



A Part to Play

Jennifer L. Fry

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When fifteen-year-old actress Lucy Carter loses her older sister in a car accident, her mother shuts down and her father can't hold the family together. Their only choice is to ship Lucy off to the Edmond School for Performing Arts. But boarding school is no cure for Lucy's grief. With failing grades, wooden stage performances, and curfew violations, Lucy is threatened with expulsion. For the once talented Lucy, it feels as though she has nowhere to turn.

One night, Lucy hears mysterious music drifting through the school's old heating system. The music leads her to a troubled but passionate songwriter whose brilliance gives her the strength to perform like never before. Yet their intense relationship puts Lucy in a precarious position: if she follows her muse, will she lose herself? And if she breaks it off, can she stand on her own again?

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From Reader Review A Part to Play for online ebook

Tracey (Life and Literature) says

Lucy Carter is fifteen years old when tragedy strikes her family. Her older sister Kate is killed in a car accident and Lucy's world is completely shattered. Her mother struggles with the most basic existence and her father can't hold the remainder of the family together, so the decision is made to send Lucy to the Edmond School for Performing Arts, boarding school. As much as her parents hope it will be just what Lucy needs, she is left feeling alone and unwanted.

Then one night Lucy hears music coming through one of the vents in the common room. She is drawn to it and sets out to find where it is coming from and who it is playing it. Her search leads her to Chris. Instantly attracted and drawn to each other, they both fill the voids in the others lives and help bring each others creativity to the surface.

I loved Lucy. You could feel her pain at not just losing her sister, but also her parents and the family dynamic. She acted with the exact emotions and feelings that you would expect of someone her age. Her relationship with Chris is intense to say the least. Her emotional conflict and struggles to find the strength for the decisions that she needed to make were heartfelt. And what a wonderful friend she finds in Isa. I loved her quirkiness and her ability to tell it like it is.

At no point did I know what was going to happen next in the story. With each turn of the page something completely unexpected was revealed to me. The author writes with such fluidity that it is with the utmost ease to be captured by and swept away in the story. A wonderful debut which I'm hoping the author will write a sequel to in the near future.

4.5/5 Stars!!

Review first posted at YA Book Addict... <http://youngadultbookaddict.blogspot....>

Rosemary Stoneman says

This book was truly a work of art. I have not had a book open up some of my buried emotions in a long time but this book did that and more. The writing flowed so much so that when I looked up I had gone through pages upon pages without looking away from the book. I guess the best way for me to explain why I loved this books is to do a pros and cons list.

Pros

* The characters were memorable and lovable. Lucy was an absolute jewel. She made me remember how I felt after the loss of a loved one and how everything changed yet I had to still be strong. Her growth from empty shell to a blossoming rose was breathtaking, I am sure it will stay with me for many years to come. Lucy's friend Isa is the kind of friend we all need. Someone who will talk sense into us when we need it most.

* Lucy relationship with her musician. I was not a fan of him because I could see the signs of where the relationship was going. But I applaud Ms. Fry for skillfully showing the relationship and the dynamics of it and why it is sometimes hard to say goodbye.

Cons

The book was much too short. Everything was done perfectly but now I want to know what happens next for Lucy and the rest of the cast. Does her mom get better? What happens in Lucy's junior year? What happens to Chris? I hope there is more to come on Lucy but until then I hope Ms. Fry has something else in the works that can move me like this.

*I was given a copy of the book by the author but I was not paid for my review.

Caitlin says

This review contains spoilers.

When the author first contacted me and asked me if I would be willing to give an honest review of her book in exchange for a free copy of the e-book version, I was ecstatic, to say the least, having never made a trade like that before. But I was also a bit worried; what if I didn't like it? Would I have the heart to give an honest review *then*? As I started reading that thought plagued my mind, but almost immediately it slipped away as I got caught up in the story and finding out what was going to happen next and how it would all end. I never expected to finish it as fast as I did, and I will admit that I blew off a bit of school work to read this book, but I must say it was well worth it.

