

Cassie Was Here

Choosing Between Friends.

Bree's mom is busy with work. Her brother is mad at her about his broken arm. Cassie, who's spending the summer with her grandmother across the street, is two years older and too cool for Bree's games. Luckily, Bree has an old friend to keep her company: Joey, who's trustworthy, understanding--and completely imaginary.

When you're eleven, an imaginary friend can be awkward, and when Cassie starts taking an interest in Bree, things with Joey suddenly aren't as much fun anymore. Bree finds herself wanting to be more like Cassie, cutting her hair and changing her clothes. Then, as they're starting to make friends, Bree discovers that Cassie has some secrets of her own--like her friendship with Bree's brother, and the real reason she's in town. Is she the friend Bree's been waiting for? Or is she better off sticking with Joey?

“*Cassie Was Here* takes place in the neighborhood in Baltimore where I grew up,” Hickey says. “It’s about a young girl adjusting to the loneliness that can come with moving and having to make new friends. Even though I never moved as a kid, I have moved many times since then, and I tried to bring all of the feelings of uncertainty and insecurity I experienced to my character.”

Cassie Was Here

A middle grade novel, ages 9-12

May 2007, Roaring Brook Press

ISBN-10: 1-59643-205-5

ISBN-13: 978-1-59643-205-5

Praise for *Cassie Was Here*

"Hickey's debut book captures the shaky essence of what it's like for an 11-year-old to be shy and desperately lonely in a new town...Bree's spunk and quirky behavior will endear her to even the most rooted of readers."

Publishers Weekly
March 19, 2007 Issue

"An unusually compelling narrator. Tweens will identify with the conflict between her little-girl and cool-teenager selves as well as with the intense ups and downs of her relationship with her older brother...Cassie's presence, and her absence, will leave young readers thinking hard about what it means to be a friend."

The Horn Book Magazine
March/April Issue, 2007

"Readers will want to find out what happens to the imaginary Joey and the very human Cassie in this engaging exploration of friendship."

Kirkus Reviews
March 2007 Issue

"This will speak to youngsters, especially girls, verging on that lurch into adolescence and viewing with a mixture of awe and alarm the teens who've made that transition."

The Bulletin for the Center of Children's Books
June 2007 Issue

"I absolutely loved the book...[It's] the first chapter book I finished the day after I got it."

KidsReads.com

Isabelle's Boyfriend

What Do You Do When The Guy Of Your Dreams Is Someone Else's Boyfriend?

Fifteen-year-old Taryn has found the guy of her dreams. Epp is tall, athletic, handsome, and best of all, she is sure he likes her too. There's only one problem: He's dating someone else.

But when Taryn becomes friends with Epp's beautiful girlfriend, Isabelle, her life begins to change. New friends, movie dates, and a first kiss--life couldn't get any better, could it? Except that her mother is lonely, her best friend won't speak to her, and Epp is still Isabelle's boyfriend. Is he worth it?

“Isabelle's Boyfriend also takes place in the suburbs of Baltimore. Taryn goes to an all-girls school, much like the one I attended, and some of the setting and events in the book are inspired by my own experiences. Taryn's story is her own, of course, and all of the characters are fictional. I never write characters that are based on real people — it's too easy to hurt someone's feelings or have their actions be misconstrued. Especially when you're writing about a boyfriend-stealer!”

Isabelle's Boyfriend

A teen novel, ages 11-14
Sept 2008, Roaring Brook Press
ISBN-10: 1-59643-413-9
ISBN-13: 978-1-59643-413-4

About the Author

Born and raised in Baltimore, Maryland, Caroline grew up with her mom, dad, older brother, and feisty dog. She began writing mediocre poems in the second grade. “My first publication credit was a poem published in my middle school’s lit journal,” she says. “The second I saw it in print, I regretted it, because I realized how terrible it was. I’m a perfectionist, and this was my first lesson in never showing anyone my first drafts.”

Caroline continued writing mediocre poems but stopped showing them to anyone. “In high school I didn’t have any idea I’d grow up to be a writer,” she says. “I thought I wanted to be a pediatrician. It wasn’t until college when I took some writing workshops and a class on children’s literature and folk tales that I began to think about it.”

