

White Palace

Glenn Savan

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Max is twenty-seven and recently, tragically widowed. He's an advertising copywriter on his way up. To his shock and confusion, he suddenly finds himself in the midst of the affair of his life – an incongruous passion for a lusty, hard-drinking forty-two-year-old White Palace waitress.

She's from the wrong side of town. She's undereducated. She doesn't begin to compare to Janey, Max's lost wife. But Max can't escape his obsession for the salty, sultry, sensuous Nora. Though the affair begins with their raw carnal attraction, Max discovers, to his horror, that he may be falling in love with this woman from Dogtown.

In his first novel, Glenn Savan presents a steamy love dilemma with wit and compassion. In Max and Nora, he creates two unforgettable characters who rival any oddball duo in contemporary literature.

White Palace Details

Date : Published September 1st 1988 by Bantam

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Author : Glenn Savan

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From Reader Review White Palace for online ebook

Jessica says

A fascinating read--very different from the movie (which I saw after I read the book). A story of opposites and human concerns and realities.

I read this because Glenn was one of my writing teachers in college--and who can resist reading something that someone they knew wrote. This was what I expected from him. His characters are not heroes or anti-heroes; they are people, flawed as all of us are.

The ending should come as no surprise.

Lizzann says

I borrowed this book some twenty years ago and recall enjoying it then. Over e years and a couple of moves it was packed away and forgotten. Before contacting my long lost friend to return the book, I decided to rearm it again. It was even better than I remembered!

Published and set in 1987, the story takes place in St. Louis. This was my first connection. Max meets Nora in a bar called Cousin Hugo's where I by chance had been served a scotch on the rocks at the age of 17! My second connection. Max is a 27 year old Jewish widower who has been living one-foot-in-the-grave for that last two years. He works in the creative department of an ad agency Nora is a 42 year old Dogtown/So St Louis Hoosier who never finished HS. It's a Pygmilain sort of story with both characters undergoing significant changes. It also has strong ties to "Of Human Bondage". It was an entertaining read. My favorite word learned in this novel is callipygian - from the Greek meaning large or well-shaped buttocks!!!

Glenn Savannah died in 2006, after life long suffering with RA. I will definitely seek out his other novels

Akemi G. says

I wish this book is more available today on Kindle, etc. It's one of the best love stories I've read, and understandably, was made into major movie, which was also quite good (even with some changes).

On the surface, it's low and racy. Well, if we are to discuss romantic love honestly, we cannot avoid talking about sex. This novel dares to walk on that thin line between rawness and bareness.

The unfavorable reviews on this novel reminds me the famous quote by Oscar Wilde:
The books that the world calls immoral are the books that show the world its own shame.

P.S. I read the author's second novel, Goldman's Anatomy, too. Unfortunately, it wasn't as good as White Palace -- imho it lost the balance between that rawness and bareness.

Lisa AKA Melanie-Shaun Striker says

It's quite possible that the movie ruined any chances of a non-biased opinion on this book, being that it is one of my very favorite films. I was rather surprised this was made into a film in the first place, because I didn't find the writing particularly good, and the descriptions of her, shall we say, voluptuous figure were off-putting to say the least.

Where the film excels over the book most is how Max falls for Nora in the first place--call it brilliant acting, or primo casting or whatever, but I believed it wholeheartedly. Not so much with the book, I was questioning how these mismatched people found enough common ground to build the story into what it is. I just didn't believe it. Perhaps that is what I mean by the writing.

Just like *The Hunger* by Whitley Streiber, the book almost pissed me off because it was so different from the film, so much LESS.

Denise Cornelius says

Yikes, this was terrible and I really wanted to like it. I actually read it twice because even though I disliked it the first time. I wasn't entirely sure why. It's a pretty basic story, guy (Max) loses his wife young and meets an older woman (Nora) and they begin a relationship. I guess the part that makes this story differ is that the woman is significantly older than the guy. However my issues with it revolve around the actual plot and characterization. The story is told from Max's point of view and written like something I would have written in second grade. By that, I mean the prose has no depth to it at all. The other issue is that Nora seems really unappealing and not just because she is older, but because she is stupid (I mean like uses racial slurs and doesn't seem to know why its offensive stupid). This stupidity falls into her speech, looks, and overall demeanor. Max is equal parts attracted to her and repulsed. The repulsion I got, the attraction I didn't. And he doesn't really explain it either. The only thing I could grasp brought them together was sex. However the sex scenes are discreet or cleaned up for the book. I don't think that works. If you have book where the attraction is mostly sexual than those scenes need to be more descriptive so that the reader can at least identify. The characterization is equally awful. I never get a sense of Nora or Max's character particularly. I mean you have details about them but the details never really add up to a character.

I have seen the movie and it's better (but that isn't saying much). Normally, I think books are always better than movies. However the movie does give you at least a sense of who these two people are a little better than the book.

My assesment is skip it.

***The Angry Reader* says**

"So, AR, will I like this book? Is this the book for me?" Ah, gentle reader - allow me to advise. Have you recently read anything with Stepbrother and the title and just "omg melted into a puddle of goo?" If you said

yes to this question just move along. Do you 5 star books with heroes that have 6 packs? 8 packs? Names that belong to exotic birds and men on soap operas? Again - this is not your book, and I am not your reviewer.

But if you're here for the words, the imagery, the magic of being transported some place other than this is the book for you.

I could tell you about the story - Max is a wound up weirdo who meets white trash Nora - but it doesn't matter. In White Palace what matters are the sentences. The paragraphs. The phrases that make you murmur "goddamn" right before you set your book down and stare off into space. Maybe you'll pick it up and read that line again. 3 times. 4. Bc yeah - this kind of writing doesn't come along very often.

