



Junkie Love

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From the cow fields of Connecticut to the streets of San Francisco, Joe Clifford's *Junkie Love* traverses the lost highways of America, down the rocky roads of mental illness to the dead ends of addiction. Based on Clifford's own harrowing experience with drugs as a rock 'n' roll wannabe in the 1990s, the book draws on the best of Kerouac & the Beats, injecting a heavy dose of pulp fiction as it threads a rollicking narrative through a doomed love triangle, lit up by the many strange characters he meets along the way. Part road story, part resurrection tale, *Junkie Love* finds a way to laugh in one's darkest hour, while never abandoning its heart in search of a home.

Junkie Love Details

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Author : Joe Clifford

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From Reader Review Junkie Love for online ebook

Michelle Turlock isler says

JUNKIE LOVE will be a book that will stick with me forever. I read a book, when I was much younger, called GO ASK ALICE. I never forgot that book, until I read Clifford's book. This book cuts deep because we all have that romantic interest in living Kerouac's life and living for the moment. JUNKIE LOVE does not glamorize life on the street and looking for that next fix. Honestly, it gripped my heart and would not let go. Do not get me wrong, Clifford can write and keep you mesmerized with his words and story. The story...God, the story was so good. (I hate using a simple word like 'good')

He starts out thinking he just wants to live the *artist life* and it gets out of control with the drugs, sex, disease, and crime. It built up to a climax that had me wanting to grab him and scream it was not worth it. Just get off that freaking merry-go-round. Yes, it was easy to sit in my chair and frantically turn the pages to see what would happen and if he would survive this crazy life.

My only complaint is why I did not read this book sooner.

Gordon says

I'd feel less guilty for liking this book so much were it not true. Two sittings were all it took, pages humming by. Some passages are matter-of-fact, while others are more fanciful literary flights (I'll let you guess which are about scrapping for dope versus shooting it). It's an apt title, as Clifford often equates or conflates his heroin highs with those of female affections any given week. Some protagonists frustrate me with their endless failings to do the right thing until it's too late in the story, but I had no such issue here, knowing that junkies never really kick, tempering my expectations and leaving them open for anything to happen. *Junkie Love* will surprise you both in its depths and heights of human behavior. Repeatedly.

Brandon Tietz says

Joe Clifford, you're a talented bastard. This was quite simply just a fantastic read from cover to cover. I've read so many "drug novels" that I had become slightly numb to them, but this one snapped me out of that. It's gritty, authentic, and has plenty of heart. Great work.

I'm immediately moving on to "Lamentation."

Melanie Neale says

Joe writes, in his intro, about the fine line between truth and fiction. This is a work of fiction, but, like any good work of fiction, there is much more truth in it than the average reader suspects. And usually the small details are what are invented--the actual truth is in the terrible stuff...the emotional stuff...the stuff that makes the writer seem like the biggest asshole in the world. To write like this, you have to know yourself more than most people even dare to. I applaud Joe for sharing the things that most people would try to hide in the past, and for writing about them so damn well. His writing is unapologetic, he doesn't dumb it down or soften it

up, and it stings. Amazing. Amazing. Amazing.

Amy says

My friend Rob P. introduced me to Joe Clifford on Facebook which is how I heard of this book. I was afraid that I might not like it, and then that would be really uncomfortable since I've now had a few conversations with Mr. Clifford. After the introduction though, I was hooked and there was no doubt that I knew I would love the book. From page one, his description of the hell he was living through made it so that I felt I was walking the streets and hanging around with the people he spoke of. It was like my mind made a movie for the book and every scene in my mind is very vivid. If I were a filmmaker, I'd be good at directing this fictional film in my head. Though there is a part where he says he's basically not fond of women like me (former or current housewife addicts), it didn't discourage me from loving the book. When I started the book Joe had joked with me that he lives in the end after I had said that the previous book I had read was so intense. Joe may have been a true junkie, but he clearly is a brilliant man with the ability to write a book that easily draws the reader in for a wild ride. Thankfully, I don't have to worry anymore that I wouldn't love the book because I honestly did and it now has a place on my bookshelf to hand down to my daughters when they are older. Thanks Rob for introducing me to Joe and thank you Joe for letting me have a peek into the deepest depths of your life and thoughts.

