty Amy*, *Dear Cassie* also has some hilariously funny moments. And some very poignant moments. *Dear Cassie* is a book that will appeal to fans of realistic fiction, to New Adult fans, and to readers who like a lot of emotion in their books.

Read the full review on my blog, *YA Romantics*

Joli says

originally posted at <http://actinupwithbooks.blogspot.com/...>

Dear Cassie, the companion novel to *Pretty Amy*, is so much more than I ever imagined it would be. The Cassie in this book is completely different from the character in *Pretty Amy* because we get to hear her

voice, know her thoughts and not just how Amy saw her. While they are companion novels, I really don't want to compare the books because each book is different, just like both girls are different.

Dear Cassie is an excellent example of how people don't always see themselves as others see them and how often people can see beyond what we are willing to share of ourselves. But more than that, it demonstrates the ways we punish ourselves when what we need to do is forgiving ourselves.

Katie Kacvinsky (an author whose books I'm a fan of) blurbed Dear Cassie, but it wasn't needed to convince me to read it. It just convinced me that I shouldn't wait another minute to read Dear Cassie and it's true - "be ready to be changed."

Dear Cassie is filled with a lot of memorable moments - shocking, jaw-dropping, laughable, and heart-breaking, but this one just might be my favorite:

He turned to go, then stopped like he remembered something. "I'll try to come back tonight," he said. His face was hopeful, as hopeful as the sun that was about to rise.

"You sure are willing to go through a lot for cigarette smoking and hand holding, " I said.

"You need to try and remember that." He watched me. Maybe for the way the sun was starting to color my face, or maybe for the way my eyes were on his, unable to look away. (pg 238)

I just love this book! I recommend it as well as Lisa Burstein's Pretty Amy and companion novella, The Next Forever.

Disclaimer: This review is based on the paperback version which I purchased for my personal library. I was not compensated in any way for providing this review. Thoughts and opinions are my own.

Tara Allen says

I have a free copy of this for the express purpose of review, but I enjoyed it so much that not only is it a definite "MUST READ" for me, I'll be purchasing a copy so that Lisa will write many, many more.

The Good:

Needless to say, the story is gripping. It's told entirely from Cassie's point of view (obviously, as it's a diary) and all of her turmoil is conveyed in raw, moving descriptions of her time at Turning Pines.

Ultimately, Cassie is just an average teenager. She isn't extraordinarily bad. She isn't even really a little bad. She's going through the same sorts of things that all teens go through as they try to figure out who they are and where they fit in with the rest of the world.

As Cassie gets closer and closer to admitting to herself and more importantly to Troyer (I've already asked for her story!), it's heartbreaking to see the effect that her secret has had on her.

Cassie finally learns to start trusting herself, and others, again.

Seriously, the writing is incredible. I felt all the feels that Cassie felt and I was right back in the middle of all the self-doubt I had when I was her age.

Lisa doesn't fall into the sometimes trap of writing teen characters for adults. They don't have it all together. They aren't confident. Her characters are still learning and trying to figure it out. They really are teens. Not teens the way that adults wish they'd been. So, BRAVA!!

The Bad:

Since it's about Cassie and told from her point of view, I want more about the other characters! I'm looking at you, Lisa!

Overall:

Dear Cassie is incredibly touching. It's a deep soul-searching journey for Cassie, as she struggles to come to terms with the long and often difficult journey into adulthood. (Doesn't that sound all official and stuff?)

Honestly, it's just an incredible read and I think you should sit down and read it. Now.

Rachel says

I have read all three books in this series, and I loved them all.

Dear Cassie tells the story of what happens to Cassie when she is sent to "wilderness rehab" after that fateful prom night when Cassie's life is changed forever. We got to see Amy's perspective in the first book of the series, "Pretty Amy" and while reading Amy's story, I couldn't wait to hear what Cassie had to say in this book.

And, oh, did Cassie have a lot to say. When we meet Cassie in Pretty Amy, she is the tough as nails girl in their group. Cassie is intimidating, loud, and calls it as she sees it. She's had a tough upbringing and you know that her actions are a defence mechanism - don't let people get too close so they don't have the chance to hurt you.

But, as we see the world through Cassie's eyes, we get a glimpse into what truly makes her tick. Under her tough exterior is a vulnerable girl who is sad and lonely, yet so determined to keep others away. I truly loved Cassie's character, and I loved watching her character's development over the two books. (Cassie isn't in Amy and Joe's book - 2.5)

While at rehab, Cassie meets Ben. Although there is romance in this book, it's not a romance novel. There's no love at first sight, no easy relationship for these two. And, I thought the slow progression of their friendship fit perfectly with the book. Cassie isn't one to give her heart away lightly. If anything had been different, their relationship wouldn't have felt authentic. I also really appreciated that Cassie was able to make changes for herself - there's no white knight in this book, no boy who changes her. Cassie changes herself.

I definitely recommend this book. It's not a light read, and I found myself thinking of Cassie after I finished reading the book. In a good way...

Jenna (Bookiemoji) says

Full Review at Making the Grade.

