



Pharmacology

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1993. San Francisco. The digital and pharmaceutical industries are booming. They're looking for the young, the hip, and those on the counterculture fringe to be both the face and consumer of their new world order. Recruited by an advertising agency focused on targeting a new drug to her own age demographic, Sarah Striker is grateful for the steady income, but she begins to question the side effects of the products she's pushing.

A kinetic, hyper-stylized jolt of pure energy, Herz delivers a strong follow-up to his debut novel, *The Last Block in Harlem*. Full of vibrant characters and razor-sharp dialogue, *Pharmacology* captures the voice of the Internet generation with style, heart, and soul.

Pharmacology Details

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Author : Christopher Herz

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From Reader Review Pharmacology for online ebook

Sam H Arnold says

It is always with in-trepidation that you start the second novel from an author, when you loved their first. It was with this in mind that I started Pharmacology by Christopher Herz. Would the book be as good as the first? Was this author just a one hit wonder? Could he continue his writing form into another novel to be loved?

Through this book we are taken into a world that we know exists, but may not be comfortable admitting exists. The world of pharmaceutical companies and the tactics that they use to manipulate the everyday public into buying their drugs. In essence within the book there were areas that remind me of another of my favourite books 'State of Fear' by Michael Crichton. Both depict how the everyday public can be manipulated by clever media to think in a certain way. The one line that I love from the book which describes the main thread running through the novel is

"Pharmaceutical companies were using homeless people in the city to run experiments in early clinical trials after the FDA had said that testing on mice was no longer a viable option"

However, it would be unfair just to review this book in these terms as it is so much more. The main character Sarah Striker is engaging and well written. By the end of the book you really feel like you have bonded and got to know her, warts and all. The book is written as if it is Sarah's memoirs and this is expressed well when the character at times floats from one thought to another and back again. There is a lovely subtle connection between the legal drugs used by the pharmaceutical companies and the illegal recreational drugs that some characters use. I loved the author's use of some of the old rock bands of the 80's. Growing up in the UK and having to import my favourite American music it is nice to know I didn't dream up some of these bands in my younger days.

In essence the book is a thoroughly enjoyable novel which is well written. The underlying theme in the book is written in such an engaging way that you are left pondering the ethics of these companies in society now. The theme is very different from the authors first book. However, it also has the twist towards the end, that I must be honest I didn't see coming at all. This is similar to his first novel. I feel compelled to say that this novel is better than his first. Although this leaves me feeling guilty like I have just picked my favourite child. I could write so much more about this novel but I don't want to spoil it for anyone. Go and read it yourself you will not be disappointed. My only criticism, if there was one, is that 214 pages is just not long enough. Although don't all excellent authors leave you wanting more.

August says

Ehhhh. I was not enamored by this book. The concept and the style were really interesting at first, so I pressed on, and by the time I was bored (give or take 60% through) I wanted to know how this awful depressing tale was resolved. (For the record: the ending made me cry and was more or less what I expected, but satisfying to a degree.) I'm kind of relieved it's over. I know Herz was trying to write something that would make me uncomfortable, and he succeeded. Good for him, I guess, but definitely not what I needed

while trying to pull out of a lethargic slump.

Kasa Cotugno says

This novel has caused me to open a new virtual shelf. The digital revolution is so recent, so immediater we are barely aware that the world has changed so irrevocably in such a short time. Sarah Striker is a good soul who moves to San Francisco in order to make the most money possible to help her ailing father in Kansas City. Missouri (she always stresses that distinction). Her McAllister Street housemates, a collection of x-gen "types," provide her access to the underworld of the City/ One of my favorite lines, "Junkies don't do their own laundry," sums up that experience. But the world is in transition and so is Sarah. Never forgetting her mission to save her Pops from distress, she finds herself in an escalating series of positions providing her enough money to exist and still send some home. There are surprises and twists, and the location is used most effectively. I know the neighborhood well -- lived near enough that Sarah and I might have shared a seat on the 5Fulton ;at some time or another.

Kathy says

Finding what you are looking for never looks like you think it will"... A perception of Sarah Striker.. and can be applied to most of the human race. Pharmacology is an interesting mix of cultures and worlds that intertwine in one woman's path in life for a time.. Characters are colorful and unique all unto themselves. While you see thru Sarah's eyes the journey she embarks on trying to find herself, do the right thing and help her Pops.. (which is what I call my dad) you see the people she surrounds herself with also need saving and are struggling on their own paths. A fate creates and puts the correct people in your path when it's needed she is able to get into a world that has direct connection to her own.. she is given a chance to enlighten the world with the truth.. although anonymously she feels the need to tell the tale.. In this life we trust with our hearts as Sarah learns the hard way.. but also learns what is important in this life that is so short.. We cannot go thru this life without lessons.. Loved this book.. Chris Herz story telling is to me amazing.. Sarah is someone to connect to.. Read it ... Tears shed at the end.. grab a tissue..