The book is grimy. Dirty. Sordid. And deliciously 80s. The 80s-ist thing I've ever read. There were moments I wanted to shower. Wash my hands. Sniff some Lysol. And there were more than a few moments when I wanted a tiny, greasy, grey, square burger. Better yet a sack of them. With their meaty stench.

If you're not about the story. Not about the hero. Not about the romance. But if above everything you're about the words - this is the book for you.

Helynn says

This is an inherently sweet, if quite sexually graphic, story of a May-September romance between Max, age 27, a successful advertising writer living in a chic Chicago apartment, and Nora, a 43-year-old waitress at a burger joint called White Palace. Max is recently widowed and still haunted by grief and memories of his beautiful late wife. Nora lives on the wrong side of the tracks, has no education to speak of, and has some kind of checkered past about which she is not 100 percent honest. When she and Max meet at White Palace, it is obvious that they have very little in common, but there is also some kind of connection neither one can deny. Can such a couple succeed in a long-term relationship, especially when their respective friends are so skeptical about their romance? There is a nice film version with a young, handsome James Spader as Max and lovely, but convincingly slatternly, Susan Sarandon as Nora. Fortunately, in my opinion, the sex in the film is not quite as gratuitous as it is in the novel, but the emotional chemistry between these very different people is nicely portrayed.

Leslie says

Max Baron is a 27-year-old widower from the nouveau riche side of the tracks. Nora Cromwell is a 41-year-old fast-food waitress from Dogtown. He has bourgeois tastes; she is a philistine. She's an alcoholic firecracker slob; he's a tightly wound neat freak. Before long the two are coupling on the lawn.

I read this book after having seen the movie. In the film, Susan Sarandon plays Nora. Nora is supposed to be blowsy, frowsy, unrefined. Put Susan Sarandon in all the bad make-up and mustard-colored denim you want, she'll always turn up elegant. What's compelling about Nora's character is that she's unattractive with allure, and that doesn't come across in the film. Susan Sarandon's Nora is like Audrey Hepburn's Eliza Doolittle; all it'd take is a costume change to make an easy starlet of her.

Max has the baggage you'd suspect. He describes Nora's "soft belly" and hamburger cologne with desire and repulsion. He is ashamed of Nora because he fears her reception among his family and peers. Nora is equally unnerved that they're unevenly yoked. They find each other's class and gender to be suspect. Together they are a pair of undertows.

The movie is definitely a romdram; Sarandon and Spader had chemistry and that made the romance fun. I found the book to be more brainy and less swoony. Max and Nora are conflicted. Their desire is off the charts and yet they both feel weirded out. Questions raised: What distinguishes desire from love? What draws two people together (e.g., fate, practicality, synchronicity, etc)?

Taylor says

I waver between one and two stars for this one. On the one hand, I couldn't put it down, but on the other, there were a lot of jarring and almost cheap moments that verged on misogyny. I don't think those moments were intentional, which actually makes them more unsettling. The character of Nora is always described in the most unflattering terms, and until the very end it's made clear that she's not good enough for Max (because she's older and poor and uneducated and has had a hard life, all of which are circumstances beyond her control). While her coarseness serves as an aphrodisiac for Max, it also situates him as superior to her, and he never really learns anything--I have a feeling we're meant to believe that he does, but that's so sloppily implied that I don't buy it. So I guess, actually, I kind of hated this book and its entire tone of white male chauvinism, but it was oddly compelling, so two stars it is. I wouldn't recommend it to any of my female friends, though. It really is pretty offensive. The movie version, while soapy to the extreme, is much better.

Jackson Burnett says

The novel is better than the 1990 movie with Susan Sarandon and James Spader.

White Palace tells story of a mismatched couple set in the early 1980's. The novel is unique inasmuch as it's a literary romance told from the male character's point of view. It's troubling. It's fun. It's well-written.

Author Glenn Savan died in 2003 at the age of 49 after suffering multiple maladies throughout his adult life. It would have been interesting to see what else he would have come up with had he been able to write more and longer.

Margo Candela says

I read White Palace years ago when I was much younger and it seemed so very grown up to me, like a book a real adult would read and it remains one of my favorites.

Mike Fiddleman says

i almost want to give this five star, but i'll go with four and a secret half. not only am i also a jew(ish) advertising writer from the same part of st. louis he talks about, i also worked with this guy for like a week when i was a pup of an intern. i remember one of my old girlfriends reading this over and over. oh, if you

have any doubt...of course, white palace is white castle. hmm, i should read this again soon.

Suanne Laqueur says

Yes, *that* "White Palace", the movie with James Spader and Susan Sarandon. But this is the book. And it's one of my top ten faves. Ever. One of the most beautiful, thoughtful, smart and sexy love stories. It influenced me as both a reader and a writer.

"Find out who's important to you, and act accordingly."

Alice Harbin says

Romance/Humor. A play on the "White Castle" burger places in the midwest; specifically, St. Louis. Grieving 27 yr old man 2yrs after the death of his wife, finds himself crossing paths with a 41 yr old woman he first met in a White Castle and then in a bar. He is a compassionate person and finds himself drawn to her simple ways. She is definitely a skillful lover. All his friends are pleased that he is no longer celibate, but warn him that this relationship can't last. Suddenly, she breaks it off and disappears. He is very depressed; loses his job and his mother dies. His former mother in law consoles him, helping him to make peace with his departed mother. He decides to search for Nora and finds her in NYC, living with an older man. He decides to find a job in NYC and after searching he lands one and contacts Nora again. Now she comes back to him.

The book slows down during his depressed time. Quite implausible, but endearing plot.

Doris says

Hands down, best book I've ever read.