So the story here is that Lucy Carter's one and only older sister Kate died in a car accident and her parents ship her off to a boarding school by the name of The Edmond School for Performing Arts, or ESPA, because the death of Kate has shaken the foundation of their family, of their very beings, to the core. Lucy's parents are separating, they can hardly be around her without thinking of Kate, and her dad figures there's nothing else left there for Lucy and it would be better for her to go to ESPA since she had been accepted and wanted to go there. B.A. - "Before Accident," as Lucy refers to it as - anyway but had changed her mind because she couldn't stand the thought of being away from her loving, together family. But since Lucy is now a sophomore and they usually only accept freshmen, her dad more or less buys her way into the school, which I think is a little like adding insult to injury, given the circumstances.

Lucy is to start her classes right away, as soon as she leaves the principal's office, and gets into life at ESPA. She goes to her classes, meets the school's resident mean-girl at lunch, makes a friend - Isabel, Isa for short, another theater major, and then later on Paige, - starts going through the motions of adjusting to life at this school, but her sister's death has impacted her greatly; she doesn't *care* anymore. Her grades start slipping, she can't act like she used to, she's ignoring her old friends from back home, she's just numb, angry at her parents for reacting to her sister's death the way they did and sending her away, and doesn't care about anything anymore.

But then one night Lucy is sitting in the common room studying like she's done every night when her room feels too small, only this night she decides against listening to her iPod and hears the far off sound of music coming up through a heating vent. She decides to investigate where and who it might be coming from and spends hours every night wandering through the maze of the school's basement - which is said to be haunted by the ghosts of a couple of students who died down there - searching for an answer to who's playing this wonderfully amazing music that has made Lucy feel and care again, that *inspires* her. And then when she finally finds specifically where the music is coming from, she discovers the maker of the music, a 17-year-old boy named Chris, (view spoiler). They inspire each other and are each convinced that they are what make the other amazing at their particular craft, acting for Lucy, music for Chris.

From the moment Lucy and Chris meet, the book takes us through their relationship and other aspects of Lucy's new life at ESPA as she tries to come to grips with everything that's going on and the new people and relationships in her life, how much things have changed since her sister died, dealing with her parents - who, she's convinced, don't want much to do with her anymore, - all while trying to keep Chris happy and her acting and grades at their best despite her sleep deprivation from her late nights with Chris.

I thoroughly enjoyed this book and the characters in it; I had some *really* strong feelings about a few of them, which just made the read that much more enjoyable, as I wanted to know more about them and what they were going to do next the entire time. Nicole, Isa, Chris, and Lucy. Each of them always managed to get a strong reaction out of me depending on what they were doing. I rarely had anything nice to say about Nicole and Chris, though; both of them rubbed me the wrong way, Nicole right off the bat, Chris not too long after him and Lucy meet. I went from thinking Chris was amazing and talented and hot and adorable - I have a thing for guys like him, you see, as I'm sure most girls probably do; damaged, but creative. - to thinking he was bi-polar and a "passive-aggressive fuck", as I noted on a sticky-note in the file whilst reading. Regardless, I know Chris did have a function and he was necessary in the story, so I shan't hate on him too badly. (view spoiler)

Quite frankly, I could barely tear myself away from this book for anything, and I believe other people who have read this just might be of similar opinions. So I gave it a four, because I liked the story, I liked that a lot of predictions that I made as I was reading turned out to be wrong so I never really knew what to expect next, I liked the characters, I liked that so many of them could get so many strong reactions out of me, I liked the different relationships the different characters had with each other, I liked that it all had its purpose, I liked the title, I *really* liked the cover, I liked a lot about this book. Now the reason I *only* gave it four and not five was because there was some stuff I *didn't* like about it. I didn't like the way things with Nicole and Lucy just ended like that, I didn't like that Lucy never really tells any of her friends about her sister dying and the real reason she started school there so late, I didn't like that we never get to know much about Paige and Isa and their home lives, their stories, I didn't like we didn't really find out much about Kate's accident that killed her, I didn't like that we never hear anything else about Lucy's friends from back home, I didn't like that some things just never really got explained or dealt with again...

Overall, however, I think it's safe to say that the positives definitely out-weigh the negatives here and I would strongly recommend reading this amazing book. I think you'll find it's definitely worth the read.

