



Dear Carolina

Kristy Woodson Harvey

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"DEAR CAROLINA is Southern fiction at its best....Beautifully written."--*New York Times* bestselling author Eileen Goudge

A moving debut novel about two mothers--one biological and one adoptive--from a compelling new voice in Southern women's fiction.

One baby girl.

Two strong Southern women.

And the most difficult decision they'll ever make.

Frances "Khaki" Mason has it all: a thriving interior design career, a loving husband and son, homes in North Carolina and Manhattan--everything except the second child she has always wanted. Jodi, her husband's nineteen-year-old cousin, is fresh out of rehab, pregnant, and alone. Although the two women couldn't seem more different, they forge a lifelong connection as Khaki reaches out to Jodi, encouraging her to have her baby. But as Jodi struggles to be the mother she knows her daughter deserves, she will ask Khaki the ultimate favor...

Written to baby Carolina, by both her birth mother and her adoptive one, this is a story that proves that life circumstances shape us but don't define us--and that families aren't born, they're made...

Dear Carolina Details

Date : Published May 5th 2015 by Berkley

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From Reader Review Dear Carolina for online ebook

Janis Skoczylas says

You know, I really wanted to like this book. I am Lenoir Co. born and raised, and I have recently moved back to Lenoir County after venturing out to other parts of the world for college and whatnot. So I know Kinston. And I know the Kinston "elite," and I know Kinston PWT (poor white trash for those not in the know). So I was excited to read a book about my people, and my home, and to read a book by a fellow ECU English MA person... but this book was just meh. I think the author has talent, and I think the book's plot had promise, although it was a wee bit predictable and melodramatic, but the story just fell apart with the two main characters and with the dialogue/prose.

The characters: Khaki was just not a likable character, even though I could tell she was supposed to be likable. But I found her spoiled and pretentious, and just unrealistic, especially for Eastern NC. She was pretty, and super thin, and super smart, and really creative, and stylish, and she had great taste in everything. And she was rich. And wore lots of designer clothes (and let's be honest... rich women in Kinston do NOT wear Chanel on the regular--- try Tory Burch and Lilly). And tons of jet setting friends from all over (strangely, not very many in Kinston). Her husband was perfect and LOVED her soooooo much. Gag me. Her struggles? Getting preggo (they had been trying for a while, but hadn't done any real treatments, so not a total struggle), balancing her AMAZING life in Manhattan and Kinston (really?), and she had some dead hubby issues mixed in with some mommy issues. None of these issues are really explored or dealt with. And then there's Jodi who is apparently a diamond in the rough. Alcoholic mom, dead daddy, psycho ex, trashy best friend. Pretty (but can't dress... but don't worry, Khaki can give her hand-me downs) and smart (should have gone to college, but can't escape the Kinston curse). At 19, has already been to rehab for drinking (how did she pay for rehab????), which I found unrealistic. She was buying booze with a fake id in a small town? yeah, right. Everyone knows everyone in a small town--- and if the author wanted to have her have an addiction problem in ENC, meth would have been soooooooo much more realistic. But meth is gross and Jodi wasn't gross---she just happened to be born into white trash (which is kinda gross, but not meth gross). So I guess meth was too real for a likable main character. But anyway, Jodi at 19 with crappy family (mom and live-in boyfriend) is apparently a canning and gardening genius. And a writer. So a hidden gem underneath all that walmart clothing. I just found both Khaki and Jodi to be caricatures, rather than fully developed characters.

The prose/dialogue- Hokey and cliché. Jodi and Khaki were both really fond of these little hokey/country colloquialisms: "I was scareder than a weed in a field a' Roundup" for example. There were tons. Seriously. And I get that southern folks love a euphemism and a cliché, but it was ridiculous how many were in this book. Jodi especially did not talk like she was a real person. 19 year olds in Kinston do NOT talk like that. I'm sorry, I know people NOT from the south think we all talk like that, but we don't. Let's stop perpetuating that notion. I mean, really?

I know I probably should separate the real Kinston from the Kinston in this novel. This novel wasn't about my people--- it was just a random setting for these characters apparently, and NOT about Kinston people. Because Jodi and Khaki aren't Kinston folks, trust me. I did think it was neat to see some of my favorite Kinston places mentioned. Shout out to Ken's Grill, for real. lol.

