



Sherry and Narcotics

Nina-Marie Gardner

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Kindle edition on sale at Amazon \$2.99 <http://amzn.to/j4TvOb> The critically acclaimed debut by Nina-Marie Gardner. "Gardner captures like no other the buildup of chemistry between a man and a woman..." 3AM Magazine <http://bit.ly/gr9AF0>

"Enter the book we couldn't put down, one which kept us riveted..." MARIE CLAIRE

"Mary is in a very fragile place after the death of her father, distance in her relationship with her mother, and a tenuous sobriety which has long slipped away but for her hiding it from her family. It's under such inauspicious timing, while living in London, that Mary starts up a correspondence with a dreamy poet, but from the very beginning things are far from how they appear." LINUS'S BLANKET <http://bit.ly/iCNqLK>

Sherry and Narcotics Details

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Author : Nina-Marie Gardner

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From Reader Review Sherry and Narcotics for online ebook

Rob the Obscure says

The cover notes call the novel "devastating" and "honest". That's the head of the nail.

This is a novel I read in 2 days...very unusual for me. I tend to read in snatches due to an overly busy life, unfortunately. But this one grabbed me from the first page.

It's not the for the weak of heart or the closed mind. The book is entirely unvarnished in its truth telling, which is a large part of its beauty. I found myself reaching out to the lead character in my head saying, "Stop! Train wreck just ahead!" But she doesn't, and there is no clichéd happy ending where everything is patched up and the reader feels that all is good with the world in the end. It isn't, sometimes. You will palpably sense this existential reality if you read this book.

Tuck says

so, i woke up at midnight and finished this at 5am, then a short nap before work. you gotta respect a woman (or be warned one) who can drink 2 bottles of red in the morning then be up for a date at the pub and clubbing later maybe even.

mary is a usaer living and working in london (she was in grad school but not just working) but is attracted to a man (via Myspace pic and his "coy" text to her) in manchester and decides to move up there, so she does. gets her own apartment, bankrolls her "boyfriend", works hard, drinks hard, fucks hard. so it's love, yeah? can you see where this may be wrong?

part epistolary (through text and email), part 3rd person, part dialog, a good mix of a story that has many noir overtones, from the grey mornings after a pink sunrise to dark thumping clubs at 3am, mary finally figures out that her boyfriend jake not only has been 2 timing her, but is a coward too and backs out of agreeing to marry her to fix her visa. i was saying respect, mary, through all her drinking, working insane hours, being expat, being the sugar momma for jake, does muster the fortitude (and money) to fly back to usa, TWICE, buy christmas presents, show her mom and uncle around manchester for 3 days (WHILE SOBER), keep up with her london friends sorta, romance the said jake, and booze it up too much too, AND grieve her recently dead dad :(not many could maintain even half that. wanna know the secret? from her epigram:

"Oh what a dear ravishing thing is the beginning of an Amour!" by Aphra Behn, "The Emperor of the Moon" here is an short excerpt when mary finally realizes jake has dumped her (actually she also realizes, he never really cared it seems). she's on the city bus, going AWAY from jake, though she is super sad and super drunk. i like the image the author conjures here:

"Down the Wilmslow Road, past all the ancient trees, the blooming shrubbery, past all the pretty stone houses. Corner stores, liquor stores---lots and lots of liquor stores.

Mary's rubbing her hands on her jeans at the knees. Her head hurts. Her heart hurts, she wants to lean over, pass right through the wall of the bus, and fall onto the cement. Imagines herself tumbling down, rolling over and over and over, wearing down, crumbling to bits, scattering everywhere, disappearing into nothing. Instead she bangs her head against the window and a black girl across the aisle looks over at her and then quickly looks away."

there was a neat book trailer video of this book, but i can't find it now. here is one of author reading http://www.goodreads.com/videos/list_...

and a new book out soon <http://www.goodreads.com/book/show/13...>

and a linuxblanket best of 2011 list <http://www.linussblanket.com/best-of-...>

Georgiann Hennelly says

Mary is an American girl living in England. She edits student essays as a job for people trying to get into universitys .She meets an English man Jake online through My Space, at first its just emails . Back and Forth than they decide to meet. Mary travels to Manchester to meet Jake,he is an actor / poet, Mary wants to write plays. We watch Mary through out the story struggle with her drinking problem, and her relationship with Jake.On so many levels this story really touched me. at times i felt sorry for Mary and everything Jake was putting her through.He still lived with an ex girlfriend he had a child with Mary could only call or text him certain times of the day she could only see him when it was convient for him. Yet he lived his life while she worked and waited till she could be with him again. it was a touching heart felt story and i truly look forward to more books by this author.

