



Spent: Memoirs of a Shopping Addict

Avis Cardella

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As a child, Avis Cardella devoured the glamorous images in her mother's fashion magazines. She grew up to be one of the people in them, living a life that seemed to be filled with labels and luxury. But shopping had become a dangerous addiction. She forwent food for Prada. Credit card debt blossomed like the ever-increasing pile of unworn shoes and clothing in the back of her closet. She defined herself by the things she owned and also lost herself in the mad hunt for the perfect pair of pants or purse that might make her feel whole.

Spent is Avis Cardella's timely, deeply personal, and shockingly dramatic exploration of our cultural need to spend, and of what happens when someone is consumed by the desire to consume.

Spent: Memoirs of a Shopping Addict Details

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Ashley says

Cardella is a wholly unsympathetic character. She frequents Bergdorf's and Bloomingdale's and has a string of relationships with men who buy her nice things (Prada suits, luxury vacations, pricy handbags, etc.), which only fuels her shopping addiction.

I don't doubt Cardella was a shopping addict. I do think she has a boatload more issues than that, though, which I think she finally started realizing and dealing with. The book had a very flat, depressing undertone and very little about how she got out of her financial mess. I get that she worked with a debt counselor who dealt with most of her CC's and reduced her payments to around \$175/month (for like 44 months). She made herself sound like a pretty successful freelance writer and mentioned she made \$2,000/article several times. I get she lives in NYC (though one could argue this as a choice/luxury) and it's expensive, but since she didn't share her whole financial picture it's really hard to identify with her exact situation and how dire it was (or wasn't). She certainly had a bevy of friends, families, and former boyfriends to borrow money from (and which she often used to go shopping again).

Overall, not a big fan of this one.

Ari says

Sounded intriguing but got boring really fast. It's just not interesting reading how many different outfits she bought, especially when she details what outfits she bought and what she wore on what day... who cares? And then there was barely any focus on how much debt she had and she seems to get out of it pretty easily, surprisingly so considering the cost of the outfits she was buying. Meh.

Sofie says

Ik heb hem niet uitgelezen. Misschien wel interessant maar niet voor mij ;-).

Dorie says

I couldn't muster up any sympathy for this shopaholic who could combine the income from her fabulous fashion writing job with her unlimited credit to afford outrageously priced designer duds. Nor did I feel bad for her when her string of wealthy boyfriends insisted on buying her Dior suits and diamond rings. There was very little mention of how the spending affected her financially and even emotionally. She would have been better off writing a memoir about the joys of shopping.

Sunny says

I really wanted to love this book like I do a good shopping spree but I felt like it fell flat along the way. Avis Cardella gives us a ton of detail on outfits, brands and luxury stores she buys, visits and conquers but never really gives the reader an equal look at why her life and relationships fail. The real interest in reading a book like this is to see 'why' she feels compelled to clothe herself into a high tower away from actual people who might love her back. The scenery she paints makes a great start to a good road trip but the story is like driving around the block a hundred times. It just left me unsatisfied.

Sara says

Well... I am ashamed to say I saw a lot of myself in this book. This book is a brave, honest look into shopping addiction - why we shop, how we try to pacify low self esteem and gain identity through purchasing items we feel represent who we want to be, or what we "deserve." The author bravely tells stories about the seduction of luxury - from how the boutiques look, how the sales people act, how the men she kept choosing liked to make her over, not realizing she was in fact losing herself instead of gaining a fabulous new life.

The only criticism I have is that there wasn't really a discussion about how it felt to stop, and what I am sure were major stumbling blocks around the way. It went from the rock bottom description of how she spent her last \$20 on something she didn't need, just to get the "fix" of buying to (paraphrased highly by my snarky self) "Well, so I stopped, and my life was so much better, and I got married, and life is great now basically, yay." The ending seemed to gloss over it all, and rush through it all. I wanted to hear about HOW she reconnected with her husband, how her daily life has changed. We just aren't allowed that peek into her life, which seemed odd given how candid she was in the rest of the book.

Koki says

Autorka doslova nudne a zdŕhavo opisuje svoj život - závislý od nakupovania. Ja som pri ŕítaní knihy normálne padala na zadok a rozmýšľala, ako len Avis dokázala dať dokopy zhruba 240 strán, na ktorých nie je ni? iné len nakupovanie. Zvyšok recenzie nájdete tu: <http://kokina1.blogspot.sk/2011/08/zi...>

Grace says

From page 199:

"In physics, chaos is a temporary state between one natural state of harmony and its transformation into a higher form. The transition could be choppy. I was in the middle of transition."

OMG, what on earth is she talking about? That is a total violation of the second law of thermodynamics and the natural universe.