“I graduated from college and moved to New York City, where I accidentally got a job at an investment bank. I realized pretty quickly it was a bad fit, and began working in the publishing industry. But a few years in, my fingers were itching to write. I enrolled in a fiction-writing workshop. Then another, and another. I was hooked. I suddenly saw with perfect clarity what I was meant to be doing. I began writing a middle grade mystery, and applied to graduate programs in Creative Writing.”

After graduating in May of 2005 with an MFA in Writing for Children from The New School, Caroline got an agent and sold her first book, *Cassie Was Here*. It was published in May of 2007. Her second book, *Isabelle’s Boyfriend*, came out in September 2008.

Hickey now lives in Washington, DC with her husband and young daughter. She is a member of *The Longstockings*, a workshopping and blogging group of middle grade and young adult writers (<http://thelongstockings.com>).

For more information, please visit her website at <http://carolinehickey.com>

Q&A with the Author

Where do you get your ideas?

I get ideas all the time. I hear a great line or a great name, and I immediately think of ways to use it in a book. I have lists of titles and character names and one-line plot synopses that I'm just waiting to get around to. I wish there were more hours in the day so I could use them all.

How did you get the idea for *Cassie Was Here*?

I started writing *Cassie Was Here* when I was in graduate school. The idea began with the image of a girl crouched behind some honeysuckle bushes, watching a taxi pull up to a house and waiting to see who got out. Then I realized there was someone next to the girl, and that someone was an imaginary friend. That scene is where I originally started the book. In my second draft, I started the story a day earlier, so we get to know Bree a little bit before she meets Cassie.

How did you get the idea for *Isabelle's Boyfriend*?

I knew I wanted to write about first love gone terribly wrong, the way it often does when you're fifteen. I also wanted to write about a protagonist who was torn in a lot of different directions—between family members, friends, etc. I started the book with Taryn and her dog meeting the guy of her dreams, who happens to belong to someone else, and the rest of the story unfolded from there.

What is your writing process?

I'm a rewriter. I write many, many drafts. I usually start a book with an image or a character that I can see very clearly. Then I let myself write, getting to know the character and the story they want to tell. My first drafts are meandering and awful. But, at the end, I've

usually figured out what my subconscious has been up to, and I can see the real arc of the story. So I go back and completely rewrite the book, focusing on the plot. Then I do it again, focusing on the characters and their motivations. Then I do it again, polishing up scenes and dialogue. Then comes copyediting. It's a long, long, process from first draft to final.

Why do you write for children?

Many, many reasons. First, because I love children's books more than non-children's books. Second, because it's challenging and satisfying to create a story that will keep kids reading all the way to the end. Third, because books are one of the ways children learn about the world, and for an author, it's exciting to know you are helping to shape your readers.

What is the hardest thing about writing?

Since I'm still a relatively new writer, I'd say the hardest thing for me is trusting the process. I know that it takes me many drafts to create a readable one, however, I still get frustrated when I start a new book and it doesn't immediately come out the way I want it to. I have to remind myself that each book is going to have its own learning curve, and that just because I've written three doesn't mean number four is going to be any easier.

What advice would you give aspiring writers?

Don't give up your day jobs! Being a writer takes many years of practice, study and dedication, and most published children's authors do not make enough to live on. Beyond that I would say read as many books in your target age group as you can, and learn as much about the publishing business as you can. While I don't think an MFA is a necessity by any means, for me it was the impetus to take my writing seriously, a chance to learn from a group of very talented writers, and a terrific introduction to ins and outs of book publishing.

What are some of your favorite children's books?

I have a million favorites, including *The Princess and the Goblin* (George MacDonald), *No Flying in the House* (Betty Brock), *The Witches* (Roald Dahl), *Catherine, Called Birdy* (Karen Cushman), Lois Lowry's *Anastasia* books, *The Egypt Game* (Zilpha Keatley Snyder), and everything by Beverly Cleary.

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