Patrick O'Neil says

Love be a motherfucker. Uh huh. And there's no love that hurts worse than *Junkie Love*, which is the title of Joe Clifford's novel/memoir (you'll have to read Clifford's opening "Note From The Author" and decide which it is for yourself). But yeah, that twisted sickening shit every junkie does to try and keep (read: hold hostage, kidnap, bribe, or just submit to) the love of their lives – it's crazy, sad, improbable, and insane. Yet when you're in the middle of it you can't see any of that – only your warped senses of desire and need. Much like the physical addiction to heroin, using relationships have their own, if I may so boldly borrow from the 12 step literature, "incomprehensible demoralization". Which is to say, "that shit will fuck you up!" And not only does Clifford give a damn good depiction of this insanity, he exposes all the other crazy-ass thinking that goes on in a junkie's brain. The kind that led him to steal from his mom and family, leave a million rehabs, chase even crazier women, commit crimes, and almost die. Fuck yeah, *Junkie Love*!

Samantha Darling says

I don't think words can really tell you how epic this book is. Simply epic - a roller-coaster ride and the brakes have failed! It's not just a book you read, it's an experience that will stay with you, maybe not forever but certainly for a very long time. *Junkie Love* deserves to be promoted, read and praised by people all over the world. It is definitely a hard, gruelling read that had me in tears a several times but gosh it touched my heart. I could feel his pain, his anguish and his longing for real love. Personally, I am privileged that Joe divulged and shared his experiences and accounts with us through his writing. Working with heroin addicts on a daily basis, I know how hard it is for people to recognise this, admit it and 'want' to get over it. Some of the descriptions had me wincing (digging the needle into the neck through scar tissue) ouch! And others had me gagging and thinking 'Jesus Christ' (mice dropping! - read the book and you'll see!). My only teeny weeny criticism would be, I would have liked to have had a paragraph or two at the end letting us know how Joe is

getting along now - though I don't think you can call this a criticism really, can you? ;-) Well done Joe.

Jen from Quebec :0) says

This was a very well-written memoir about the horror of addiction. Joe was pretty much addicted to every drug there is, as well as addicted to women. His wife, Cathy, was a mentally disturbed woman, often hospitalized for bouts of 'madness' yet he remained married to her and introduced her to his junkie lifestyle. Marriage did not stop Joe from falling for other women, though. He moves from New England to San Francisco after reading Jack Kerouac's books while on a train in Europe and deciding that SF is the city for him. He spends ten years living in crackhouses, sheds, trailers, shelters, hospitals, rehabs and jail. He suffers from infections, skin diseases, and almost has a hand amputated after shooting 'bad speed' into a vein on his right hand. This is not a pretty or glamorous tale, but the writing is great- often entire scenes (mostly describing the city) read like long stretches of lyrical poetry. If you are looking for a no-holds-barred book on addiction, look no farther. --Jen from Quebec :0)

Justin says

Not bad, the entire novel is just a series of junkie tales and it was interesting to take a look at the life of a junkie. The story of shooting up rat shit was pretty cringe worthy. My only complaint though is that there wasn't really a story here, he spent a lot of time doing drugs and had some fun stories, and some horrible stories and then he got clean. The end. I got this free to review and it was entertaining enough. But I do think I would have spent more than a couple bucks on it.

Bark says

Kindle FREE today @ Amazon.

Scott Waldyn says

There's a lot I want to compliment the author regarding this book, but I don't know where to start. It's one of those books that leaves you mulling over what you just read as the ending seems to arrive too soon. As a reader, you want to stick around; you want to see where the author goes from here. He's bared so much of his soul to you, sparing none of the visceral, gritty details, that you feel a kinship - a friendship formed. In a way, I felt like Dr. Stevens at the end of this book (he's a character near the latter parts), watching from a distance the journey of a heroin addict as he struggles and fights his way to sobriety.

As a memoir, this is an undoubtedly amazing one. The prose is solid, and there's an inherent beauty to it too. It's like watching a single, solitary snowflake glide down from the sky up close as some sort of devastating mushroom cloud erupts in the background. Beauty in a dark world teeming with disease and shady characters.

The author, as I mentioned, spares no details. He's upfront and honest. He tells us the things we're itching to

know, and he tells us the things we'd shy away from - the hard, cold realities of what addiction can do to an individual. We get both the fantasy and the sludge at the bottom of the gutter. It's this combination of beautiful prose and blunt honesty that reels the readers in. We trek through this muck, sometimes unwillingly, with him, hoping (praying) that there's a lit torch at the end of this dark voyage, that everything will be okay.

This book really resonates with the reader on a deeply personal level. That said, I feel this is a must read, and it'll stick with you. I know I won't forget it.