I will say, I do think this author has promise, but she has got to learn to reign in the hokey and learn to edit. A lot of the book read as though it was a fantasy of a bored housewife (What if I was rich and a talented interior decorator, and wore great clothes and and and????) rather than a realistic novel. I will try this author

again, just for the Kinston/ECU connection, but I'm hoping this author's next offering is a little more substantial/less hokey/less fantasy.

Laura Rash says

I loved that this was written to Carolina! Totally unique to think of her reading her story. A true testament that family is what you make it. Whether you're blood related or not. A wonderfully written book!

Jennifer ~ TarHeelReader says

I wish I could give this more than 5 stars! When I saw the title of this book, I secretly hoped the author was a North Carolina native like me, and even more, that she went to UNC-CH (aka Carolina) like I did. And both are true! I savored every word of this book as I highlighted local places that I know and love. The Oceanana reference with the playground took me back to a time when I was a child on that somehow mystical, but very dated, playground. The local references were really just icing on the cake, though. The book was well-written and flowed so smoothly and easily. I fell in love with every character from Jodi and Khaki, down to Pauline, Buddy, and Graham. There was so much love in this story, so much generosity of love; I somehow knew the entire time I read it that all great things were going to happen, and I really needed that with this book! It was refreshing for things to work out well, and people to do above and beyond what you would expect; all for the love of a beautiful child. I will buy any book Kristy Woodson Harvey writes. I cannot wait for her next one to come out.

Melissa says

It's not often I go into a story knowing the outcome, but it worked well with Dear Carolina. It was well-told with lots of anticipation along the way, as well as some situations that I didn't expect. Kristy Woodson Harvey had great use of description that made it easy to visualize characters and settings, without taking away from the story. I enjoyed reading both Khaki and Jodi's perspectives, but felt I could relate more to Khaki, as we are similar in a lot of ways.

I know a lot of readers would want to tell Khaki that she already has a child so why is she complaining about not being able to have more? Some would tell her she should be grateful to at least have one. I kind of felt that way initially, even as a mom of three, just knowing what some women go through just to possibly have one child. However, I also know from experience that I wanted more than one to begin with and I have friends and acquaintances who lost babies after their first was born healthy. The women this happened to were devastated, even though they already had a child. This also recently happened during one of my favorite shows and I was able to sympathize with the character it was happening to. I couldn't even imagine what they (including the TV character) were going through but know I would have felt the same if I weren't able to give my child at least one sibling. So I understood how Khaki felt about wanting to add to her family.

My only criticisms were too many metaphors with southern references that I didn't quite comprehend and that things seemed too easy for both Khaki and Jodi at times. I wanted to see them struggle a bit more before succeeding. Neither criticism took away from my enjoyment of this story though.

A sweet and heartwarming story that is perfect for fans of Beth Hoffman. Hard to NOT smile while reading it. It's a comfort read that you'll definitely want to check out.

My movie casting ideas for *Dear Carolina*:

Khaki: Emma Stone (<http://imdb.to/1LYdKnQ>)

Jodi: Hailee Steinfeld (<http://imdb.to/1PQsoPB>)

Buddy: Luke Bryan (<http://bit.ly/1Gu3zqL>)...I know he's a country singer, but if Tim McGraw can act, then so can he!

Sonja Yoerg says

As a cynical Northerner, I typically resist having my heartstrings yanked. I confess, however, that *Dear Carolina* did a job on me.

The chapters alternate between the voices of the birth mother, Jodi (young, naïve and short on self-worth), and the adoptive mother, Khaki (bold, loving and lucky), telling Carolina her story, and theirs. The structure is ambitious because we know the outcome at the start, yet Harvey expertly weaves tension into each chapter, finding angles to the storyline that glued me to the page. And the writing is impeccable.

Dear Carolina is a very sweet story, no doubt about it, but also a very real one. Told with humor and compassion, it explores the nuances of motherhood, family and devotion in a completely fresh way. Take it to the beach, or curl up with it in your favorite sunny chair, then pass it on to someone you love. It's that sort of story.

Laurie Carlson says

What a BEAUTIFUL story, beautifully written! One of my FAVORITE books of ALL time! This is a KEEPER! A book I WILL read a second time! I took my sweet time savoring every word I read in this book! My Take:

5+++ Stars!!!