This book is shopping porn for addicts. I am not an addict and have no idea why I bothered to finish this book. Perhaps I was hoping it would redeem itself, but it did not.

Liz says

I zipped through this and enjoyed it, but I suppose I found it difficult to relate to someone who runs in these circles (who attends fashion week, lives in Manhattan, and has extremely wealthy boyfriends who buy her designer suits.)

Kristi says

I'm a sucker for a memoir. Can't get enough of them. I liked this one. I could relate to fashion magazines impacting self image and remember pouring through issues of Glamour and Cosmopolitan at age 13...and understanding only 25% of the article content. But I understood the images 100% and like Avis Cardella, I longed to become like them. I too was a lost teenage grasping for someone or something to show me the way. Unlike Ms. Cardella, I didn't have the funds to support a habit and was probably the only girl in my junior high to never own a pair of designer jeans. My parents imparted just enough frugality in me.

I enjoyed reading about Ms. Cardella's journey to self-awareness and transformation. I enjoyed reading about the clothes and the luxuries of her addiction, but felt her portrayal of the downside of it just didn't ring impactful enough for me. She wasn't after all a heroin addict living in a doorway with two teeth. But I could relate to the search to become authentic when you feel your identity is just simply lost or never really established in the first place.

Miranda says

The idea of this memoir sounded fantastic to me and I couldn't wait to read it. Unfortunately, it got boring very quickly. I found it to be very repetitive and hard to take pity on Cardella, who blames everything but herself for her addiction (her mother's death, being born in the 60s, her father making less money than she did that one time she got a modeling job). This book just made me dislike the author and brought very little light to the true, dark world of the average shopping addict.

Ciara says

avis cardella always admired her mother's stylish dressing, & became addicted to women's fashion magazines at a young age. she came of age during the nascence of luxury designer brands, wearing gloria vanderbilt corduroy jeans to studio 54. she tried to parlay her obsession with the fashion industry into a modeling career, but it didn't really go anywhere. instead, cardella started a relationship with a wealthy german photographer who showered her with designer clothes & gave her a job as his assistant.

slowly growing accustomed to a standard of living a world beyond anything she ever experience growing up, & being sucked into the world of easy credit, cardella begins to use shopping as an emotional crutch after her mother's unexpected death. she begins lying to her boyfriend about how much time she spends shopping, & anesthizes her grief by spending more & more time in timeless, placeless shops, where she can try on clothes & imagine that this is the purchase that will change her life. she even starts developing physical symptoms--

hyper-sensitivity to her environment, sweating palms, etc, that are only alleviated by buying something. soon cardella in buying things only to leave the shopping bags unopened in the back of her closet for months or years.

the spending creeps up on her & slowly takes a toll on her financial life. her boyfriend doesn't know how many credit cards she has or how much debt she's racking up. cardella fantasizes that she can get everything under control & pay it all off on her own, but she can't as long as her solution to stress is to go shopping. when she splits up with her boyfriend after admitting to herself that she doesn't want to get married & have children, she is faced with the reality that she's become accustomed to a lifestyle that is wildly beyond her means.

i kind of like addiction stories, i guess because i have an addictive personality & i like to be aware of what i'm up against if i'm not vigilant. there were aspects of this story that were interesting, like cardella's frank assessments of new york wealth & the constant struggle for physical perfection. she writes about all the money that goes into achieving the perfect hair, the perfect skin, the perfect body that can fit into clothes from sample sales, & how all of these elements are absolutely crucial to receiving respectful treatment from the salespeople at high-end shops. i think there's this unconscious belief in american society that if you just try hard enough, you can look like whatever starlets are making the rounds, & you can have what they have. but this book makes clear (& contemptuously so) that that life requires incredible amounts of work & financial backing that the average person (especially a person who wishes to have any kind of life outside of the pursuit of physical perfection) can't really hope to replicate. cardella is bitterly honest about the toll the pursuit took on her life.

it's true that the whole book strikes an oddly emotionless note, & as such, it was hard to get invested. but i guess that beats yet another histrionic addiction memoir, the author over-reaching in her sordid attempts to convince that the reader that being \$2000 in credit card debt was the ninth circle of hell. i mean, not to minimize, but i guess the emotionlessness was a refreshing change from all the "celebrity intervention"-style emotional manipulations out there.

Francine says

Love this little book. I've read it twice. Cardella is more talented than she knows. She has a great eye for detail and I find her likeable. She writes with honesty.

DeAnn Kohlbeck says

Painfully honest..compelling story of a misunderstood and serious problem facing many people today.

Suzanna says

I received a free copy of this book through a Goodreads first reads giveaway.

It's oddly emotionless for a memoir. At times, the author leans toward documenting other people's shopping addictions. She talks about one part of her life or another, but rarely explains why she chose the path she did.

