



# Claire DeWitt and the Bohemian Highway

*Sara Gran*

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## Claire DeWitt and the Bohemian Highway Sara Gran

*The eagerly awaited second book in the buzzed-about Claire DeWitt mystery series, featuring “one of the genre’s most original characters in years . . . as if David Lynch directed a Raymond Chandler novel.”*  
(CNN)

When Paul Casablancas, Claire DeWitt’s musician ex-boyfriend, is found dead in his Mission District home, the police are convinced it’s a simple robbery. But Claire knows nothing is ever simple.

With the help of her new assistant, Claude, Claire follows the clues, finding hints to Paul’s fate in her other cases—especially that of a missing girl in the gritty 1980s East Village and a modern-day miniature horse theft in Marin. As visions of the past reveal the secrets of the present, Claire begins to understand the words of the enigmatic French detective Jacques Silette: “The detective won’t know what he is capable of until he encounters a mystery that pierces his own heart.” And love, in all its forms, is the greatest mystery of all—at least to the world’s greatest PI.

An addictive new adventure featuring an irresistible heroine.

## Claire DeWitt and the Bohemian Highway Details

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Author : Sara Gran

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## From Reader Review Claire DeWitt and the Bohemian Highway for online ebook

### Dan Schwent says

When her ex-boyfriend is murdered, Claire DeWitt goes on the case. But what does it have to do with the other case she's working on, The Case of the Missing Horses, or one from her past, The Case of the End of the World? And is there enough cocaine in the San Francisco area for Claire to find her ex-boyfriend's murderer?

**This is the eighth book in my Kindle Unlimited Experiment. For the 30 day trial, I'm only reading books that are part of the program and keeping track what the total cost of the books would have been.**

In the second book in the series, Claire DeWitt continues being the world's greatest detective. This time, Claire's mission is a much more personal one. As she digs through Paul Casablancas' past, she also confronts her own, when she and Tracy were looking for a missing girl in Brooklyn when they were teenagers.

As with the previous book, Claire uses unconventional methods like dreams, tarot cards, and copious amounts of cocaine to keep things going after she exhausts conventional methods. Who knew clues like a missing guitar and poker chips could snowball like they did. Once again, Claire proves she's the World's Greatest Detective.

She also proves she's just barely skating along the border of genius and insanity, getting more self-destructive as the case progresses with her cocaine and pain pills. The case from the past in Brooklyn gives us a glimpse of how Claire got to where she is today.

The second book leaves a lot of questions unanswered, paving the way for the third and final book. Who is the one leaving copies of Detection for people to find? How was it Claire and her friends were the only people to read the Cynthia Silverton books when they were kids? And who was it that cliffhanged Claire's ass at the end of this book?

The writing, as with the previous book, is superb. It reminds me of Megan Abbott and George Pelecanos writing a Nancy Drew mystery. I enjoyed this one slightly less than the first Claire DeWitt book but it was still a great read. 4.5 out of 5 stars.

**Current Kindle Unlimited Savings Total: \$48.10.**

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### Toby says

Fantastic. Very close to being a masterpiece. I love how Gran took the bold step to create a very different novel to the first entry in the series. Choosing to avoid a straight continuation of her quirky private eye tale, sending Claire DeWitt out on just another case etc, this odyssey is as much a portrait of despair and addiction and denial as it is a hardboiled detective story, something that verges on being comparable to classics of the genre such as *The Long Goodbye* or *The Last Good Kiss*. I don't have the time to do this wonderful novel justice with a comprehensive review but if you love noir and bleak literary private eye tales then Sara Gran's

Claire DeWitt books are for you.

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## **Carol. says**

“‘That’s wonderful,’ I said.

‘Do you really think so?’ Lydia said. ‘Do you really think it’s wonderful?’

Did I really think it was wonderful? Wonderful was probably an exaggeration. I thought it was fine. Maybe even good. I couldn’t say the last time I thought anything was exactly wonderful. This implied more joy than I may ever have felt. But that was what she wanted to hear.’”

\*\*\*\*\*

Claire is a mess. A word of advice to those that allow her in their homes—keep your drugs locked up, as she’ll be in the medicine cabinet hunting for Valium and oxycodone as soon as your back is turned. You know Claire. I was friends with her in college. I’m not precisely sure if I love the character, or my memory of the Claire-like friend. Beautiful. Burning with intelligence. Supremely dysfunctional in an utterly honest way. Prone to exploiting and helping those around her in equal amounts. Not with maliciousness, mind you; more an instinctual focus on meeting her own needs, her desperate attempt to fill the holes in her psyche. And yet, despite all those dysfunctional behaviors, it’s heartache for friends to walk away. (Come to think of it, I’m in a Claire-like relationship with a certain book site right now).

