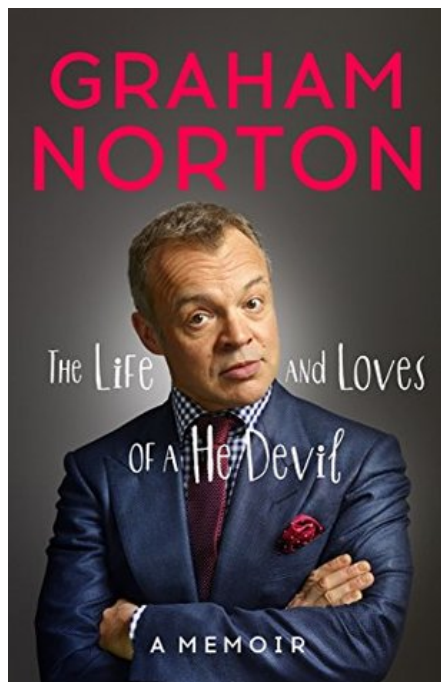




The Life and Loves of a He Devil

Graham Norton

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The Life and Loves of a He Devil Graham Norton

'I defy anyone not to snort, howl and recoil' *The Sunday Times*

'Full of wicked asides, tart observations and sharp remarks that could only have originated in Graham Norton's witty brain.' Terry Wogan

Looking around the room I saw what life really was. It was made up of my passions. I saw my life reflected back at me. People I liked, people I loved, people I had shared half a century with. All the stories of my life were together in that one room and it made me very happy.

Who wouldn't want a friend like Graham Norton? A little bit naughty, full of frank advice, bursting with gossip about the world's biggest stars - but most of all with an emphatic love of life and all its joys, big and small.

Join him - glass of wine in hand, faithful doggy friend by your side - and delve in as he shares the loves of his life.

The Life and Loves of a He Devil Details

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Author : Graham Norton

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From Reader Review The Life and Loves of a He Devil for online ebook

Paul Wardman says

This is Graham Norton's second book, the first was a straight up autobiography telling the tale of his life in a chronological order whereas this is his memoirs which basically means he picks a topic (Ireland being one of them) and then tells what effect this has had on his 50 plus years on this planet.

The thing I like about Graham Norton is that he entertains and makes me laugh, there was a few moments here and there which raised a slight chuckle but nothing that made you feel you were reading about the bloke from the TV (and of course radio). Not exactly a huge problem if it turns out the subject matter has had a torrid life filled with tragedy but since this doesn't appear to be the case then a few laughs wouldn't have gone amiss.

The chapters on Dogs and Ireland were interesting, his love of canines shines through and reading about how he had little love for his home country but rediscovered passion for it was lovely to read.

Now for the main reason this scores such a low rating and why I almost gave up on the book. I'll parenthases this by pointing out that I am in no way homophobic. Now that's out of the way.

Graham Norton is gay. Did you know this? You probably did. If by some chance you didn't then by the time you finished this book you'd be in no doubt because he takes every opportunity to remind you of the fact. It doesn't matter what the subject matter he finds a way to bring it back to the fact he sleeps with men. And it really doesn't take long to get tiresome. From tales of divas who are gay icons, to waiters he's drooled over he bangs on about it constantly. It's almost like he's justifying it to the reader. Yes I'm aware that heterosexuals who write autobiographies talk about their previous partners as well but we're not usually given intimate details about their sex life. And if memory serves me right you don't get them mentioning "I'm a straight actor / comedian etc etc. Take a shot every time Norton actually uses the word "Gay" and then say goodbye to your liver. The worst has to have been describing a lover as having "The biggest foreskin I've ever seen". OK we get it, you like men and you enjoy having lots of sex, congratulations. I don't want to read about anyone's sex life in detail when learning about their life, it's just like using the toilet, I assume you do it but I don't need confirmation.

Not the best autobiography I've read by a long shot and not one I'd go out of my way to recommend.

Pedro Campos says

Favourite passages:

All silver linings are attached to a bit of cloud.