If I can recommend one book in which you become so emotionally invested in, THIS IS IT! Why? I actually became so invested in the lives of these characters that I had a feeling one of the characters who was pregnant was going to have a girl, I just had this feeling, when later I realized I was only reading a BOOK, and this was NOT real life! Well, THIS is THAT book I am recommending to read! I realized how amazing the writing is in this book, that this author is pretty darned amazing that these characters felt like 'real life' people! Koodles to this author, Kristy Woodson Harvey!

This book is told in alternating chapters between Khaki and Jodi as they write to baby Carolina, and as you are reading each chapter, you look forward to the next, yet sometimes you don't want the one you are reading to end. You want that character to keep talking. The chapters in which Jodi talks, you can really hear that southern accent the way it is written. This grows on you, too, and you definitely knew who was talking in which chapter!

This book is about Khaki and Graham who could not get pregnant with a second child they wanted so terribly. They had Alex, from Khaki's first husband, Ben, who passed away. She met and married Graham, who happened to be a cousin to nineteen year old Jodi.

Jodi ended up getting pregnant by her abusive boyfriend, Ricky, but she had no possible way in this world to be able to raise this child, and she knew it, too. Despite Jodi thinking she wasn't very smart, she was much smarter and wiser when it came to 'life' than what she would even give herself credit for. Jodi is a realist. Rose colored glasses were not in her vocabulary, nor did she know what they were. She faced life head-on, bravely, and with a vengeance.

Jodi was an alcoholic, living with her mother and her mother's new boyfriends every time the wind blew a different way, in a trailer park, drinking like fishes, including Jodi, that Jodi didn't know how she even grew up safely if it wasn't for her Grandma. The saddest part was Jodi did not want to raise her child like that, or even near it, but how could she possibly change that fact? She couldn't, so she was going to have an abortion.

Khaki and Graham tried everything known to man to try to get pregnant. Khaki was a little sad when someone like Jodi got pregnant, yet she could not. She had no problem getting pregnant with Alex, so this sure did baffle her to no end as to why she could not get pregnant with Graham. Khaki is an Interior Designer, and every one of her chapters starts out talking about design as it relates to the story she is telling to Carolina. She has an apartment in expensive Manhattan that she flies to every once about every other week, and in-between her home is with Graham and Alex in North Carolina. Graham and Khaki decided they would help Jodi with Carolina, and Jodi was all for it.

Later they approached Jodi about adopting Carolina, and she could still be a part of her life with them. It seemed simple, but it was still hard for both of them, issues popped up with Carolina's father. but there was one thing they both agreed on completely, and that was, 'you can never have enough people who love you'. Again, I HIGHLY recommend this book! You will get lost inside of it, and maybe you'll do what I did and mix up reality with fiction!

Some of my favorite quotes from this book are:

"I was scarder than a weed in a field a' Roundup."

"Having somebody love you so much they caint' even leave you for vacation is the best feelin'."

And so many more! Read this one!

I received this book for review purposes from the publisher, Berkley, in exchange for an honest review.

Andrea says

3.5 Stars ?

I found a new feel-good author!

These characters were wonderful, albeit full of sugary sweetness. It doesn't matter though, they were precisely what I needed. And....the awful thing I desperately didn't want to happen, DIDN'T. Oh, the relief!

Sue says

Dear Carolina is a love story of two mothers to their infant daughter. One mother is the biological mother, Jodi, who has made some bad decisions in her life and is poor in money but so rich in spirit and hope for the future. The other mother is the mother who adopts Carolina, Khaki. She is ambitious, nurturing, caring and loving. Both of the mothers love their daughter and Khaki realizes very early that 'you can never have too many people to love you'. I live in North Carolina and these characters are so well done that I feel like they are people that I know in my daily life. Jodi is a serious gardener and canner and Khaki is a designer who has great thoughts and a heart of gold. The book made me laugh out loud and it made me cry. These are

characters and this is a book that I won't forget and I really look forward to Kristy Harvey's next book. I see great things ahead for her and for her readers.

Tammy says

A beautifully written southern novel with humor, compassion, devotion, heartbreak and love. *Dear Carolina* is a very sweet story about the importance of family and close friendships that touches your soul. If you're looking for a heart-warming summer read this is it.