Because I’m doing my best to limit dysfunctionality, I’ll continue my review--as well as speculation about the author--at

<http://clsiewert.wordpress.com/2013/0...>

or

<http://carols.booklikes.com/post/6797...>

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## **judy says**

It’s not that the empress has no clothes--it’s that she can’t find them because she’s coked out of her head. I truly loved the first Claire DeWitt. I was ready to be just as blown away by this one. I even saved it for last in my stack of books just so I could savor it. I’ve never done that before. All was well when I started out. I felt the rush I’d had with the first Claire. I was experiencing a new kind of mystery writing--until I wasn’t. As I read on her whole way of detecting and the mentors she’d had became less and less interesting. It didn’t take long for it to reach stale. I kept plodding through because, just like Claire suddenly knows what’s on the other side of a door, I knew in my heart it wasn’t going to get better but I’d still get some phrases to enjoy. Gran can be an amazingly creative writer but the few gems I find aren’t worth reading the whole book. As for

her little droplets of philosophy/wisdom most are useless or worse if you actually read them. Frankly, I get more enlightenment from the musings of Henri, Le Chat Noir, the Web's first existential philosopher cat.  
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## **Cynthia says**

I really love these books. I can't help it. Why isn't everyone talking about Clair all the time?

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## **Doug Hoffman says**

There's so much goodness in this novel, it's hard to know where to begin. First, as in *Claire DeWitt and the City of the Dead*, this is a novel of obsession. In high school, Claire Dewitt and her friends Kelly and Tracy are transformed by a book on detection by (fictional author) Jacques Silette. Silette's book is far more a metaphysical treatise than a how-to manual; Silette's is a philosophy that forever marks its believers. Silette's students are like shepherding bodhisattvas whose role is to bring not enlightenment but truth to their clients. Claire is monomaniacal in pursuit of the truth, and in the world of this novel (as, I suspect, in the real world), this is a torturous monomania that's at least as savage to the detective as it is to the client.

Second, this is a hellish love story -- not a "Silly Love Songs" kind of love story, but a "Love Will Tear Us Apart" love story. Claire has long since broken up with musician Paul Casablancas when she finds out from the police that he has been shot to death in his home. The police want Claire involved not for her badass detection skills, but to handle the distraught wife, Lydia, also a musician, also a friend/acquaintance of Claire's. The story of Paul's relationships with these women is heartbreaking.

Third, this is a novel of subculture: not just the musicians' subculture, but also the drug subculture. Some readers might find Claire's drug use a turnoff, but this is only a modern-day riff on a very old genre trope (think of Philip Marlowe and his bottle of rye). Anyone who thinks Gran is glamorizing drug use must have read this novel half asleep. In any case, Claire's drug use is absolutely true to character. I found it an extremely effective means for showing Claire's internal pain.

A big part of *Bohemian Highway* is a flashback to Claire and Tracy's investigation of the missing teenager, Chloe. Gran has a blast turning the YA girl detective genre on its head: young Claire as Nancy Drew, if Nancy were a borderline alcoholic truant. Its connection to the main plot-line? Both relate strongly to the novel's core conflict, which is Claire's destruction or redemption.

This novel brought me to tears a few times, and choked me up more times than I could count. Maybe that doesn't sound like much fun to some readers, and if you're more into the bonhomie of an Agatha Christie protagonist, Claire may not be your thing. But it's very cool when an author can make me feel that deeply about a character. It really doesn't happen that often, and I think it has some kinship with real magic. Just technique, but awesome technique. So few authors pull it off.

I've been reading Sara Gran ever since her 2003 novel *Come Closer*. *Dope* (2006) was better, and *Claire DeWitt and the City of the Dead* (2012) better still. Clearly, this is an author who is as dedicated to her craft as her newest protagonist is to detection -- each novel has been better than the last. So I guess I shouldn't have been surprised that Ms. Gran's second Claire Dewitt novel affected me so deeply.

Gran is an author who understands the tropes of the hard-boiled genre well enough to play with and milk those tropes for all they're worth. "Hard-boiled" doesn't begin to describe Claire, by the way. She's more like an egg fried on a hot sidewalk.

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### **Lori says**

A smart, funny, flawed detective working around the rules. I liked the first one a bit more and plan on reading the next one.