Jennifer Fry says

I am proud of A PART TO PLAY, my debut novel, because I stayed true to the story I set out to tell. It's a story of coping with loss, of the foolish things we do when we are wrapped up in our first love, of understanding a different paradigm within the parent-child relationship, and most importantly, of learning to believe in yourself.

Ironically perhaps, because she is not the lead in the story, my favorite character is Isa. She is spunky and insightful, brave and funny - everything I value in a friend. Even as the author, I didn't know fully how the story nor the characters would turn out. I got to know the characters as I wrote, and at the end of it all, Isa is the one who still makes me laugh out loud.

I wrestled with how much to reveal of Chris's character in this story. I wrote the book in a limited third person viewpoint, so we as the reader are only privy to what Lucy (the main character) knows. While I know Chris's back story well, he was a mirror to Lucy in a couple of ways; he is severely lacking in self-belief and, more to the point, he's ashamed of his past and therefore does not choose to talk about it. As a result, his character appears to lack depth in this story. But I don't feel that I'm done with him either - I want to see what happens to him after this story ends.

Even after reading my novel more times than I can count, I still appreciate the overall flow of the story, and I always find myself rooting for Lucy. I especially enjoyed having my book read to me while recording the audiobook version. There is something really magical about hearing someone else read my words, using the same inflection that I originally intended.

I've been a writer since I was old enough to write, but publishing my first novel has been the most amazing roller coaster ride of my life. Thank you to everyone for your reviews - I appreciate the criticism as much as the accolades. I can't wait to see what's next!

Jamie says

I was very excited when Ms. Fry asked me to read and review her debut book *A Part to Play*.

When I started the book, I was about 12% into it when I realized I had connected deeply enough with Lucy that I had already cried with and for her, laughed with her at some of the memories she shared, and genuinely felt for her and her family.

My first night of reading carried me through the early morning hours and over half of the book. I guess it's safe to say that I couldn't put it down. :)

As a mother, warning signs went up as I watched Lucy and Chris interact. I empathized with her parents, but Ms. Fry did such a great job of building Lucy's character that I was more connected to her and her journey through loss and back into the light that I didn't get so motherly.

Other than a few typos which weren't glaring due to the interesting journey of Lucy, I can't find anything to fault. In fact, I found myself trying to imagine what happens next, what Isa's back story is, how Paige and Isa grow and change, the relationship between Lucy and Nicole, etc.

Here's to hoping for a sequel.

Update: it's been a few weeks since I read *A Part to Play* and our local theater advertised that they were holding auditions for extras in a movie that will be filmed locally. I said to my husband "Oh, I know this girl who should try out! Her name is Lucy and she...crap, she's a character in a book!!!" We definitely laughed, but I realized then that Lucy's character was much better written than I previously had thought. She stayed with me....obviously.

Jocelyn Sanchez says

When I was asked to review this book by the author, to be honest I was really excited! I wanted to read the book because it looked amazing. So when I started reading, I was not disappointed, it was truly a fantastic book!

This book starts off with Lucy going to ESPA, a school for performing arts. Lucy was a very gifted actress, that was until her sister Kate died in a car accident. After that her parents sent her to ESPA because her mother couldn't move on, and her dad wasn't strong enough to hold the family together. The first couple of days at ESPA weren't great for Lucy, in fact she started failing her classes and couldn't perform well on stage because she doesn't know who she was now without her sister. She was drowning in sadness, until she heard the music. Beautiful music coming from the heating vents. Needing to find where her inspiration was coming from she followed the music, going through obstacles to find the musician. And then one day, She found him. A handsome musician named Chris. His music has given her the strength to perform again and feel for the first time since Kate's death. As Lucy and Chris start their relationship everything is great, but Lucy must now ask herself a question. Am I a good actress even without Chris?

This novel was a wonderful book, I could not put it down! I spent hours laughing, crying, and feeling all the emotions that Lucy went through in this book. I can't wait to see what the author, Jennifer L. Fry, comes up with next. The book was beautifully written and makes you really connect with the characters. I highly recommend this book to everybody, it was amazing!