Laura McNeill says

I've added Kristy Woodson Harvey to my list of favorite Southern authors! Her delightful debut is an inspiring story of friendship, love, humor, and personal growth, centering on two mothers--one birth and one adoptive. Khaki (Frances Mason), who has a son, a loving husband, Graham, and a burgeoning career, longs for another child. When Jodi, Graham's young cousin, comes to terms that she cannot raise her baby alone, Khaki and Graham step in to raise Carolina.

Khaki truly embodies one of the book's messages, "you can never have too many people to love you," by selflessly ensuring that Carolina will always have a lasting and meaningful relationship with her birth mother. This sweet story is told in alternating voices by Khaki and Jodi, who write letters to their beloved child. "*Dear Carolina*" is a novel that stays with you long after you finish the last page. Highly recommended.

Jenny Belk says

Dear Carolina is the debut book by up and coming Kristy Woodson Harvey. She's a Carolina girl so she knows what she writes. This is the story of two mothers-one birth and one adoptive. The two women bond after the birth mother becomes pregnant. Being nearly destitute and from an abusive family, Jodi worries about how her new baby will be raised, all the things she wants for her that she is certain she can't provide properly. Khaki who already has a child, longs for another. The decision is made that Khaki will adopt and raise Jodi's baby and provide a stable upbringing and a loving home.

This book is a beautiful story about unselfish love, growing up and coming to terms with what needs to be done to change your life for the better. Vivid, memorable characters. I thoroughly enjoyed this book. I highly recommend it.

Kathryn says

4.5 stars. I first noticed this book when I read a review by Kristin at Always With a Book, I made a note of it to read sometime in the future. When I was browsing our local library shelves there sitting facing me was a pristine copy of the book, so I felt the time had come to read it. The library rose a few more degrees in my

esteem, for already having it on its shelves here in New Zealand!

Jodi Thomas says on the cover - "Characters with rich, complicated lives.... Beautifully shows how a family comes to be". As Jodi Thomas is a favourite author of mine, I needed no further incentive to read.

Each chapter is alternately spoken by two women. It is addressed to baby Carolina, and while that sounds a little odd it works perfectly. Frances Mason - Khaki to those closest to her, is a very successful interior designer, mother of Alex and wife of Graham. They live mostly on a farm in Nth Carolina, but they also have an apartment in New York. Khaki has it all and is very happy, but the one thing she would love is another child to add to their family.

Jodi is a cousin of Geoffrey and while he has had a well adjusted life, Jodi has not been so lucky with an alcoholic mother and a father who died. Jodi also reaches for the bottle when things become stressful. So when she is pregnant at nineteen, she fears that her baby is going to end up having the same kind of life as she has had, and she doesn't want that. With an aching heart Jodi comes to a decision that she hopes will give Carolina the love and sense of family she wants for her.

Khaki has a huge loving heart, and as the story progresses she makes decisions that are right for her and her family, so by the end she is very grounded. Jodi - so young, has a wonderful sense of planting and growing and is an expert in canning and jam making. She knows if she can keep busy she may have a chance of overcoming the need to drink. She too has a big heart and I enjoyed her evolution during the span of the novel.

I really enjoyed this book, I think anyone who enjoys women's fiction, and the exploration of parenthood, love, trust and strength and growth will find it right down their alley. It's hard to believe this is a debut novel, it's so accomplished, totally agree with Jodi Thomas!

Judy Collins says

4.5 Stars. **DEAR CAROLINA**, a stunning southern. witty, and compelling debut of love and sacrifice by *Kristy Woodson Harvey*, of two mothers, one biological, one adoptive—with plenty of love to go around for one little girl, “You can never have too many people to love you.”

Frances “Khaki” Mason had it all with homes in both North Carolina and Manhattan. A successful interior designer, a loving husband, Graham and a son, Alex. She has the Best of two worlds (city and country). However, she has been unable to conceive a second time. They have tried everything and still coming up empty, very disappointed when they both wanted a house full of kids.

Jodi, is a 19-year old cousin of Grahams; an alcoholic, out of rehab, now pregnant, and a boyfriend long gone. She goes to Khaki for money for an abortion. Khaki, cannot believe here is a girl, who does not need to be pregnant, while she would give anything to be able to get pregnant. However, sometimes God just has other plans in mind. Adoption was not something she had ever thought about.

Speaking to baby Carolina in alternating chapters from voices of both Khaki and Jodi, with letters to their beloved daughter, from two totally different women, with one common interest – the best for their baby girl.