Excellent for fans of *First Comes Love* by Katie Kacvinsky or *Pushing the Limits and Dare You To* by Katie McGarry, *DEAR CASSIE* is a contemporary tale that will resonate with many readers from beginning to end. Although reading the companion novel, *PRETTY AMY*, is not entirely necessary in order to understand and enjoy *DEAR CASSIE*, I do believe that if you want to gain a full appreciation for some of the revelations in this novel, you should consider reading the companion novel, as well.

If you recall, during the pages of *PRETTY AMY*, the “cusses-like-a-sailor” Cassie found herself convicted of the crimes that occurred in that novel. As a result, she has been sent to a boot camp of sorts for delinquent teens, and that is where she finds herself in the opening pages of *DEAR CASSIE*. But *DEAR CASSIE* is less about Cassie dealing with the repercussions of her mistakes on prom night (despite the fact that it is the reason she is where she is) and more about her own personal demons with regard to a much, much larger problem.

I found myself quite surprised by the depth of emotion contained within the pages of *DEAR CASSIE*. How Lisa manages to interweave Cassie’s ongoing story with the events that occurred in her earlier novel are surreal and also carefully plotted. Cassie has been keeping some secrets from everyone and she is about to face them head-on as she learns to take responsibility for herself and for others at Turning Pines Wilderness Camp.

For a good part of the book, Cassie merely seems to be going through the motions – albeit with frequently snarky remarks and “choice” words. Resistant at first, as one would expect of a girl who thinks the whole world is against her, Lisa Burstein finds slow and subtle ways to reveal Cassie’s true self, all thanks to the people she meets and through the passages of her personal journal. Cassie is not the most likable person, by any means, more she is someone who will likely grow on you when you least expect it. Just as she miraculously appealed to the carefree and seemingly harmless character, Ben, Cassie will find her way into your heart, as well. Trust me. Cassie has some skeletons in her closet that will have you feeling for her in no time.

I liked the fact that help comes for Cassie where one would least expect it. Help in the form of various characters Cassie meets while at Turning Pines. The mute but keenly observant Troyer becomes an unusual but true friend to Cassie. She is Cassie’s opposite in every way, and just might be what the doctor ordered for the troubled teen. Then there is the bombastic Nez, who has a few noticeable “issues” of her own, and in a way Cassie learns from her as well. Finally, there is Ben. Yup, of course he’s going to be the love interest, but he offers Cassie is so much more than a gentle hand. I won’t say anything more for fear of spoiling the book, but just know that Ben will surprise you (and Cassie) in very unexpected ways.

Also an excellent book about camp life and wilderness training, the only items that I had issue with in *DEAR CASSIE* include 1) the extensive use of foul language (of course). (But I give great exception on my typical aversion when it comes *DEAR CASSIE* because Cassie would not be the character she is without the distasteful words which she uses as a shield.) Be advised that if you have younger teens reading this book, they will be exposed to almost every manner in which foul language can be used. And 2) the ending was a bit more abrupt than I had anticipated it to be. While I do have faith that we have not seen the end of Cassie, I wish there had been slightly more closure to her story in this entry.

Have you ever done anything in your life you regretted? How did you find ways to bring yourself peace and, even more importantly, to forgive yourself for what you have done? If any of the questions above pertain to you (or even if they don't) I encourage you to read DEAR CASSIE today. Through Cassie, readers will learn about forgiveness. They will realize that no matter how bad things seem to be and that, though our lives may not turn out as we expected it to, there are ways that one can persevere and still be happy.

When push comes to shove there are few lessons in life greater than that.

Lisa Sanchez says

Dear Cassie is the first book I've read by Lisa Burstein and won't be the last. I did not read Pretty Amy (the first book in the series), and it didn't hinder my enjoyment or understanding of this story in the least.

Dear Cassie is told from Cassie's pov. She's tough, gritty, and in your face, and I felt instantly drawn to her character. It was evident to me, early on, that she pushed people away with her swearing and attitude, and I wanted to know what it was that had scarred her so badly she felt she couldn't trust anyone.

Turning Pines, the camp she's been sent to in order to help her "straighten out her life", is nothing short of horrific (well, in my girly-girl opinion, anyway, lol!). Stuck in a rustic, dirty setting, and unable to take advantage of basic things most of us take for granted on a daily basis—like using a flush toilet, or showering—Cassie struggles to come to grips with her "real" problem, the truth that's slowly tearing her apart. These moments, where we see Cassie open up and face her reality are poignant, well-written, and truly make this a wonderful read.

The secondary characters were equally enjoyable. Nez, in my opinion, quickly became the character everyone loves to hate, while sweet, mute Troyer was her exact opposite. And then, of course, there is Ben. I loved his unwavering, and oftentimes relentless pursuit of Cassie. His refusal to give up on her was touching and I wish we could have seen more of him and Cassie together. What can I say? I'm a hopeless romantic, lol!

I'd definitely recommend this book to lovers of contemporary YA. I think the subject matter and hard language makes it appropriate for older teens, and gives a great depiction of the aftermath some of our youth face after making tough, adult decisions at an early age. This is one of those books that would be great to read along with your sixteen-year old daughter, and then have a nice, long talk.