Grady says

For your consideration: A New Gifted Young Writer Explodes on these Pages

Nina-Marie Gardner is a puff of exhilarating smoke that rises out of the pages of her first novel (yes, her first!) SHERRY AND NARCOTICS. She hails from Massachusetts (Marblehead to be exact) and has tiptoed through many jobs and experiences including acting that most assuredly gave her exposure to the flotsam and jetsam that inform her created characters. In an interview she was quoted as saying 'I am most interested in writing about people on the fringes: the loners, the losers, the quirky and/or invisible types. The quiet wallflowers who do the observing. The late bloomers. The ones who maybe have fallen through the cracks, the deeply flawed but big-hearted, the lost but relentless. I care most about keeping it real and honest and true. I am interested in writing about women and addiction and recovery. Language matters a great deal to me; I also hope to expose readers to a perspective or emotional place they might not have considered before.' And those goals and concepts are met completely in this immensely readable book.

To reveal too much of the story in a review would be a disservice to the reader as the real pleasure of steeping into SHERRY AND NARCOTICS is the clever way Gardner mixes ruminations on the part of her main character, the American Mary who travels to Manchester, England after a brief but desperately needy Internet correspondence/date with one Jake who lives there. Mary has problems related to alcohol and drugs - problems that she uses to manipulate her courage to tie down a physical and emotional need with the lanky blue-eyed redhead Jake - a fellow not without his own set of problems.

Gardner's forte is her humanism coupled with her creative writing style. She often relates internal conversations without the use of the repeated name of the speaker/thinker. Little sample: 'Mary shifts her knapsack, feels for her wallet, her cell phone. Walks clear across the stations, and out on the large set of sliding glass doors. To her right is an arcade of shops, to her left what looks to be a main road with a tram

line. The wind has kicked up, so she ducks over to a stoop just outside a greasy spoon to light her cigarette. Holds it near her face, taking quick deep drags, enjoying the here and the now. People filtering past, the occasional tram, the sky cresting - now a soot-tinged peach.' She then pops into emails and Internet tags and jumps her places in a prancing that keeps the reader immediately at her smoky/smelly side. And yet for all of Mary's mismanagement of her life we love her.

Nina-Marie Gardner: we will be hearing alot about her. Start here. This is a great launching platform!

Grady Harp

Jason McIntyre says

You read it and you think, just maybe, everyone will get exactly what they deserve: happiness, love, and the ever-after they all crave. But they are human after all, and they sabotage themselves as only humans can do. The people are scary in their self-denial, they do damage to everything around them, just like you might. Or your neighbours, or your co-workers, or your long lost niece. And, sadly, the dogs in this story can't seem to get away from the very human behaviour either.

What I liked about this book: the fluidity. This IS a narcotic-fueled narrative. You are drawn to it, into it, and by it. You cannot fight the feeling of being propelled down a mine shaft. All around you, explosions, but you keep going deeper. You want to look away, shield your exhausted eyes, your fatigued brain. But you can't. You must see where this is going.

Even if you think the creeping suspicions you've had since page two will come to pass, you must learn more. You need to. Like Mary reaches for another bottle of wine, you lick your finger and turn the page. The truths about relationships, about romantic and sexual obsession and how they intertwine with things like lifestyle and chemical addiction are told so truthfully here. I suspected that I might not be reading true fiction here. Was I? The answer is still blurred to me now.

If not taken from the author's life, then surely taken from mine, from people I've seen on busses and train cars, at parties and such. The characters and situations are so vividly portrayed, I couldn't help but see people I knew in the pages. This is a darkly profound drawing of people -- of real people. And after reading this book, if not before, we definitely know them as exactly that: real people. Foibles and cares and problems, all of it. All too well.

karen says

i am going to preface this review by saying that i own about a billion books. and i have limited time, both in my day-to-day, and in my lifespan. i don't have a disease or anything, but let's face facts: mortality is a real thing.

so.

i am always trying to tear through books, so i can at least make a dent in the piles and teetering stacks of books that already exist here. so when goodreads.com authors slip into my inbox with their promises of reviewer copies and pdfs of their books, i generally turn them down because i just have too much on my plate already. however, i got a request to review this one, and the reviews were so unilaterally positive both

here and on the amazon.com, just glowing and gushing, that i felt like, after i had verified with the author that they weren't just hundreds of her friends, i had to give it a chance. plus, it sounded like a really sad and dark book, so i was powerless to resist.

and it was exactly that: a sad book full of sad and real people. a self-destructive roller-coaster written at a frenetic pace that kept me up reading it until 3:30 in the morning, even though i had been exhausted when i got home that evening at eleven, but i could not stop reading it. i needed to know how it was all going to pan out at the end, even though i knew it would not be happily.