Nicholas May says

"A Part To Play" is a very strong debut by Jennifer L. Fry, that at first look might look like another of many coming of age, teenage girl novels, but Fry quickly brings life to her main character, and makes us feel the very real pain of losing a family member. Fry opens a window into the family dynamic after it has been torn apart by grief, and fifteen-year old Lucy is the only one strong enough to stand up and move on through life, even though she doesn't realize that she is the strong one. It isn't until a very passionate, and very unhealthy, romance with a trouble musician that Lucy realizes where her strength comes from. Is it from the muse she has found in this talented, but tortured soul? Is it from inside herself? Is it from the memory of her sister, who always stood by Lucy's side? Will Lucy be able to be the strength that brings her family back from the brink?

I thoroughly enjoyed this book, and felt the pain when Lucy thought of her family and of her loss. I knew the joy in her heart when she was in love and was in the arms of the only person she could think about. Jennifer L. Fry brought out real emotions in me, the reader, and that takes a skilled writer to do. So debut novel or not, Fry is a name to watch and her characters are people you won't want to say goodbye to!

~*~Princess Nhyia~*~ says

I love this story. For too many reasons.

When I was asked to read this novel by Ms. Fry, I was excited to say the least. I couldn't put my finger on it but I knew I was going to love it. I could not stop reading this book. Jennifer, I tip my hat to you for sharing such a rich and heartfelt story. This book is packed with so much emotion it just resonates with you. I cried.

ALOT. Happy, sad, and angry tears.

So let me get to why I love this story.

The writing: It flows at an even pace. For such a short novel it is packed with information. You get a real feel for all the characters involved. What makes them tick and why.

The story: Lucy's voice in this story, it just draws you in. It makes you want to stay there. While being on this journey with her, you truly feel as if you're right there and I love that. Lucy is just your average, well rounded 15 year old girl, who is forced to weather the storms of unspeakable tragedy, alone. Something that would test the most seasoned woman, Lucy is basically left to deal with this on her own. A heart breaking thing, but unfortunately so common with these types of situations.

Chris: OMG! I love him and he broke my heart. He ticked me off for so many reasons, but especially at the end. I found myself thinking from the moment I met Chris, "Oh no! Has Jennifer read my journal?!" LOL

Chris is *my* first love. The only thing that's different, is their names. So reading this, I fell in love and my heart broke all over again. Beautiful and brutal all in the same breath for me.

I love how with this book you really don't know where the story is going to go. What is going to happen. But the journey is what keeps you captivated. Although this one had a bitter sweet ending for me, it was still a great close to Lucy's journey.

But I think what I love most about this one was the bottom line...

Sometimes things will happen for reasons we will never understand. And they rock our worlds to the very foundation of all that we hold sacred. Take us away from our paths and if we are not careful, keep us from finding it again. In the end it only matters what we choose and how we choose to go on.

I would DEFINITELY recommend this read.

You did wonderful on your debut Jennifer. See? All of your peers agree...

Charlene says

I feel there are two strong emotional arcs in this story that make up the heart of the narrative. The first is the loss of Lucy's sister in a car accident and the devastating effects on her family. The emotional realism of Lucy's deteriorating family is vivid and well-realized, and made me choke up multiple times. I felt like the author brilliantly captured the emotion of this family trauma and Lucy's efforts to cope drove the first part of the story.

In comparison, the second emotional arc - the romantic attachment between Lucy and Chris, the secret musician felt less well-built. It's insta-love on a certain level, although Lucy and Chris's emotional damage does explain their strong connection. I did feel that this part of the story could have been more effective dramatically if more time was spent on Lucy and Chris getting to know each other. And with Chris I would have liked to know more about his character - his history and what drives his behavior. The tension over Chris's volatile personality was perfectly pitched however, as I was very intrigued by his character.

This book was a quick read for me, because the author did a great job building the characters of Lucy and her family and I wanted to know more about how her relationship with Chris and her friends would help heal her. This is an inspiring story with realistic, contemporary drama and characters.

J.N. says

When fifteen-year-old actress Lucy Carter loses her older sister in a car accident, her mother shuts down and her father can't hold the family together. Their only choice is to ship Lucy off to the Edmond School for Performing Arts. But boarding school is no cure for Lucy's grief. With failing grades, wooden stage performances, and curfew violations, Lucy is threatened with expulsion. For the once talented Lucy, it feels as though she has nowhere to turn.