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### **Jamila says**

Claire DeWitt is one of the most exciting, crazily-flawed, kick-ass women characters. She is a brilliant and fearless detective. Yet, an emotionally crippled addict. Though the answer to the novel's main mystery was not a surprise, Sara Gran expertly weaves in other intriguing mysteries from Claire's past and present. This novel is dark and raw and highlights cool things about the Bay (SF/Oakland/Berkeley/Pt.Reyes. Further, there are awesome NYC scenes as well! It's not as good as the first novel set in New Orleans; but, it's a great read!

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### **David says**

The second Claire DeWitt book is as quirky as entertaining as the first; Sara Gran has managed to create a unique and offbeat female detective who so far drags you along on her cases because she's odd, intuitive, empathetic, a hot mess, and uses drugs and palm readings as often as she uses detective work, without involving us in an extensive backstory of past cases and subplots running through multiple books. Though there are recurring characters and references to *Claire DeWitt and the City of the Dead*, so this series may face the danger other detective series have succumbed to, of becoming less about the detective work and the cases and more about the ever-growing circle of friends and associates that make up the main character's supporting cast.

Claire DeWitt was taught by Constance Darling, the "world's greatest detective," who was a student of the famous detective Jacques Silette, the French "father of detective work." Gran has already created her own little mythos here in an ostensibly mundane detective series. In the second book of Claire's adventures, she is back home in San Francisco, when an ex-lover is killed. Claire, naturally, is put on the case. The wife is the most obvious suspect, of course, but solving her ex's murder is really the least interesting thing about this book - when all is revealed, it's the journey we remember.

We learn more about Claire's adolescence, as the book alternates between her current case and one of her

first, back when she and one of her teenage friends were aspiring "girl detectives" and set out to find a missing friend in New York City. This turns out to be loosely tied to her current case, but mostly it's a deeper delve into what makes Claire so fucked up. Our protagonist unashamedly snorts lines of coke before interviewing people, passes out in bathrooms after one-night stands, has visions which are probably just hallucinations, and considers signs and omens to be clues. Yet she dispenses a sort of gritty worldly wisdom wrapped in New Age trappings, and always reminds us that what she is looking for is not justice, but truth, the thing her clients usually don't actually want.

Definitely one of my series to follow; Claire DeWitt is a strange bird and I hope she has more trips ahead of her.

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## **James Thane says**

I was a big fan of Sara Gran's first novel featuring Claire DeWitt, *Claire DeWitt and the City of the Dead*, which was set in post-Katrina New Orleans. To say that Claire is an unconventional detective would be the height of understatement, and the character was fresh, quirky and very intriguing. Additionally, Gran did an excellent job of portraying the city in the wake of the disaster, and she was particularly good at capturing the lives of the city's young, poverty-stricken African-American males, many of whom have no real prospects and very little hope.

For those who haven't yet encountered Claire, she's a disciple of the French detective, Jacques Silette, author of the book *Detection*, which changed Claire's life when she discovered the book as a young teenager. Claire later did her apprenticeship in New Orleans under the tutelage of Silette's most outstanding protégé, Constance Darling, and when Constance died, Claire advanced to the position of World's Greatest Detective.

Claire is heavily tattooed; she drinks and takes drugs to excess, as often as not stealing the drugs from the medicine cabinets of unsuspecting friends. To solve her mysteries, she relies on mysticism and dreams as much as on more traditional methods of investigation.

This case begins when a musician named Paul Casablanco is murdered in what appears to be a burglary gone wrong. His home has been invaded; several guitars are missing, and the police are ready to write off the murder as incidental to the burglary that Casablanco apparently interrupted. But Claire has a personal tie to the case; she and Paul were once lovers, and when Paul's widow asks Claire for help, Claire assumes the responsibility of attempting to determine what really happened.

Claire investigates for the next several months with the aid of her new assistant, Claude, a graduate school dropout. In and around the investigation, Claire ruminates on the disappearance years earlier of one of her best friends, a girl named Tracy. As teenagers, Claire, Tracy and a girl named Kelly were inseparable. They discovered Silette's book, *Detection* together and began investigating mysteries of their own. Then, shortly after they solved a particularly difficult case, Tracy simply disappeared and neither Claire nor Kelly ever heard from her again. Tracy's disappearance was a critical element in the first Claire DeWitt novel and we now get the backstory that fills in many of the blanks.