this is not a spoiler. this is a story about two people who meet on the internet, and i think we have had enough reminders in the form of *catfish* and *to catch a predator* to have washed away any of the cheek-pinchingly naive optimism of the kind of relationships displayed in *you've got mail*. the internet is for crazy people - it is not a good place to meet friends or lovers. except here of course! on goodreads.com everyone is wonderful and everyone is exactly as advertised and you are all exceptions proving the rule. ('cept me - i am actually a 65-year-old man with bad intentions)

this is about the impulse that drives you forward into increasingly poor decisions even when you are being hit with warning signs from a thousand different angles but not being able to slow the momentum forward into destruction because of the blindness of obsession and lust and self-loathing. it is about isolation even in a room full of people. it is about making excuses until someone else starts making the decisions.

the book incorporates many e-mails into the text, which makes it a superfast read. and there are some typos, but it didn't bother me at all, because when they appear in the e-mails, it makes it seem more real, and some of them are just really cute, like when she refers to a "baklava-ed intruder" instead of, presumably, a "balaclava-ed intruder," which sounds DELICIOUS!

this book is fast, and real, and painful.
a marvelous addition to the salt-in-wound body of literature.

J Driscoll says

I was very excited to receive an advanced copy of *Sherry and Narcotics*, and, as a testament to the quick-paced candor of the book, I will admit I read it in just two days. Nina-Marie Gardner exposes the deep loneliness and desperate insanity of addiction in a way that's totally relatable. I laughed and my heart hurt at the same time. The narrator's voice is sweet, snarky, self-deprecating and bumblingly honest. And, while it's easy to read at breakneck speed, the novel rides a razor's edge of danger. That's what gives the book its real strength: Gardner's ability to create for the reader the experience of painful tension between loving the narrator, wanting her to get the comfort, reassurance and relief she seeks and suffering the increasing dread that all will not end well. Plus, it's so nicely written - with simple, beautiful poetry wrung from casual, colloquial speech. The correspondence between the main character, Mary, and her charming, elusive, sleazeball lover feels particularly real and (I hate to admit it) familiar. I loved the book. I would definitely recommend it to a friend. And I will probably go back and read it again myself.

knig says

Never no mind what this book is about. The gory details represent a subset of a tale told a thousand times, and lessons never learned.

Say you are a woman. And you happen to get yourself a man. He is dead hot, charming, witty, handsome, educated, polite and sensitive. For extra bonus points add employed and leaves the toilet seat down.

But. All is not well in the Kingdom of Denmark. Prince Charming is weak, indecisive, emotionally needy and always on a bender.

‘But I’ll change’, says he.

Question: how many chances do you give Romeo to pull his act together before tossing him out , his dog, and the horse he rode in on?

Its hard, I can see. The mixed signals scramble the brain and addle the mind: I mean, he’s intelligent and well meaning : surely he’ll turn himself round?

One chance after another, and by then, you’ve invested so much in the relationship it becomes a matter of principle to persevere: no one likes to sell at rock bottom when you’ve bought at the top: we cling on hoping for a Bull.

Bullshit.

Set your stop loss high. And then:

Sheri says

Sherry and Narcotics
Novel.

This is the story of a young woman named Mary, an American who is living in England. There she meets a young man (on-line) named Jake. They begin a relationship. In the beginning it is primarily through email and text messages. We watch Mary struggle with her personal demons, as she recklessly embarks on a relationship with a man she knows little about.

Jake has 'issues' himself. He not only drinks to excess, but he is hiding the truth from Mary. Mary also is consumed by alcohol, even though she recently went through rehab. She has past issues that completely debilitate her thinking and actions, inhibiting her from making rational decisions, ultimately leading her down a path of self destruction. Jake seems to be close behind her on this destructive trail of doom.

Ms. Gardner writes with passion and meaning, pulling her readers into a private nightmare. A voyeuristic view of two troubled young people in a desperate attempt at happiness.

I really enjoyed this, and recommend to those who are up for an intense, emotional, and thought provoking

read.

Shana says

Let's start with the title: Sherry & Narcotics. Catchy, memorable. Sounds like the title of a Best Album by a New Artist Grammy award winner. The words written on the pages themselves inside the book aren't catchy, but they're certainly memorable.