As we were carrying our gay fur baby back to where we had parked the car, I heard a flesh-trembling deep bark and suddenly, from behind a half-stable door, there jumped up a standard poodle so big you could have thought it was a farmhand having a bad reaction to the moon.

Bad boyfriend had become intolerable boyfriend and no amount of dog care was going to help. With his return to New York, I was left holding the baby but happily Bailey will always provide a link between us.

Once the angry scars of the break-up had begun to fade we became friends again and now our phone calls always begin with me looking at Bailey sprawled on the floor like an enormous, tattered hearthrug and exclaiming, "It's your bad daddy on the phone!"

As her dainty feet clattered into the Hall I was filled with relief and fury: thrilled she was alive, while simultaneously wanting to kill her. It's an emotion every dog owner in the world has experienced.

I dread to think how self-obsessed and removed from reality I might have become over the years if it wasn't for my furry friends. After all, it is hard to remain smug and aloof when you are wrestling with two overexcited dogs and struggling to pull a plastic bag out of your coat pocket to pick up a piece of shit. If Bailey and Madge had to explain the world to an alien visitor, I imagine they'd say their poo is like a form of currency or at least extremely valuable, because I insist on collecting every piece they produce.

After nearly ten years I'm still entranced by those funny sleep yelps and paw twitches as they chase phantom squirrels in their dreams

Some of my fathers stories will sweeter. A man had cycled his whole life. You never saw him without his bicycle clips. One day he arrived home breathless, by now an old man. He sat down and said to his equally ancient wife, "you know, I think that bike of mine is beginning to lose its speed".

The atmosphere of secrets and shame made growing up in Ireland, seem suffocating. Another person's rural childhood might have involved galloping horses through crashing waves and raising an abandoned fox cub as a pet, but mine seemed to consist of ticking clocks, boiling kettles and drawn curtains.

In fact, if I had been writing a book about my passions and loves twenty years ago, I doubt very much that I would have included a chapter on the country where I was born and brought up. Since then, though, we've both changed a great deal. I have grown older and if not exactly wiser, I have at least started to rethink life and see things from a different perspective.

A real turning point in my relationship with Ireland was when my father died. Like a cruel punishment for life crimes he never committed, he ended his days, made helpless by Parkinson's disease, in a bleak nursing home. When he died, the sense of loss was overwhelming but at the same time we all understood that he hadn't just left us he had escaped. To no longer have to watch him suffer meant that in death our father could be reborn. Once someone goes, you no longer think of them as the pale gaunt old man waiting to die, suddenly, he is alive once more in the collective memory and in his prime. The man that could build and carry and dig. The bashful groom, the loving father. The guy we had wanted to live for ever now could, unburdened by a body that had failed him so badly. The other strange thing I discovered is that in death the person you have lost is revealed to you in a way they never could be in life. I had always seen this man simply as my father, but now everyone who came to the house with a bottle of whiskey or a fruitcake also shared their stories. It turned out he wasn't just a dad: he was a friend, a colleague, a joker, a thrill-seeker.

As the funeral approached, in addition to seeing new facets of my father, I was also beginning to fully understand the small community I had grown up in. Living there had stifled me and I spent most of my childhood and adolescence longing to be released. Shaking hands while familiar faces muttered "Sorry for your loss" was the classic small-town scene that would have induced a great deal of eye-rolling in the teenage me, but now it provided much-needed comfort. The community had lost one of their own and was coming together to make sure no one stumbled in the gap. The bonds that I had felt holding me back were now there to support me. I liked it.

Little like my relationship with the whole island, I can now look back and see that this manure-soaked, bare-boards education did have its benefits. The pupils might have been mainly from farming backgrounds but scattered amongst them were troubled city kids being given a second chance, plus the children of exotic foreigners who had been drawn to Ireland by the lure of unpasteurised milk and donkeys weighed down by

baskets of turf harvested from the bog. In retrospect, I realise what a privilege it was to be exposed to such a varied and strangely cosmopolitan group at an early age, as it set me up to be able to talk to anyone and only be intimidated by a very few, as I made my way into the big, bad world. The exam results back then suggested that we weren't getting the best of educations, but by not spoon-feeding us or putting us into some sort of educational hot-house, we learned to think for ourselves - when I got to university, the convent girls and Christian brother boys really struggled when they were asked what they thought.

