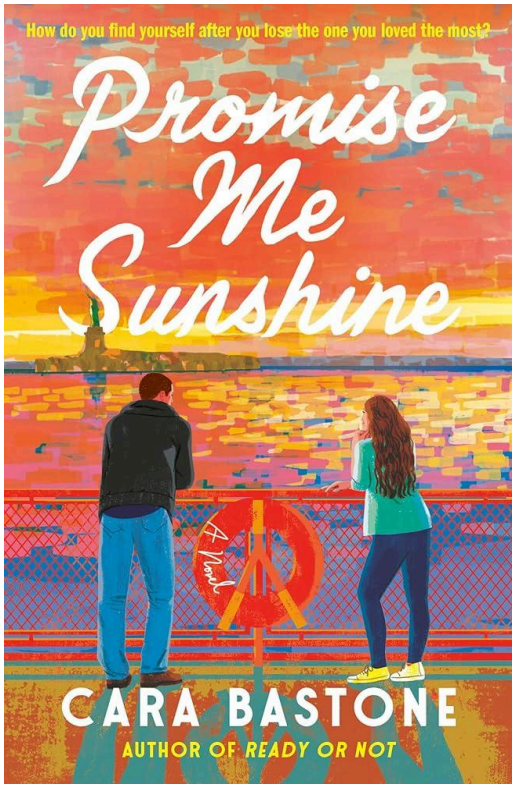


NATIONAL BESTSELLER • Grieving the loss of her best friend, a young woman's life is turned upside down when she meets a grumpy stranger who swears he can help her live again, in this heartwarming, slow-burn romance by the author of *Ready or Not*.

A BEST BOOK OF THE YEAR: NPR, Elle, *Library Journal,* New York Public Library, *Seattle Times*

Lenny's a bit of a mess at the moment. Ever since cancer stole away her best friend, she has been completely lost. She's avoiding her concerned parents, the apartment she shared with her best friend, and the ever-laminated "live again" list of things she's promised to do to survive her grief. But maybe if she acts like she has it all together, no one will notice she's falling apart.

The only gigs she can handle right now are temporary babysitting jobs, and she just landed a great one, helping overworked, single mom Reese and her precocious daughter, Ainsley. The only catch: Ainsley's uncle, Miles, always seems to be around, and is kind of. . . a walking version of the grumpy cat meme. Worse – he seems to be able to see right through her.

Surprisingly, Miles knows a lot about grief and he offers Lenny a proposition. He'll help her complete everything on her "live again" list if she'll help him connect with Ainsley and overcome his complicated relationship with Reese. Lenny doubts anything can fill the void her best friend has left behind, but between late night ferry rides, midnight ramen, and a well-placed shoulder whenever she needs it, Miles just won't stop showing up for her. Turns out, sometimes your life has to end to find your new beginning.

REVIEWS

- **Booklist:** * Starred Review * "Grieving people are scary." Lenny may look scary, but mostly she is forlorn, disheveled, and unkempt—not a great look for a nanny on New York's Upper West Side. Though she is a highly recommended temporary hire to look after seven-year-old Ainsley, Ainsley's extremely protective uncle, Miles, suspicious of Lenny, follows her. He discovers she spends her nights on the Staten Island Ferry going back and forth, buying secondhand T-shirts rather than going home to change clothes. When Miles confronts her, challenging her ability to care for Ainsley, he discovers that her intense grief over the recent but lengthy death of her lifelong best friend is keeping her from going to the apartment they shared. When she accidentally pulls a laminated

slip of paper with a list titled ""Live Again"" from her pocket, he starts trying to help her fulfill the tasks she names. Lenny and Miles are good people in pain, who react with kindness instead of lashing out. Bastone's heartfelt, touching examination of grief and depiction of living through it and finding joy and love while building relationships makes this romance rise to the top. -- Diana Tixier Herald (Reviewed 2/1/2025) (Booklist, vol 121, number 11, p37)

- **Library Journal:** * Starred Review * Six months after cancer took her beloved best friend and roommate, Lou, Helen "Lenny" Bellamy is still adrift, spending most nights riding the Staten Island Ferry instead of returning to the apartment she once shared with Lou or trying to check items off Lou's "Live Again" list. An experienced nanny, Lenny can keep herself together only for short-term gigs like a weekend with Ainslie, an eight-year-old girl with a single mom and a grumpy uncle named Miles, who seems to see right through Lenny's fragile facade. Having lost his mother and cousin in a car accident years ago, and more recently his father and Ainslie's pop pop, Miles is determined to be a lifeboat for Lenny, with no judgment. As Miles helps Lenny fulfill the items on Lou's list, they both find they have so many things to live for. VERDICT A stunning book by Bastone (Ready or Not), who delivers another slow-burn and emotional romance that doesn't shy away from also exploring life's hardest moments. Recommended for readers who also enjoy Abby Jimenez. --Elizabeth Gabriel (Reviewed 11/01/2024) (Library Journal, vol 149, issue 11, p75)