One night, Lucy hears mysterious music drifting through the school's old heating system. The music leads her to a troubled but passionate songwriter whose brilliance gives her the strength to perform like never before. Yet their intense relationship puts Lucy in a precarious position: if she follows her muse, will she lose herself? And if she breaks it off, can she stand on her own again?

A Part to Play is a YA debut novel from Jennifer L. Fry. Jennifer asked me to read and review her book. This in no way affects my opinion on the book. Many thanks to her for the chance to read and review. I'm going to try to review this without giving too much away.

At first, I wasn't sure if I was going to like this book. The beginning was a little slow, but once things picked up, I started to like it better. I liked the main character, Lucy, right away. The relationship between her and her parents was interesting and tragic. It was easy to feel for her. It helps that this story is set at a boarding school dedicated to the arts. I'm not sure what it is about settings like this, but I love them. The author did a great job at painting the setting to be what I imagine to be authentic.

I was a little worried about the love interest (Chris) in this. Chris is handsome, can play beautiful, inspiring music, but has a quick temper and somewhat possessive personality. I was afraid that he would be romanticized like some bad boy love interests tend to be in other books, but this isn't the case.

Lucy soon finds herself overwhelmed as she continues to deal with her sister's death, schoolwork, friends, theater roles, and a secret relationship with Chris by night. Lucy is one of those characters that you can't help but feel bad for. I really wanted to give that girl a hug. Lucy begins to have doubts about her intense relationship with Chris, fearing that if they aren't together, she will lose her inspiration and not be able to stand on her own two feet.

The relationship is one thing that really makes the book shine. Most books don't focus on relationships like the one Lucy and Chris have. I believe while Lucy's relationship is unhealthy, it is very realistic and many people should be able to relate to her plight. The characters are also very fleshed out, from Lucy's wacky friend, Isa, to Lucy's very dramatic theater teacher, and even the girl with a huge grudge against Lucy and her talent, Nicole. Even when I didn't like a character (Chris, Nicole), they were still strong enough to evoke some kind of emotion in me.

This didn't quite get five stars from me because I felt there were a lot of loose ends once the book was finished and although the writing didn't grab my heart, it was pretty good. Although there were some errors, there weren't enough to detract me from reading. I do like that Lucy tries to make amends with Chris and

Nicole, and that Lucy's relationship between her parents is getting stronger by the end of the book. There were a few parts where I felt there was a little too much "telling", but overall this was a very enjoyable, unique, and interesting story. Recommended.

Ruth Hill says

When I began reading this book, I was quite intrigued because I could not help but think of "The Phantom of the Opera." While it is certainly not the exact story, I think if you pick it up and read it, you will probably see what I mean. I actually had hoped it would be more like that story, but after all, the story had a much bigger message to get across than comparisons with that story.

As I read this book, I couldn't help but become engrossed in the story. After all, I love the theatre and music. Put those together, and it is a winning combination. I appreciated the fact the author dealt with how a family handled an unthinkable tragedy, and I was glad to see the resolution of the situation in the way it did. I was able to connect with the characters with virtually no trouble. The characters may have been somewhat stereotypical, but I did not see that as any real kind of problem.

I am grateful to say that there are no sex scenes in this book--that is always a relief. I could have done without the superfluous profanity, especially since this book's targeted audience is upper high school. I had considered whether I should mark the book down for this, but I chose not to.

Up until the last ten pages of the book, I had planned on giving this book a 4-star rating. But I knew when I read the conclusion that this book deserved the 5 stars. Why? Without giving anything away, Jennifer Fry has created a very strong female character who truly embraces who she is as a woman and a person. If you are looking for a book that is a typical young adult romance, you may wish to look elsewhere. This book is much more realistic, and you may not like the ending. I can honestly tell you that I was exuberant when I reached the end! Lucy is smarter as a fifteen-year-old than I was at the age of 30!

I was sent a copy of this book in exchange for my honest review. I was not financially compensated, and all opinions are 100 percent mine.

Stephanie says

POSSIBLE SPOILERS

I really enjoyed this book. I was ecstatic when Jennifer Fry messaged me asking me to read and review it. I thought that the concept was great. I did cry occasionally. Even though it was a quick read (took me about a day of on and off reading), I thought it was well worth it and it cured my boredom. (:

The story: I thought that the concept of an art school, especially one with dorm rooms, was a creative idea. Most stories that have a school setting take place in an average school, but this one specifically focuses on the characters' talents and definitely adds more depth to the characters and their story.