As the above will doubtless suggest, we're not in Cabot Cove anymore, Toto, and this is not your grandmother's traditional mystery novel. It may not appeal to every fan of crime fiction, but it will certainly intrigue those who are willing to take a chance on a story and a character who are more than a little bit out of the mainstream.

If I have a concern about this book, it would be simply that it suffers a bit by comparison to the first in the series. Claire no longer seems quite as fresh as she did in her first adventure, although this is probably to be expected. More than that, Gran did such a magnificent job with the setting of the first book, that this one inevitably suffers a bit by comparison. The disaster suffered by New Orleans allowed Gran a canvas to work with that simply doesn't exist in San Francisco, although it's a great city in its own right. It also struck me that the supporting cast here is not as interesting and well-drawn as the one in *City of the Dead*, but these are relatively minor complaints, and I'm looking forward to the third and apparently final installment of the Claire DeWitt trilogy.

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### **Kasa Cotugno says**

As I remarked in yesterday's review of the first Claire DeWitt novel, Sara Gran is one of those writers who can't write fast enough for this reader. Her style is punchy and solid, with believable dialogue that zings. I didn't know until after completing this second book that she has written for one of my favorite tv shows, Southland. She populates her books with characters she only could have met and elaborated on, as with the cities that Claire inhabits. There are more than one mysteries contained herein, and she gives her cases whimsical titles that almost make them into Nancy Drew books for adults (The Case of the Green Parrot, for example). But as with Jackson Brodie's continued inquest into his sister's death in Kate Atkinson's quartet of novels, Claire is haunted by the seemingly unsolvable disappearance of her best friend in 1987, Gran has said that she's only planning to write 4 novels in this series, which makes me as sad as Zoe Ferraris's announcement that she's stopping at the 3 novels in her Saudi Arabian thrillers. Some authors just know when to quit, but that makes it hard for those of us who admire their work.

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### **Mara says**

This one is definitely really a 4.5er for me. I think Sara Gran really brought Claire DeWitt to a new level in this one. The integration of cases past and present gave this book a cadence that made it hard for me to put it down (I think I read it in three days or so). A pleasure to read, while still thought-provoking on a profound level.

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### **Kyra Leseberg (Roots & Reads) says**

Claire DeWitt, the world's greatest detective, returns to California after solving a case in New Orleans (book 1, Claire DeWitt and the City of the Dead). Her ex-boyfriend Paul Casablancas, a well known local musician, is found dead in his home and police believe he was shot after surprising an intruder during a robbery in progress. The killer took several guitars and locked the door from the inside when leaving the home.

After learning the door was locked from the inside, Claire believes the murder was much more personal than a robbery. She looks back on her relationship with Paul and takes a closer look at his marriage and his music with help from old friends and her new assistant Claude.

Claire has a habit of reminiscing on old cases that lead her to clues in present cases. As a follower of master PI Jacques Silette and his book *Detection*, she knows that nothing is ever as simple as it seems and there are

no coincidences, only fate.

Working this personal case has Claire relying heavily on drugs (again) and more haunted than ever by another unsolved personal case: the disappearance of her best friend Tracy when they were teenagers. Tracy's disappearance was discussed at length in the first novel and we get quite a bit of new information through flashbacks in this book.

Once again Claire uses copious amounts of drugs, mystical dreams (hallucinations perhaps?), and information from some strange characters to lead her to the truth.

On a self destructive path to destiny, Claire manages to solve the case of Paul's murder while leaving many unanswered questions: how is such a small amount of people finding the Silette novel *Detection* and then finding each other? How did Claire and her friends Kelly and Tracy have copies of the Cynthia Silverton mysteries in their childhood after we find out how extremely limited the copies were? What happened to Tracy?

So basically this book was a mystery within several other mysteries where we're building a case for all but solving a few at a time.

*Claire DeWitt and the Bohemian Highway* ends with a frustrating cliffhanger. The PI has located the only known remaining copies of the Cynthia Silverton books from her childhood and mails a letter to the address in an ad for a detective home study course.

She then heads out of town in search of Andray (a character from the first novel) who she believes is destined to become another Silette detective, after he fails to show up in Las Vegas to meet a friend. She lets her assistant Claude know finding Andray is her next case -- and then she realizes it's not her paranoia: a Lincoln is following her through Oakland...

You won't get any spoilers from me! I'll just end with this quote from Silette:

"Mysteries never end. And we solve them anyway, knowing we are solving both everything and nothing. We solve them knowing the world will surely be as poorly or even worse off than before. But this is the piece of life we have been given authority over, nothing else; and while we may ask why over and over, no one yet has been given an answer."