The light at the end of the tunnel was getting a lot brighter.

If you don't like being hated or discriminated against, then maybe don't do it to other people.

I had not been on many planes at this point in my life and I had certainly never been invited to turn left by the air stewardess. Myself, Joy, Brian and his lovely wife, Anne-Marie, settled into our large, armchair-style seats. Joy's assistant, Ben, was travelling in economy. I promised to visit him during the flight. Given that I had always travelled in the back of the plane, it was amazing how quickly the world of free champagne and legroom became like home. We had only been in the air for about half an hour when I decided to see how Ben was getting on. I pulled back the curtain that divided the two cabins and I remember I actually gasped. Compared to the serene world of sleep suits and linen napkins I had left, this looked like a documentary about refugees in a third-world country. I waved and smiled at a grim-faced Ben and headed back to where I so obviously belonged.

A friend of mine once described Liza Minelli as a 'vortex of need' and, in that moment, I witnessed it. David Gest was taking on an impossible task.

Liza is unique and that somehow means that she will always be alone, no matter how much love surrounds her.

Liza was a vortex of need but also a bottomless well.

It's such a saccharine thing to say.

So far, so awful.

So much of Dolly Parton is a frothy façade - the high hair, the pink nails, the giant bosoms, but behind it all is a brain the size of a planet and a heart that beats for the world.

I got to know my various neighbours as I peered at them undetected from my darkened lair: the couple that fought, the woman who never stopped brushing her hair and, of course, the compulsive wanker.

We were sitting on the matching sofas chatting about our night. It was in no way raucous. My friend suddenly stood up as if he had just remembered he had left the gas on and then, with no warning, opened his mouth to release a gushing torrent of stomach contents.

He always asked if I wanted the last of the leftovers.

Like a wounded animal I howled into the night sky. Young hearts don't break; they explode with operatic intensity.

I met a lot of people (hookups) and although I saw several of them more than once, there was no one who really filled the role of boyfriend. Many of them have become good friends and we simply choose to ignore the carnal side of how we met.

The wildly enthusiastic reaction of the guests and the studio audience was so overwhelming we couldn't help but count our unhatched chickens.

The powers that be must have some other plans

My favourite shows are the ones that take me by surprise. Putting people side-by-side on the couch is like conducting an experiment in chemistry, where you've no idea how the various elements will react.

If you are that desperate for attention why not develop a personality and a sense of humour.

Self help: Now I am all in favour of selfimprovement. Learn how to make an authentic curry. Dazzle me with your command of the French language. Lose weight, build muscle, don't be afraid to change and evolve. What you shouldn't do is spend hours of your life and a great deal of cash getting ready for some life that you won't start living until you are completely ready. What are you waiting for? If life is a party it has started already and it turns out it's a 'come as you are' affair. The time you spent preparing yourself for the challenges of living are big chunks of life you will never get back. Skills may be contained in books, but wisdom is acquired from experience and mistakes. I intend to write a whole book about this. I hope you like it.

The internet: Well, of course I don't really hate the internet; I just hate what it does to me. Clearly it is an extraordinary research tool and source of news, so why then do I find myself spending hours sitting in front of a computer screen watching videos of a man who can slice up a cabbage to look like a map of the world, or a six-year-old dancer who blew the judges away on India's Got Talent? Sometimes it can fool you into thinking it matters. When I end up in floods of tears watching Bruno Mars singing to a blind girl, it feels like time well spent but in reality my time would have been more wisely used folding laundry, trimming nose hair or, in fact, doing almost anything else apart from watching the pocket-sized pop star tug at my heart strings. Equally, the various social media sites can be a great way of keeping in touch with out-of-the-way friends but in practice I spend my time scrolling through hundreds of holiday snaps of people I don't really know holding pints of lager and wrapping sunburnt arms around more people I don't know. I actually become impatient when the photographs don't load fast enough because, yet again, some weird part of my brain has convinced me that this is time well spent and that seeing every identical drunken image is somehow important. Part of the problem is surely that we can now surf the web wherever we are. There is no escape. On safari in Tanzania I could look out of the window at gazelles drinking from a watering hole, but in my room the presence of wi-fi meant I was actually looking at pictures of Lady Gaga leaving a bar in New York. We used to be safe on planes, a refuge from emails and Facebook status updates, but now airlines are proudly announcing the availability of internet on board. Does the web really need to be worldwide? It used to feel like something that magically connected us to every corner of the globe but increasingly the web feels like a trap.