Mary Cartwright, the protagonist, is a struggling young playwright from the States who, shortly after a stint in rehab and her father's death, moves to England. There, thanks to the Internet, she supports herself by helping non-native English speakers write coherent essays in English. Of course, while the Internet is valuable for entrepreneurs, it is also a gem when it comes to making connections with others. Others like Jake, the proverbial "dark, handsome, mysterious stranger" who sends Mary messages of admiration through Myspace (okay, perhaps this is a little 2007, but stay with me, it's worth it).

The love story between Mary and Jake takes Mary to Manchester, where she moves to be closer to him. Jake, who is initially intriguing, attentive and charming, quickly morphs into an emotionally unavailable lout, and his behavior borders on despicable. But we love who we love, and for Mary, vulnerable and broken, Jake is her slurring, staggering white knight. Their affair consists of ingredients many twenty and thirty-something women will find familiar—drinking, lovemaking, writing, lies, and half-truths. It isn't sweet, nor is it terribly romantic. However, it is gripping and real.

Gardner expertly conveys the depths of Mary's passion, longing and hurt. Mary may be a junkie for a lot of substances, but most of all, she seems to be junkie for closeness, connection, and the sensation of being touched and held. When that sensation dries up, withdrawal takes over and fear rises to the surface, seeping from her pores. Yet for women like Mary, who are raised with high expectations, where mantras are from commercials telling them that "We girls can do anything" and "Never let them see you sweat," fear and yearning are too unbearable to feel. Mary's solution is to stuff them away with bottles of red wine, knowing the Merlot will quell her insecurity, if only for an hour or two.

If you're no stranger to co-dependency, Sherry & Narcotics is a must-read, as the book feels like an old friend. On the other hand, if co-dependency is new territory for you, this novel by Nina-Marie Gardner is the real deal; you can live through it vicariously (without the hangover the next day). PS--If I could, I'd give this 4.5 stars.

Justine James says

Disturbing, brave and haunting. But also supremely entertaining, wicked & perverse.

Naomi says

Have you ever been in a situation where you are seeing a very slow motion "train wreck" and you want to yell out to a person and warn them about the impending "doom"? That is Sherry and Narcotics. Gardner has nailed it. She has methodically set out in writing this book that one just thinks it is the story of a woman

living and dating in the UK..Under the surface, you can feel the destruction, both physical and mental, very slowly coming to Mary and the path she is choosing to take in her relationships with drugs/alcohol and men. Very giftedly written...I took this book from 4 stars to 5 based on Gardner's ability to "write beneath the surface." One must pay VERY CLOSE ATTENTION to see the destruction. If one reads it superficially they may miss very important parts of the story. A must read for young women!

ETA(04/01/11): A very haunting book...I read 30-40 books a month so it is rare that a book gets in and stays in my mind...this one has definitely accomplished that. If this is the debut, I can't wait to see what comes next from this incredibly talented author!

On a very side note: The formatting of this book drove me nuts! This is not the fault of the author though. There were no page numbers and the page layout was weird!

Adel says

Sherry and Narcotics was a bullet train that drove Gardner's narration from its pages straight into my heart. I read a third of it late last night and this morning I stayed in bed until I was done. Didn't budge; what a treat. This is neither a timid nor a sentimental author. Nina Marie Gardner goes straight for the jugular from page one and doesn't let go until the very end. The tension continuously ebbs and surges keeping the reader wishing and pulling for the main character, always unsure of her final fate.

I enjoyed the intermixing of the narrator's voice with text messages and emails not only as an ingenious mean to propel the story along; but one that belongs to our age. This is masterfully done, giving the book an overall harmony in movement with changes in rhythm that keep the reader in constant suspense. Not a dull moment here.

To say that I was undaunted by the main character's plight would be a big fat lie. I fell for Mary and her struggles from the very first page. My heart went out for her and I admit that it did ache upon reading the ending of her first night back on the bottle.

A very easy read, albeit an exhilarating one. A deceptively simple voice that is poetically rich without being pretentious. The descriptions of the scenery is rich in detail, be it a pub, the city of Manchester, the lobby of a hotel or a posh restaurant, the reader is given the full spectrum of sensory experiences that only a very conscious and honest writer can render vivid and fully alive. It was precisely through the strength of her descriptions that the author managed to keep me in constant touch with our heroine Mary and the crescendo of trials that she underwent. From very early in the book, Mary stopped being a fictitious character and quickly became a good friend. I found the ending soothing and subtle leaving me calm and relaxed. It wasn't overplayed, nor spelled out, but very satisfying.

I strongly recommend this book and I am positive that it's one of those that I'll get back to.

Sandra Shwayder says

As the mother of women roughly the same age as the protagonist Mary, I found this novel both a compelling and a heartrending read. It opens with graphic narrative scenes of Mary, drunk and drugged, participating in sexual acts with random partners. Later there is a flashback to an actual rape and beating. Throughout I wondered what was the childhood history that propelled this young woman to put herself in such danger.

