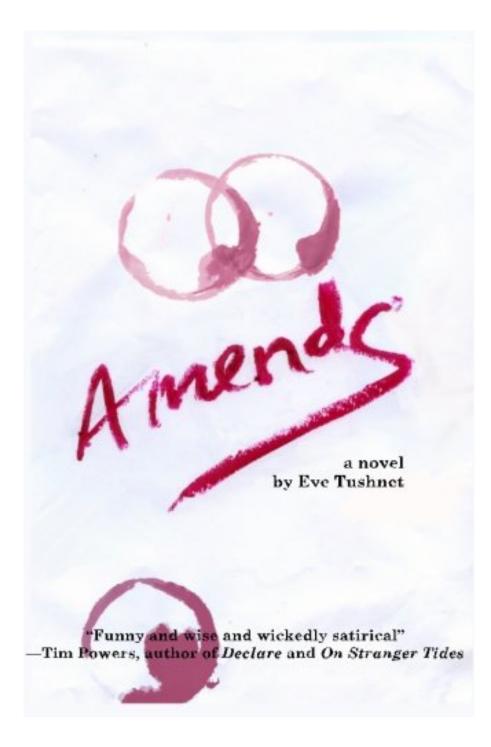


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Review

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A month in rehab would be stressful enough without a television audience. When the ramshackle cast checks in for "Amends," a new reality series about alcoholism and recovery, they don't know if they've been cast as villains or potential redemption arcs. Over the course of the show they learn what God sees when he shuts his eyes, how to appreciate the comforts of hallucination, and what it looks like when a wolf fights a troll. A conservative journalist woos a homeless Ethiopian visionary. A teen hockey star licks a human heart. And a collections agent pays some of his own oldest and saddest debts. From backhanded compliments to accidental forgiveness, "Amends" proves that there's a place you can go when you've given up on reality: reality TV.

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Most helpful customer reviews

10 of 10 people found the following review helpful. Brilliantly witty, but also piercingly truthful about forgiveness

By Leah L.

Eve's first novel is excellent. I read it for the first time on a plane and was sorely tempted to wake up the stranger who was my seatmate, so I'd have the pleasure of reading some of her one-liners aloud (just from the first page "He had a dilapidated body and a face like the last days of the Raj: jowly, discredited, eager for the final defeat.")

But this isn't a book that got distracted by it's own cleverness. When anything tips close to pastiche, it tends to because I'm seeing through the eyes of one of the characters, all busily trying to rewrite the story of their own lives, and (most of them) pretty ready to believe that tragedy can be farce, if you tell it well enough.

The book delivers on the title. What the characters, and I wind up remembering in tranquility is what it looks like for forgiveness (or the initial wound that necessitated it) to be an ongoing act of love, not a "successful" act of closure, that makes a relationship so tidy that you can call it finished. I'm confident that this book will bear fruit (gradually and weirdly) in my life.

4 of 4 people found the following review helpful.

Come for the characters, stay for the rehab

By Ryan

In AMENDS, Eve Tushnet manages to balance a heavy dose of poignancy with an equal helping of humor and wit. I am a sucker for this combination, so I loved this book. The heavier themes of the book have to do with substance abuse, which does not figure prominently in my background, but the characters' struggles and pain were still relatable to me. As for the humor, I found Eve's writing to be deliciously dry, with smart, sharp jokes, sly irony, and a subtle delight in the absurd. I was laughing out loud quite a bit as I read. If you don't care about anything else in the book, I still recommend it for the humor.

The characters were delightfully portrayed, and Eve played them off each other well as an ensemble cast. Each one of the main characters is singular and memorable, from the sanctimonious wolf-girl to the Ethiopian transplant and even the puckish jock. I feel like I could have read a book about each one of them.

My only real criticism is that sometimes the narrative strays from being about the characters to being about the rehab process. For example, some of the therapy sessions are narrated and these parts begin to feel like Eve is instructing us on rehab therapy concepts, using the characters as hand-puppets. This is probably a great way to train therapists (and it was in fact educational to me, which I don't want to sound unappreciative of), but I was looking for a novel about the characters. Like I said, though, most of the novel delivers, especially toward the end, where they are out of rehab and coping with real life. (Importantly, the novel does not end when the rehab ends.)

tl;dr - Simultaneously hilarious and touching: a good read.

- P.S. Eve, if you're reading:
- Bentley rocks my world!
- Dylan & Gair 4ever!!!!

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