Jourdaine says

Powerful book. Took me a couple of extra days to finish it, but it was one of those intense novels I needed to take a break from every now and then. Joe Clifford has a strong, honest voice. Although he wronged friends and loved ones and made so many poor decisions that made me want to scream, I couldn't help but root for him to improve his life and get better. This novel is a definite five stars. Loved every page of it.

Christa Wojo says

Junkie Love is a romance, but it doesn't so much involve the women in the book. It's fundamentally a love story about heroin.

We follow the narrator from past to present and back again, from speed freaks' trailer floors, to homeless shelters, to rehabs. We walk with him into the very depths of earthly hell—cesspools of disease and despair populated by hopeless characters that make you doubt that there is any redemption for the human race. How do these people become this way? How do they live with themselves? They do, and everyday they are fighting by the hour to extinguish a hunger that will never be satiated.

The characters flux in and out of each other's lives. Friends are made and lost. Lovers are sworn to and left behind. But throughout the book no one really touches the heart and soul of another because the drugs seal them in a membrane that keeps them from ever truly connecting. Together yet separate, they are companions in addiction—the one true love being that perfect high.

Joe Clifford's prose is reminiscent of The Beats—romantic, poetic, and sonorous, making a nice juxtaposition to the emotional and physical muck the main character wades through. The narrator describes his surroundings with reverence, especially San Francisco, and his love for all that surrounds him simmers beneath the darkest of subject matter.

Junkie Love demonstrates just how much an addict is willing to sacrifice for one more fix. It also follows a hero's journey—from boyhood dreams, to grown up disappointment, and eventually a homecoming to his true being.

Ryan Leone says

Honest. That's the first word that pops in my mind when I think of this book. I loved it so much that I just read it for the second time this year. I was a heroin addict for a decade, so I tend to be interested in films or books that depict addiction. What made this book stand out, was its emotional honesty. It was a candid confessional, almost like a therapy session that you're listening in on. The way it bounced back and forth, from coast to coast, relationship to relationship, was all done with dizzying recollection. I remember reading a quote once that said something like, "the best writers are the ones with the best memories." Joe Clifford has a memory to a fault, where he unabashedly shows us his warts and all. He doesn't care if you judge him for the grime, he's presenting his life without a filter. It's an amazing accomplishment and a terrific comeback story. I actually got emotional at the end of this book, and that's really saying something for someone as jaded as me. One of the best addiction memoirs of all time (Clifford says it can be taken as a memoir or novel in the foreword, trust me, no novel is capable of such honesty.)

Keith Nixon says

Junkie Love portrays the author's existence as a drug addict.

This is one hell of a book. It reminds me of another I reviewed, Just Like That by Les Edgerton. The subject matter is entirely different, the parallel lies in the incredible honesty that both authors apply in their work. In Junkie Love the author charts his decline from light drug user to utterly messed up waste of space and then recovery. I truly struggle to understand how Clifford actually survived.

The writing style is interesting and unusual, a mix of past tense flashback chapters in the past tense interspersed with others in present tense. It's unfair to say the narrative is confusing, the thread does move about, but it conveys the mental state of a junkie. We're not talking lucid here, memories are jumbled for the straightest of people, never mind those who spend most of their times either high or hunting down their next fix.

The author is incredibly blunt about the life he led, the places (dumps really) he lived (like Hepatitis Heights) and the things he did to survive. I doubt 99% of the population would never experience anything like the events in Junkie Love. Here's an example:

I didn't last long. Like every other job I've ever had, I was fired from this one, too. As the summer nights grew shorter, my heroin problem grew worse, and a quarter gram of speed just wasn't enough to drag me from the other side of town fast enough, especially if I was chasing down smack. Heroin first, speed second, cocaine third and then the other stuff like food and shelter. That was my hierarchy of needs.

Then there are the supporting characters. Minor ones with nicknames (e.g. Gluehead) come and go but there are a handful of constants – the author's wife, Catherine, who has serious mental health issues and is dealt with in the past tense chapters, Amy a junkie girlfriend in the present tense and his family who are in both. Ultimately almost all these relationships fade, only the author's family is there at the end (remarkable given what he put them through).

Here's an example of the writing, and one of the characters:

Oksana was boiling cat heads in a big pot on the stove when I got back to the apartment. Oksana collected road kill, cooking off the fur and using the bleached bits of skull as jewelry. A homeless, teenaged speed dealer, she'd race the midnight streets of San Francisco on her skateboard, a demon pixie draped in shiny beads and necklaces delivering product, two giant guard dogs snapping at her side like the Hounds of Hell.

Brilliant, but shocking stuff.

****Originally reviewed for Books and Pals blog. May have receive free review copy.****
