



Love Nina: Despatches From Family Life

By Nina Stibbe

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Being a nanny is great. Not like a job really, just like living in someone else's life. Today before breakfast Sam had to empty the dishwasher and Will had to feed the cat. Sam: I hate emptying the dishwasher. MK: We all do, that's why we take turns. Will: I hate the cat. MK: We all do, that's why we take turns. In the 1980s Nina Stibbe wrote letters home to her sister in Leicester describing her trials and triumphs as a nanny to a London family. There's a cat nobody likes, a visiting dog called Ted Hughes (Ted for short) and suppertime visits from a local playwright. Not to mention the two boys, their favourite football teams, and rude words, a very broad-minded mother and assorted nice chairs. From the mystery of the unpaid milk bill and the avoidance of nuclear war to mealtime discussions on pie filler, the greats of English literature, swearing in German and sexually transmitted diseases, Love, Nina is a wonderful celebration of bad food, good company and the relative merits of Thomas Hardy and Enid Blyton.

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Editorial Review

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Starred Review With a who's who at the beginning that ranges from film director Stephen Frears to Maxwell, the author's "ex-pony," you might guess this is not your typical memoir. Not only that, but it comprises the tuneful, descriptive letters Nina wrote in the 1980s, while she tried her hand at nannying in London, to her sister, Vic, who stayed basically at home, near Leicestershire, England. The nannied children were young Sam and Will Frears—their arty, daffy children's conversations fill the pages—living with their sharp, blunt mother, Mary-Kay Wilmers, deputy editor of the London Review of Books. Nina herself, then just 20 and new to the task of being a nanny, was a lover of London and quite the observer, documenting for her sister back home the who, the when, and her full-blown, clever, open-eyed take on the what of life at the Wilmers-Frears. Stibbe notes that nannying is "not like a job really, just like living in someone else's life," but what a funny, artist-filled life she lived, and how well she watched and participated. This is an offbeat paean to families, real and cobbled-together, to sisters and siblings, and to communicating with love. It's also a rare and wholly delectable epistolary slice of life. --Eloise Kinney

Review

I adored this book, and could quote from it forever. It's real, odd, life-affirming, sharp, loving, and contains more than one reference to Arsenal FC -- Nick Hornby * The Believer * Last year, we had Roger Mortimer's splendidly bufferish Dear Lupin: Letters to a Wayward Son. Love, Nina - funny, quirky, vivid and touching - is every bit its equal * Daily Mail (Book of the Week) * I loved this book. What a beady eye she has for domestic life, and how deliciously fresh and funny she is - a real discovery. -- Deborah Moggach, author of 'The Best Exotic Marigold Hotel' Breezy, sophisticated, hilarious, rude and aching with sweetness: Love, Nina might be the most charming book I've ever read -- Maria Semple, author of 'Where'd You Go, Bernadette' Funny, warm, life-affirming and accutely well-observed, Love, Nina is a gift that will keep on giving . . . A hoot * Metro * The snippets of dialogue and vinettes evoke the characters and atmosphere brilliantly . . . Funny, sharp * Evening Standard * Even if Adrian Mole wrote about the Primrose Hill set, it wouldn't be as funny and absorbing as Love, Nina * Psychologies * Like a 1980s Mary Poppins with a sense of humour * Stylist * The funniest new writer to arrive in years -- Andrew O'Hagan Adrian Mole meets Mary Poppins mashed up in literary north London . . . Enormous fun * Bookseller *

About the Author

Nina Stibbe was born in Leicester. She is the author of Love, Nina, which was shortlisted for the Waterstones Book of the Year Award and won Non-Fiction Book of the Year at the 2014 National Book Awards, and the massively acclaimed novel Man at the Helm, which was shortlisted for the Bollinger Everyman Wodehouse Prize for Comic Fiction. She lives in Cornwall with her partner and two children.

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