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FOREWORD REVIEW ♥♥♥♥♥ YOUNG ADULT FICTION

Picture Perfect

Linda Bernson
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Cassie Talbert is used to mixing oil paints, but she's not familiar with mixed-up hormones that are causing her changing emotions toward her childhood buddy, Justin. She and Justin have confided in each other, played together, and enjoyed each other's company since they were small. He's a handsome, down-to-earth, creative photographer, who frequently takes candid shots of Cassie. She's a talented artist, funny, smart, and deeply concerned that her parents are having major financial problems.

She decides to enter an art show and give the $5,000 prize to her parents. She's also aware that a conceited, "popular" girl is chasing after Justin. Cassie is surprised at her sudden jealous feelings and becomes aware of how Justin's casual touch affects her.

As she tries to understand her emotions, Cassie goes to the beach with a sketchpad and pencils. Unintentionally, she draws Justin, and then adds herself, holding his hand. She knows it is one of her best works, even if it is not created with her usual oils.

As the art show draws near, Cassie discovers that her eight-year-old brother has destroyed her intended entry. Desperate to save the family, she decides to enter the drawing she made of herself and Justin, but fears that displaying it will announce her feelings to the world, ruining their friendship.

The dean of an art school raves about her entry before the show opens and encourages Cassie to visit his campus for an interview. As she tries to explain that the drawing is not in her normal, more formal style, the dean says that art is spontaneous and that to be successful "you have to paint from the heart—you have to feel good about the emotions that you are portraying in the work that you create." That is good advice for artists and, importantly, for teens coping with spontaneous hormones.

This teen romance, the first title in a new series for girls ages eight to fourteen, uses sweetness and substance in its exploration of the changes that take place in early adolescence.
LINDA SALISBURY (November / December 2001)

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