- **Kirkus:** * Starred Review * Following the death of her best friend, a Brooklyn woman completes her “Live Again list” with the help of a wounded stranger.After her best friend, Lou Merritt, dies from cancer, Lenny Bellamy feels like she’s barely hanging on. Thankfully, the babysitting gigs she picks up to pay the bills also serve as a bright distraction in her life. Lenny is one of those blessed individuals who knows exactly how to identify with children. She’s warm and endearing, and nannying makes her feel just the slightest bit better—or at least that’s what she tells herself. Her latest job is watching 7-year-old Ainsley. Ainsley’s mom, Reese Hollis, is a single parent, raising her daughter in the swanky apartment left to her by her father, a famous musician who’d died a year earlier, with her moody half brother, Miles Honey, living upstairs in the same building. It’s obvious from Miles’ first appearance in Reese’s apartment that their relationship is strained—he barely knew his father and has only been in Reese’s life for two years. He doesn’t trust Lenny, clearly overprotective of his niece and judgmental about everyone who takes care of her. As Miles transforms into a helicopter uncle, he starts to recognize something familiar in Lenny—the grief that is all but consuming her life, something with which he’s had some experience. When Lenny reveals that she and Lou had compiled a “Live Again list” to help Lenny work through her friend’s death, Miles agrees to help her fulfill the tasks on her list on one condition: He wants Lenny’s help in finding ways to connect with Ainsley and Reese. Bastone’s contemporary romances are truly in a class of their own, creating difficult events and softening them with the comfort of finding a romantic partner who is both supportive and empathetic. Miles’ rough and admittedly awkward edges are smoothed by Lenny’s dogged efforts to carry on through her

sadness and pain. This is a tender slow-burn romance with an emotional wallop.A beautiful portrayal of two people navigating love and grief. (Kirkus Reviews, January 15, 2025)

OTHER RESOURCES

- Author website: https://www.carabastone.com/
- Podcasts featuring Cara Bastone interviews
- AudioFile Magazine: Author Cara Bastone on Creating Audio-First Romances

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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS for Promise Me Sunshine

- Character & Growth
    - What were your initial impressions of Lenny, and did you find her journey through grief relatable?
    - How did Miles's background as a "grief expert" change your view of him as a love interest?
    - How does Lenny evolve from being consumed by loss to finding joy again?
    - What did you make of the relationship between Lenny and her mother?
- Themes & Plot
    - How does the novel explore the balance between honoring memories and moving forward?
    - Did you anticipate the twist regarding who wrote the "Live Again" list?
    - How did the "found family" aspect (Miles, Ainsley, and Reese) contribute to the story's emotional weight?
    - What did you think of the author's decision to have the characters work through intense grief in a romance setting?
- Symbolism & Structure
    - What is the significance of the Staten Island ferry setting in the book?
    - Why do you think the author chose to focus on small details, like hair, in her character descriptions?
    - How does the "slow burn" pacing affect your investment in the characters?
- Personal Reflection & Engagement
    - If you had to create a "Live Again" list, what would be on it?
    - Have you ever had someone help you through a difficult time in a way similar to how Miles helped Lenny?
    - How do you think the characters' lives will look five years after the book ends?

PROGRAM IDEAS

- **"Find Your Spark" Joy Workshop** - Inspired by the character finding happiness in small things, hold a workshop where participants create vision boards or journals focusing on personal joy.

- **Moving Through Grief -** Invite a therapist or grief counselor to speak on dealing with grief or helping others cope with loss.

- **"Letter to My Future Self" writing workshop** - As a writing prompt, read some passages from the book then have participants write letters to themselves focused on the "promises" they want to keep for their own happiness.

- **Walking Book Club** - Organise a walking book club where participants walk through a local park (or cemetery, as a nod to key scenes) while discussing the book's themes of "re-learning how to live" or “finding joy.”

- **Memorial Book Donation Drive** - Invite patrons to donate copies of their favorite books in memory of a loved one. Creating a book display featuring these books.

READ-ALIKES

- Say You’ll Remember Me by Abby Jimenez
- Passion Project by London Sperry
- PS: I Hate You by Lauren Connolly
- Funny Story by Emily Henry
- Charlie Quinn Lets Go by Jamie Varon
- The Last Sunrise by Anna Todd
- You and Other Natural Disaster by Maria Martinez
- Casket Case by Lauren Evans
- Take Me Home by Melanie Sweeny
- Cole and Laila are Just Friends by Bethany Turner
- What If I Never Get Over You by Paige Toon