If Claire has taught me anything, it's that everything is connected. I can't wait to read the third book in this series to see if we get answers about who is driving the Lincoln and why they're following Claire, Silette's book *Detection* and the group of followers it's created, the Cynthia Silverton ad, Tracy's disappearance, and how they all connect!

For more full reviews, visit [www.rootsandreads.wordpress.com](http://www.rootsandreads.wordpress.com)

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## **Annie Lee Phillips says**

This is the second in Sara Gran's Claire DeWitt series after *Claire DeWitt and the City of the Dead*, and I simply cannot wait for #3 to come out. Claire DeWitt is not your ordinary detective. In addition to more standard methods of detection, Claire relies on mind altering substances, dreams, apparitions, signs, and symbols to get the job done. I think CNN put it best: "as if David Lynch directed a Raymond Chandler novel."

In addition to the mystery at hand, the long-term mystery through both books has been the decades-long disappearance of Claire's best friend and partner Tracy from their Brooklyn neighborhood. The first book, *The City of the Dead*, has Claire trying to locate an ADA in post-Katrina New Orleans. In *the Bohemian Highway*, we are taken to San Francisco as Claire tried to solve the brutal murder of her ex-boyfriend, popular local musician Paul Casablancas.

Gran is skilled at evoking a powerful sense of place, as well as creating a spooky ambiance as Claire not only tries to solve the mystery at hand, but also deals with the fallout from Tracy's disappearance and her own particularly vicious demons. After reading this second installment, Sara Gran has already become one of my favorite authors. My next move is to go back and read her first two stand-alone novels – *Dope*, and *Come Closer*.

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## **Dorothy says**

Vintage, vintage, vintage. On every page. Sometimes, seemingly, in every paragraph. For about two-thirds of this book, vintage was Sara Gran's favorite adjective. All of her characters wear vintage clothing. They all shop in vintage record shops or book stores or clothing and accessory stores. Often, they even drive vintage cars. Okay, we get the idea. It's cool to love vintage things.

This is the kind of quirk that can irritate me almost beyond endurance when reading a book - the repetitive use of a word. Yes, I realize that might be perceived as petty. So sue me! It's my pet peeve and I'm sticking with it.

At a certain point in the book, Gran seemed to realize what she was doing and she stopped using the word, cold turkey. Never used it again. But she found synonyms or other ways of conveying the same idea.

I really liked Gran's first Claire DeWitt book which was set in New Orleans, and I had looked forward to reading this one. It started off very well. I was happy to make Claire's acquaintance again and to see her in her home city of San Francisco. The mystery that she was engaged in solving - who murdered an old lover of hers - was one that intrigued me. Then I got hung up on the repetition of "vintage" and Claire's downward spiral into drug addiction and the whole thing just kind of fell apart for me.

In *Bohemian Highway*, we meet a Claire who is clearly out of control and not functioning well in her life's destiny as a detective. She spends much of her time searching out sources for purchasing cocaine and whenever she visits anyone's house or apartment, either as part of the investigation or just because, she seeks the bathroom and checks the bathroom cabinet for drugs. If she finds Percocet or Vicodin or Valium or anything else that will help her get high, she takes one or two of the pills and puts the rest in her purse. If she finds cocaine in the house, she steals it.

She is, in short, a mess. Her nose is constantly bleeding. Half the time it's not clear whether she's experiencing reality or some drug-induced dream. It is thoroughly depressing.

And yet, we are led to believe that her finely honed instinct for detection is totally intact and that she is able to intuit the clues that she needs to eventually solve this case. I have no experience with cocaine, but somehow, I just don't think that's the way it works, especially when you are mixing cocaine with Vicodin, Percocet, Valium, Adderall or whatever else the next medicine cabinet holds. Yes, one has to suspend

disbelief when reading fiction and allow the author his/her artistic license, but this was too much for me.

Sara Gran is a talented writer and there were parts of the book that I really, really liked. They mostly occurred in the first third of so of the novel. In the end, I gave the book three stars, but if I could have given two-and-a-half, that would have been a truer reflection of my reaction.

I'm sure that Gran had a method in mind and that she was working from a plan in presenting her main character in the way she did, but I can't really discern what the purpose was. The book ended on a cliffhanger, so I am sure that another entry in the Claire DeWitt story is forthcoming. I hope that her creator will see fit to put Claire back in control of her addiction and allow her to become a more likable human being. I'll be less eager to read the next book unless I have an inkling that something like that has happened.

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