



Clean

By Amy Reed

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From the author of *Beautiful*, a poignant, captivating novel about five teens in rehab.

Olivia, Kelly, Christopher, Jason, and Eva have one thing in common: They're addicts. Addicts who have hit rock bottom and been stuck together in rehab to face their problems, face sobriety, and face themselves. None of them wants to be there. None of them wants to confront the truths about their pasts. And they certainly don't want to share their darkest secrets and most desperate fears with a room of strangers. But they'll all have to deal with themselves—and one another—if they want to learn how to live. Because when you get that high, there's nowhere to go but down, down, down.

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Editorial Review

Review

"With deep, sympathetic characters and beautiful prose, CLEAN cuts to the heart. It's poignant and real. I can't stop thinking about it." --Lisa McMann, bestselling author of WAKE and CRYER'S CROSS

"An affecting drama about five teenagers in an upscale rehab facility for drug addiction. The author handles complex issues deftly and honestly, from family dysfunction to attempted rape....The hard-hitting scenarios and abundance of white space make this a perfect suggestion for Ellen Hopkins fans."

—Kirkus

"Delivers some emotional and smart insights....The use of multiple narrators results in a briskly paced, vignette-driven story that suits the frenetic lives of the teens."

— Publishers Weekly

"While not all young addicts are fortunate enough to receive and succeed at rehab, this is a thoughtful portrait of those who do, and it offers hope for what often seems a hopeless situation." - *The Bulletin*

"A quick, frank read, with humor, information, and action that will keep teens interested. Those who read Reed's *Beautiful* (S & S, 2009)—and even those who haven't—will be drawn to the great cover, and fans of Ellen Hopkins will love this novel." - *School Library Journal*

About the Author

Amy Reed is the author of the edgy contemporary YA novels *Beautiful* (2011 YALSA Quick Pick), *Clean* (2012 YALSA Quick Pick, Junior Library Guild Selection, Northern California Book Award Nominee, and YALSA Best Fiction for Young Adults nominee), *Crazy* (Bank Street College Best Book of the Year), *Over You* (2014 YALSA Best Fiction for Young Adults nominee), *Damaged*, *Invincible*, *Unforgiveable*, and *Nowhere Girls*. She lives in Asheville, North Carolina. You can visit her online at AmyReedFiction.com.

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Clean

KELLY

I can't sleep, as usual.

My third night in this strange bed and I'm still not used to it. I'm just lying here in these scratchy sheets, listening to this place's weird version of night, where the lights are never fully turned off, where the doors are never fully closed, where there is always at least one person awake and on guard.

Lilana is the assistant counselor with hall duty tonight. I can hear her knitting that hideous thing she calls a sweater, the click, click, click of those plastic needles. I can hear the deep, watery wheezes of a fat woman with health problems and a history of smoking whatever she could find. She's what you think of when you think of a drug addict. Not me. Not a middle-class white girl with a nice house and still-married parents.

It's been ten minutes since Lilana checked on me. It'll be five minutes until she checks on me again. All this fuss because the stupid doctor at my intake asked, "Do you ever have thoughts of hurting yourself?" Could any seventeen-year-old honestly say no?

I wonder if the buzzing of fluorescent lightbulbs has ever given people seizures. Or if the clicking of knitting needles has ever driven someone to psychosis. Total silence would be better. Total silence I could get used to. But tonight is different. Lilana's walkie-talkie crackles something about a late-night admit. I hear her shuffle toward my room to check on me one more time. I close my eyes as she pokes her head through my already open doorway. I can smell her signature smell, the combination of cheap perfume and sweat. Then she walks away. The beep-boop-beep of the code-locked door to the lobby, to the outside, the door we all came through. The door crashing closed. Then silence. Even the lights seem to shut up.

It is several minutes before I hear the door open and Lilana return. There is another set of footsteps. "I can't believe you're not letting me have my own room," a new voice says, a girl, with a stuck-up anger that sounds rehearsed.

"Olivia, please keep your voice down. People are sleeping, dear," Lilana says slowly. The way she says "dear" makes it sound like a threat.

Another door opens and closes. I know the sound of the door to the nurse's office. We all do. I can't hear their voices, but I know Lilana is asking Olivia questions now, doing "the paperwork," scribbling things down on a yellow form. She is telling her the rules, going through her bags, turning out every pocket of every sweater and pair of pants, confiscating mouthwash, breath spray, Wite-Out, facial astringent. She is watching her pee in a cup.

I pretend to be asleep when they come into my room. I've been without a roommate since I got here, and I knew my solitude wouldn't last long. Lilana turns on the overhead light and talks in that kind of fake theatrical whisper that's probably louder than if she just talked in a normal voice. I turn over so I'm facing away from them, so I won't be tempted to open my eyes, so they won't see that I'm awake and then force me into some awkward introduction, with my stinky breath and pillow-creased face. I just try to breathe slowly so it sounds like I'm sleeping.

I hear zippers unzip, drawers open and close. Lilana says, "That's your sink. Bathroom and showers are down the hall. Wake-up's at seven. Someone'll be in here to get you up. That's Kelly sleeping over there. Your roommate. Pretty girl."

Pretty girl. My life's great accomplishment. I wait for Lilana to say more, but that's all there is: pretty girl.

There's silence against a background of fluorescent crackling like some kind of horror movie sound effect. I imagine them staring each other down: Lilana with her always-frown and hand on her hip; this Olivia girl with her snobby attitude, probably another skinny white girl like me who Lilana could crush with her hand.

"Do you need anything?" Lilana says, with a tone that says, You better say no.

I hear the swish of long hair across shoulders, a head shaking no.

"All right, then. I'm down the hall if you need me. Try to sleep off whatever you're on. Tomorrow's going to be the longest day of your life."

“I’m not on anything,” Olivia says.

“Yeah,” Lilana says. “And I’m Miss-fucking-America.”

“Aren’t you going to close the door?” Olivia says.

“Not until your roommate’s off suicide watch,” Lilana tells her.

I hear her steps diminish as she walks to her perch by the med window, right in the middle of the building where the boys’ and girls’ halls meet, where, during the evening, when the patients sleep and no doctors or real counselors are around, Lilana is queen of this place.

I lie still, listening for something that will tell me about my new roommate. I hear clothes rustling. I hear her moving things around, faster than anyone should move at this time of night. She walks over to the permanently locked window by my bed, and I open my eyes just a little to see her profile, shadowed, with only a thin outline of nose and lips illuminated by moonlight. I cannot tell if she is pretty or ugly, if she is sad or scared or angry. Darkness makes everyone look the same.

She turns around, and I shut my eyes tight. She gets into the twin bed between the door and mine. Neither of us moves. I try to time my breath with hers, but she is too erratic—fast, then slow, then holding her breath, like she is testing me. Lilana comes by again, looks in to make sure I haven’t killed myself. She walks away, and the new girl and I sigh at the same time. Then our breaths fall into a kind of rhythm. They seem to get louder, gaining in volume with every echo off the white walls and linoleum floor. Everything else is silence. The room is empty except for us, two strangers, close enough to touch, pretending to be sleeping.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Jeanie Hynes:

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