The novel soon moves into a pattern of dialogue carried on via emails and texts between Mary and her new, sweet love, Jake. Mary is a playwright so carrying the story forward this way makes sense and the author is extremely good at it. The emails and texts between Mary and Jake bring a smile to the face and a flutter to

the heart. The time spent waiting for those emails and texts inspires anxiety. The reader feels each moment along with the character. There is also the undercurrent of tension between Mary and her mother. A brief telephone conversation between them is particularly poignant, giving the reader a hint of a painful and complex history in very few words. In fact, the entire book moved along like a film in my mind's eye and I think it could be easily transformed into an excellent film. Jake, not a bad guy but an indecisive one, ultimately lets Mary down and I don't think I'm spoiling the story by disclosing that since the end of their sweet affair is skillfully foreshadowed throughout. Then, when it seems Mary has hit bottom, two miracles occur at the very end: she rescues a dog from a cruel and brutal death and two strangers turn out to be kind and help her in this endeavor. Of course she is overwhelmed in a good way by this kindness from strangers who in the past she had learned to fear, so the book ends on an upbeat note that begs for a sequel. In fact, since the details of Mary's family and childhood history are never explained and given the enticing nature of this book, I would like to see both a prequel and a sequel because the author made me care deeply about what past moved Mary into this particularly painful present, as well as what her future holds: hopefully sobriety, self awareness and appreciation, and the unconditional love of dogs. I recommend this book be read when the reader has time to read it start to finish, you won't want to put it down.

Evie says

***This Review was posted to Bookish

Nina-Marie Gardner's *Sherry & Narcotics* is one extraordinary debut novel. The author's virtuosic storytelling achieves a tone at once passionate and detached, and the result is as curious as it is convincing. The hypnotic narrative captivates the reader from the first sentence to the last paragraph of this beautifully written novel. It is breathtaking, intense and nerve-wracking. You might want to hold onto your seats.

Mary Cartwright is a young playwright from United States who, shortly after her father passed away, decided to move to England to have a fresh start on life. Her income consists of money she makes rewriting essays for non-native English speakers. Although it is not the highest-paying job in the world, she likes it, mainly because it gives her freedom and keeps her brain sharp. She's free to travel/live anywhere she wants as long as she can access the Internet to upload her work.

One day Marry gets a message through My Space from Jake, who claims to be deeply impressed with her plays. They start exchanging emails and text messages, and things quickly get intense between them. They're fascinated with each other, she likes his poems, he likes her writing. There's a great chemistry between them and a strong, almost unhealthy pull. Marry doesn't think twice before deciding to move to Manchester. She wants to be close to Jake, get to know him better, be a part of his life. But things don't always work out as we want them to. Sadly, there will be no "happily ever after" in this story, just plenty of heartache, disappointment and pain.

The true, almost nightmarish beauty of *Sherry & Narcotics* is the all too crystal clear mirror it holds up to its readers. Nina-Marie Gardner has written a sublime and clear-as-glass book, a book of almost frightening transparency and openness. Reading this book felt like observing someone else's life through a spyglass, invading their personal space, eavesdropping, hacking into their brain and shamelessly stealing all the intimate secrets. The strong narrative pull will keep you engrossed in the story until the heartbreaking ending. It's a thought-provoking masterpiece that will make you wonder about life, love, trust and –inevitably – addiction.

Practically from the get-go there's an overwhelming sense of impending doom. We know that something bad

is about to happen. We sense that this story won't end well, not for Marry, not for anyone. The loneliness, sadness and hopelessness drips from the pages and we find ourselves wishing there was something we could do to fix it. But of course, there's nothing that can be done. We can only sit and watch, and it's truly gut-wrenching.

I read this book in a single sitting. I read it ravenously, not wanting to stop turning the pages, not wanting to put it down, and even though I knew it would break my heart, I can totally see myself reading it again. I liked everything about it, the setting (England!), the explicit narrative voice, the original take on the subject of drug abuse and alcoholism, even the broken and hopeless characters. It was painfully real yet magical in a way. This book has a very artsy feeling to it and I can picture it being made into a great movie, or perhaps adapted into an even better play. Reading it reminded me in part of Dreamers (2003) and in part of Catfish (2010).

Nina-Marie Gardner is a writer of rare intensity and she definitely knows how to elicit a strong emotional response from her readers. Sherry & Narcotics is a book about trying to find your place in life, struggling against devastating addiction, doing your best to keep it together, loving, hoping, losing, and falling... falling...

It's a powerful book, treasure it.
