

The Stockbroker: Insider Information

J.R. Shine

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What if *Sex and the City*'s Carrie Bradshaw came from a wealthy family and became a stockbroker? That might be overstating it a bit, but chick lit does meet finance in J.R. Shine's difficult-to-put-down novel *The Stockbroker: Insider Information*.

Jennifer Palmer, the stockbroker of the book's title, is a recent college graduate, young and inexperienced. After breaking off her engagement to a suitor she doesn't really love, Jennifer moves home to finish college and begins a career in the rough-and-tumble world of finance. Against all odds, Jennifer finds good fortune in love and money—but it may all be a bit too good to be true.

Having worked at major investment firms for nearly thirty years, Shine knows her topic well. Anyone familiar with the stockbroker trade will recognize plenty of note-perfect details. Similarly, Shine fills her writing with fun asides about other topics she knows well: food, fashion, and the South Florida lifestyle.

Glitz and glamour are present throughout the book—meals are gourmet, and fashion accoutrements are expensive. When Jennifer decides to move back in with her parents, they award her with a red convertible BMW 338i as a welcome-home present. Later, as a graduation gift, she is offered a choice of a new car, a month in Europe, or \$50,000 to invest. This might seem unsurprising, given that Jennifer's parents are demonstrably rich, but as an underdog protagonist readers are supposed to be rooting for, the cards are stacked against her.

Fortunately, Shine deftly balances the fine line between allowing readers to live vicariously through Jennifer, with her Hermes Birkin handbag and Manolo Blahnik shoes, while at the same time not dismissing her as a spoiled brat. It is fun to catch the designer names dropped throughout the book, but it is easier to cheer for Jennifer when she is braving a crass, male-dominated field and battling everything from her parents' expectations to the "no mercy" approach to investing at her firm to the wealthy Russian oligarch determined that Jennifer be his girlfriend.

Shine's writing isn't perfect—she describes a brokerage manager as having a rotund "mid-drift" instead of "midriff." But the novel features a breezy style that keeps the reader feeling as swept up in Jennifer's adventures as she is. With Jennifer flying in a private Gulfstream jet, Shine writes: "The sound of the engine lulled her into a light sleep only to be awakened by the smell of food cooking in the galley. The stewardess came by with the shrimp cocktail." A few minutes later, Jennifer is enjoying lobster and expensive wine on her way to the story's exciting conclusion.

The Stockbroker: Insider Information is an enjoyable book. The once-naive Jennifer Palmer gets a thorough education, ending this adventure a wiser, more mature young woman. If Shine has another *Stockbroker* tale in her, readers will certainly be eager to join Jennifer for the next chapter of her life.

PETER DABBENE (November 9, 2012)

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