Julie says

Graham Norton's show is one I usually sit down to watch over the weekend. He has a constant supply of interesting celebrities on his shows, although the American ones often look slightly puzzled as they fail to get the joke or understand the humour.

It was a cracking little read this book, and I think as a comedian he brought a great amount of balance to this memoir. It was funny without being silly and I like that he broke up the book into a series of stories on a subject, talking about his dogs, Ireland, work and his sex life.

Entertaining and funny and it gave me a big long smile reading it.

Advance says

This fitted my mood going into the New Year. There were some giggle moments, some thoughtful moments, and some quite heartbreaking moments too. It was written very well covering themes rather than a general autobiography. He says at the beginning he hopes that readers will find at least one passion of his that we share and I certainly did. His love for New York, dogs and divas were particularly enjoyable for me. An easy read but I felt I did learn a lot about Graham and it was refreshing to read an autobiography actually written by the person!

Mandy says

if you like graham, you'll like this. if you don't know who he is, don't read it!

Deborah says

I like Graham Norton but there's always a risk with anything autobiographical that it will all come tumbling down, so I was slightly worried about reading this - what if I ended up never able to watch Eurovision again?

Luckily Graham didn't let me down. His stories are funny and moving and above all interesting, even the ones that involve vomit-covered socks. Some of the stories are, in fact, very *ordinary* - lots of people can tell a tale about falling asleep on the night bus or falling in love with the wrong man. But they don't tell the tale like he does and, more to the point, he has lots of other *extraordinary* tales to tell as well. After all, it's not everybody who has floated down a river singing with Dolly Parton, is it?

Credit also to Graham for suggesting those of us who don't 'get' dogs should flick forward to the next chapter. Of course, I didn't, and having read this chapter I do now 'get' dogs in a way I didn't before. I'm not going to rush out and adopt one, but I can now understand why people get so attached to them despite the poo.

My only gripe has to be the half-dozen or so typographical errors, mainly missing or poor punctuation. Sort it out for the next print run, please (I'm happy to help).

Rebekah says

Delightfully light and easy read which passed the time exactly as I expected.

Silvia says

An amazing read. I picked it up because I enjoy watching his talk show, because I think he's funny but not in

a silly way, because I've read a pretty insightful interview with him a while back... and because I got the hardcover at a good bargain price :-)) I didn't know what to expect from a book that goes by the title of "The Life and Loves of a He Devil" but let me tell you, it's funny, sad, ridiculous, wise, disgusting, entertaining, and it will give you some food for thought, too.

I've liked him for quite a while and his bio is well written and very entertaining but he got me with the following:

[...] There have been various attempts at relationships but nothing has lasted very long. [...] They have all drifted in and out of my life. I never blame myself but it is glaringly obvious that I am the common denominator in all these failed relationships. I have to ask myself if I really want the 'happy ever after' and the answer seems to be no. I like having someone around who will come out for dinner, go for holidays and even have the occasional fumble in the bedroom but I'm not sure I'm built for sharing my entire life and heart. Being with someone should double your joy and yet I find it halved. Nor is being alone something I fear; in fact, when offered the choice, I seem to embrace it. [...] I must admit I feel fairly content being solo. I'm not pretending being alone makes me ecstatically happy but I'm not sad, and that already seems like quite a lot in life.(Taken from the chapter "Men")

These words are like cool linen on a very sore spot. Sore, not because I keep scratching it but others do by constantly telling me that one day, oh yes, one day I will find The One and then I, too, will ride into the sunset. And I should get my arse outside and start looking for him now because really, all this being single is not healthy.