Written with southern charm, humor, compassion, and sensitivity, Dear Carolina will warm your heart.

Being a Southern gal and designer myself (native of Charlotte, NC), spending most of my adult career in Atlanta, GA, and South Florida, home for the last ten years. I loved the cuisine, gardening, design, and Carolina southern references--Kristy KNOWS the South and everything which makes the South so spectacular! (would make a great gift for mother's day).

An author to follow, she will be a big hit as a top southern author--always enjoy her design blog, Design Chic, an avid follower on social media.

Well-done, a beautiful debut! Look forward to many more bestsellers to come. The next *Dorothea Benton Frank*, *Patti Callahan Henry*, *Mary Alice Monroe*, *Wendy Wax* and *Mary Kay Andrews* (my favorites)--*meets Emily Giffin*. "Elin Hilderbrand of the South."

My favorite part is Palm Beach from Jodi's eyes. I can view The Breakers Hotel and Worth Avenue, from my apartment window. I had to smile seeing Jodi there, experiencing all the luxury it has to offer. Kristy makes everything so witty, special and charming---loved it!!! Jodi and Khaki together -Priceless! Have never laughed so hard. All about second chances.

After reading the e-book, purchased the audiobook. Narrated by *Carla Mercer-Meyer and Meredith Mitchell*--outstanding southern performance! If you enjoyed *Dear Carolina*, a mother's love (strong bonds and sacrifices), also recommend, *Amy Hatvany's* *Somewhere Out There*.

Just wait until you read Kristy's upcoming *LIES AND OTHER ACTS OF LOVE*, Coming, April 5, 2016. Top Southern Fiction of 2016! (5 Stars) It is Amazing! Enter Giveaway Apr 5-15.

JDCMustReadBooks

Tamara says

Review Originally Posted:Traveling With T

****Strong debut. Heart-tugging. Good read.****

This book was sent to Traveling With T for review consideration.

Dear Carolina

Khaki Mason. Southern. Interior Designer. Does not take "no" for an answer. Besides the death of her first husband, Khaki is the personification of the words "charmed life".

Jodi, Khaki's husband's cousin, is not living the charmed life. She's the daughter of an alcoholic. Her father has recently died. She's in love with a man who is content to let her foot his bills and still think it's ok to talk down to her. And she's an alcoholic herself.

What do these 2 women have in common?

Carolina.

When Jodi tells Khaki she's pregnant, Khaki- in her desire for babies- thinks it's wonderful news. Khaki is firmly convinced that Jodi, with some help, will be able to be a good mom to her child.

But after one particular horrifying incident- both Jodi and Khaki have to consider that baby Carolina might have a better life elsewhere.

Part love story to sweet Carolina, part empowerment for chasing your dreams- Kristy Woodson Harvey's 2 main characters, Khaki and Jodi are fabulously layered. On the outside they are different, but you begin to see that both of them have a strength about them that makes you think of the phrase "steel magnolias".

Traveling With T's Thoughts:

DEAR CAROLINA will tug at your heart-strings in so many ways. 2 women who love Carolina decide to do what is best for Carolina- and ultimately show what family really is all about. Jodi, growing up how she did, has not known a real family. Khaki has never not known a real family. But these two women are determined that Carolina will have the best family possible- and have a relationship with both her birth and adoptive mother.

Because, as it's pointed out in this book: You can never have too much love in your life.

I expected this to be a tear-jerker at times- but it really wasn't. It was tugging at my heart-strings- but mainly it's a sweet book.

The characters: Kristy Woodson Harvey nails Jodi's way of talking. I could hear her accent, her particular phrasing!

Bottom line: A particularly sweet debut that tells the stories of 2 women- 1 who firmly knows she is a steel magnolia and can do anything and the other, who through love and support, finds she's always had the tools to be a steel magnolia and to chase her dreams, no matter who told her otherwise.

Look for this debut in stores May 5th, 2015!

This book was sent to Traveling With T for review consideration by the author. All thoughts and opinions are mine alone.

Adria Cimino says

A touching story, told with simplicity, elegance and emotion. I really enjoyed this novel, the stories of two very different women who are brought together through the birth of a baby. Kristy Woodson Harvey is new voice in Southern Fiction and Women's Fiction absolutely worth discovering!