The family: I felt as if I could relate to the family problems in some way. Not in the fact that my sibling had died, but in the way that often it feels as if they don't care about me. It feels like they'd be happier sending me away than dealing with me. Every family has problems and this was greatly shown in the book, about how one occurrence can tear everything apart and change the world as you knew it. I also liked how Nicole's mother was brought into the story. It shows how words do hurt and that a person's parents have a major impact on their attitude and behavior.

The relationship: I have had my fair share of clingy relationships. While I have never pondered my love for the person: clinginess=major turnoff (it's over, sorry), I feel that many people can relate to this relationship in some way. Whether it be the clinging, the sneaking around, the anger, anyone who has dated is bound to have felt this. Chris, to sum it up simply, pissed me off. I would've left immediately after the first freakout. This might've just been me, but I was thinking throughout the entire book that Chris would be one of those guys that becomes so needy of his girlfriend that when she tries to end it he snaps and ends up murdering her. It would've been an interesting plot twist, to say the least.

But the story ended with a happily ever after (at least for Lucy) and that was perfectly fine. The book ended in a way I thought would lead to a sequel, which would make me very happy, and if there is a sequel, I would definitely like to know. I would especially love it if I could review that book too! (: Overall, I would definitely recommend this book to anyone who loves a nice, sweet, short and simple YA book.

Kelsy M says

i loved this book!

Mitsy says

Lucy is 15 and just lost her older sister. Her mother is unable to cope. Her father tries to do what's best and ships Lucy off to drama school. There, Lucy struggles with the loss of her sister and the abandonment she feels from her parents. After weeks of grieving, wooden performances in her drama class, and failing grades Lucy is put on academic probation. Then she hears music that awakens her inside and leads her to Chris.

This is a wonderful story of grieving, teen romance, and so much more. The characters are funny, real, and likeable. Yes, I even like Nicole and hope to see more of her. Lucy! Lucy is a super star! Seriously, movie please. Also, the ending begs for a series starring Lucy, because the girl is a star in every way! 4 or 5 book series?!

Yes, I love it! What a breath of fresh air! It feels as if the author has published 20 books already! When Jennifer asked me to read this, I was thrilled! I love A Part To Play. Thank you, Jennifer!

Ashley says

First and foremost, I really liked *A Part To Play* by Jennifer Fry. It was an easy read—language wise, but Fry delves into topics I hadn't really read about, and I commend her for it because these topics aren't always the easiest to read, let alone write.

The characters in *A Part To Play* aren't perfect. They fight with each other, have stupid arguments friends have because they're stressed out elsewhere and then make up five minutes later, and the characters each have their quirks.

From the start, the main character, Lucy is dealing with internal issues, captivating the reader right away. As we get more into the story, we are introduced to a love interest, who was cleverly dropped into a few scenes before we meet him. It's obvious to the reader the relationship between Lucy and Chris isn't a healthy one, but Lucy and Chris still delve into their relationship. I think Lucy and Chris's toxic relationship is something Fry handles very delicately and very well for what this relationship turns into. She weaves enough hints for the reader to realize what this relationship will probably end in, but you're still not sure.

I also liked how Fry treated Lucy's mother. While written in third person, readers still get a skewed view of Lucy's mother from Lucy, who is angry with her mom and hurt by her. I liked how these issues are addressed and dealt with, as opposed to chalking it up teenage angst.

Another thing Fry does well is how much Lucy actually felt her age throughout this whole story. Most characters I come across feel as if they're older than they are, but Lucy doesn't. Yes, she has moments where she does channel an older mentality, but for the most part Lucy feels like a high school student. And I appreciated that.

The only thing I wish that was addressed more is Chris. It is hinted he has a mental illness of sorts (maybe only I have gotten that vibe), but it is never really addressed once he cracks. He ships off and that is that. I wish I had some more insight on that, but other than that I had no qualms with Fry's *A Part To Play*. I suggest buying your own copy and settling in to read it. It's a great story that deserves to be heard, and I am looking forward to more from Fry.