Well, the above paragraph alone made picking up the book worth my while, and for that, I want to kiss Graham Norton. There's a lot more good and wise insights on a variety of topics (friendship, gratitude, family, life's priorities) but this one stuck.

Not your usual celeb bio. Go + pick it up. It's worth it.

Shirley Revill says

I listened to the audiobook and the narration was absolutely brilliant. In fact I thought the whole book was absolutely brilliant. Final thoughts absolutely brilliant. Okay, maybe it's just brilliant.

Gabrielle says

This was staring down the barrel of a one star review when he wrote a genuinely adorable chapter on divas. His telling of Liza's wedding was what I read memoir, as a genre, for. His chapter on men was more graphic than he implies.

Nadja says

There are some funny chapters in here but in the end not much really stayed long in my mind.

Charlotte Jones says

I love Graham Norton's late-night show on the BBC so I thought I'd check out his latest autobiography.

Graham Norton's narration made this book all the more enjoyable as his voice really added to the way it was written. Though some sections were a little slow at points, I was surprised that not only did Norton make me laugh, but I was actually crying on my way to work listening to one of his stories. I think that the presentation of his career progression was an honest and inspiring one.

This isn't my favourite autobiography I've read so far but it is an entertaining one. I'd recommend it if you are already familiar with Graham Norton's work and I'd be interested in picking up his recent fiction offering.

Melissa Anderson says

I'm a huge fan of Graham and his humor so naturally I picked this book off the shelf knowing that I would enjoy it. The format of the book is great, with Graham talking about eight different things that he loves, one for each chapter. All the while he gives us the background of his life and tells funny stories about his adventures. I especially enjoyed the chapters on his dogs and Ireland. I recommend to fans and anyone who fancies having a funny, enjoyable read!

Iola says

Anyone who has watched and enjoyed one of Graham Norton's TV chat shows will know he's funny, irreverent, and gay (both happy and homosexual) with a distinct voice. If any of that bothers you, this isn't the book to read, because his irreverent voice shines through in this memoir. It's as though he's reading (and no, this wasn't an audiobook). I enjoy Norton, so I enjoyed this book.

Norton wrote a "then I did this" autobiography when he was forty, and *The Life and Loves of a He Devil* memoir is quite different. It is structured along a series of themes of things he loves—dogs, Ireland, New York, divas, booze, men and work—capped off by things he loves to hate. As such, it bounces all over the place in terms of timing: boyfriends he broke up with in the "Dogs" chapter reappear and disappear throughout the memoir, as do home, locations and jobs.

He has some fascinating tales about people he has worked with and hosted on his various chat shows, but what really shines through is his own strong personality—and humility. He's as surprised as anyone he's become so successful, and doesn't take it for granted or believe he has somehow 'earned' it. That also comes through in his show, which hosts a mix of the almost-famous, famous and mega-famous, and while Norton is at ease with all of them, there are some guests he is clearly thrilled to get to meet, just like a teenage girl meeting her idol (he actually tells a funny story about meeting idols: they are usually better admired from afar).

At the very end, he says:

"The final thanks must go to you, the reader ... If you watch or listen to any of my shows, thanks for that as well. None of what I do actually matters, but without an audience it really would be pointless."

I found that refreshing.

Norton fans will enjoy this book, but anyone who isn't a fan should steer well clear. It's definitely not a clean read, but it is an excellent example of memoir (as opposed to biography) in that it's all about themes and ideas, not necessarily chronology and events.

David Highton says

Graham Norton writes this autobiographical book at age 50, ten years after a more standard chronological autobiography, so this is grouped thematically around his loves - dogs, divas, work etc. Norton is a very funny and pretty camp chat show presenter and Radio DJ and had an earlier career as a stand-up, so I was expecting this to be very humourous. In reality, parts of it are funny but all in all I found it an easy read but generally pretty uninspiring and disappointing (certainly compared with the promotional blurb)
