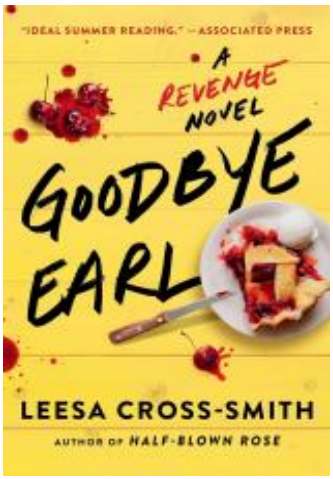
Goodbye Earl: A Revenge Novel

by Leesa Cross-Smith



About the Book

Four women take fate into their own hands in this big-hearted story of friendship, resilience and revenge on monstrous men, from the award-winning author of HALF-BLOWN ROSE.

Taking inspiration from the infamous, empowering song, GOODBYE EARL follows four best friends through two unforgettable summers, 15 years apart.

In 2004, Rosemarie, Ada, Caroline and Kasey are in their final days of high school and on the precipice of all the things teenagers look forward to when anything in life seems possible...from falling in love, to finding their dream jobs, to becoming who they were meant to be.

In 2019, Kasey has returned to her small Southern hometown of Goldie for the first time since high school --- and she still hasn?t told even her closest friends the truth of what really happened that summer after graduation, or what made her leave so abruptly without looking back. Now reunited with her friends in Goldie for a wedding, she?s determined to focus on the simple joy of being together again. But when she notices troubling signs that one of them might be in danger, she is catapulted back to that fateful summer. This time, Kasey refuses to let the worst moments of her past define her; this time, she knows how to protect those she loves at all costs.

Uplifting, sharp-edged and unapologetic, GOODBYE EARL is a funeral for all the ?Earls? out there --- the abusive men who think they can get away with anything, but are wrong --- and a celebration of enduring sisterhood.

Discussion Guide

1. When Kasey returns to Goldie for the first time in 15 years, she expresses many conflicting emotions. ?How could the place she?d grown to hate so much look so pretty? How could even the rotten parts make her wistful?? How does this

complex sense of home shape her character? Do you find Kasey?s attitude toward her hometown relatable?

2. This story is told in parallel timelines and several different points of view, with the narrative jumping back and forth between 2004 and 2019, as well as between RACK?s perspectives. What impact do these choices have on the book and how you experience it?

3. Rosemarie prides herself on being an open and honest person, but she keeps several weighty secrets over the course of the novel. How do these secrets affect her relationships with her loved ones?

4. What are the different ways love and loyalty are expressed in this book?

5. Ada is the main person taking care of her mother in the 2019 timeline, and she eventually has to ask her brothers for more support. What factors do you think contribute to the expectations --- either explicit or implicit --- that Ada?s family has for her?

6. How is Caroline?s relationship to motherhood impacted by her relationship with her own mother? What other kinds of mother-daughter relationships do we see?

7. GOODBYE EARL?s subtitle is ?A Revenge Novel.? Discuss the role of revenge in the book. How does each girl/woman justify it? When do you think revenge is necessary? Do you agree with the characterization of RACK?s actions as ?revenge,? or would you describe them in a different way?

8. Rosemarie, Ada and Kasey all have different ways of coping with their emotions after they murder Trey. What do their reactions say about their characters?

9. Many people in the town of Goldie are quick to jump to Caroline and the rest of RACK?s defense when Trey is found dead. What other benefits are there to this type of small-town community? What drawbacks are there?

10. What are the many ways women in this novel demonstrate agency?

11. How does Rosemarie?s cancer affect her perspective on life?

12. Music plays a big role in GOODBYE EARL, from the novel?s name to the mentions of other songs and artists scattered throughout the story. What were the most fundamental songs of your own teenage years? Do you return to them as an adult?

Author Bio

Leesa Cross-Smith is a homemaker and the author of seven books. She was longlisted for the 2022 Mark Twain American Voice in Literature Award and the 2021 Joyce Carol Oates Prize. Her third novel, HALF-BLOWN ROSE, received the Coups de C?ur recognition from the American Library in Paris and was the Amazon Editors? Spotlight pick for June 2022. It was also the inaugural pick for Amazon Editorial Director Sarah Gelman?s book club, Sarah Selects,

and a Barnes & Noble Book Club pick. She lives in Kentucky with her husband and two children.

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