Mrs. Heather says

This is The Time Capsule you NEED to break open! Read this novel NOW!

For those of you who lived life through trial and error in the 90's, Pharmacology offers you an opportunity to shake your head and remember all of those experiences that should have left you rocking in a fetal position in the corner.

Christopher Herz takes you for a joy ride into the coming of age of twenty-somethings in San Francisco circa 1993. The author exposes a very real subculture of executives with a penchant for dominance and a group of vampires for hire more than willing to sate their cravings for the right price.

He introduces us to life in the cube, jacked into a computer and head set when people were still reliant upon bike messengers to transport documents. Ahhhh, what ever did we do before email and hand held devices? He holds our hand as we pass the threshold into the digital age and leave our sanity and attention span behind

under the guise of progress.

This novel is different from anything else that is out there right now because it is truthful. There is an honesty that resonates in his writing, a truth that emerges through his characters and the world they are forging. The author depicts how lost we really are when we feel we are in the most control of our destiny.

Pharmacology forces you to question why you are taking those over the counter drugs that you can't seem to get through life without. You begin to question advertising and marketing tactics. You begin to question life and how you fit into it. He forces you to think and evolve through contemplation.

Pharmacology offers a look into the past to shed light on our present and future.

If you only pick up one book this year, Pharmacology needs to be THE book.

Read this from cover to cover, then repeat and pass it on!

You will not be disappointed.

Cyrus Webb says

Continuing with the first-person style that drew readers to his debut novel, author Christopher Herz is back with another literary treat that takes you into a world where nothing is ever as it seems. Our narrator Sarah finds out firsthand that when life happens it can disrupt the most simple of plans. She is looking for a way to make a difference and support herself and help her family, but when she finds out that her father has cancer, life begins to be just about doing all she can to help those who have been there for her.

In the process she becomes a part of a campaign seemingly geared towards advocating a client's product, but Sarah soon finds that it may be doing more harm than good. With the intent of making a difference, she sees a way of trying to warn the public about the potentially dangerous side effects of a drug--and in the process gets swept into a part of the world she is trying to protect people from.

PHARMACOLOGY is also about the rise of another powerful force in our lives: the internet. Sarah gets introduced to it and it becomes both a part of the problem and the solution she hopes to develop. To us she says this: "the internet, whatever it was going to bring, promised to assimilate and dilute the last gasp of rebellion left in the country and consolidate all of the small truck stops and little diners along the back roads of this country into Burger Kings and Starbucks." In effect, Sarah saw the "convenience" of the internet as many have gotten to view it: as a way to tell us what to think, where to go and what to do.

This is a book that has twists and turns you would expect in a great novel, and by the end we come to realize that just as we believe we are making a difference it becomes revealed to us that our "freedom" was being controlled all along. Let's face it: Herz has done it again, casting a literary spell that has us all enthralled and ready for more.

Jamie says

That had to be the craziest, coolest story I've ever read! I love people who try to stand up to the government for things like this. Sarah Striker did a fantastic job with it to with the help of her friend, Alberto. I was so glad I finally got around to reading this book because I've been staring at it on my shelf for the longest time, it feels like. I loved all of the relationships that Sarah got into because they added another layer to the story. The characters were very believable, like they could be your next-door neighbor. This was probably the most interesting plot, to me at least, that I've ever read. Pharmacology has got to be one of the best, well-written novels I've ever read from cover to cover.

Thank you so much for sending me this through the GoodReads Giveaway!!!

Stacy says

This is the second time in my whole life that I did not finish a book. I got to page 35 and I could not read anymore. This book is awful! It is about a girl who moves the city and shares a house with other young kids. There is a young couple who is addicted to drugs and makes a living by being prostitutes. The book might turn into a inspiring story in the end but I could not even get though the beginning.

Radheshyam says

This is interesting book

Danielle Lynd says

There is no way to sum up the literary complexity of Herz's book *Pharmacology*. It is amazing, there is so much going on. Herz's characters break new grounds. He takes you farther into the dark truths of every one of his character's lives. I thought I knew or understood Herz's writing, I was so wrong. Just when I thought I might have figured it out I'd get slapped with a new twist. I loved it. My head is still spinning from all the lessons that could be taken from it. You will not be disappointed when you read it. You have to give yourself the chance and the time to really "feel" it. You also must have the nerve to stick with it. There is some really big envelope pushing going on here but when you finish the book you are the one that is ready to pick up where it left off. I am ready to preach it to any one that will listen. If they don't listen I'm crumpling the envelope and throwing at them for their ignorance.

Jessica says

This book is so spot on. As a person who lived through the boom of the digital age, you see where the world went very wrong. I complain about high school students who can't communicate outside of a text message, and the answer why is in these pages. And in the coffee, and the medications, and the disconnect with reality.

This is a book that will make you want to live off the grid. Pack up everything "analog" and go live a real life with real experiences. I hope Sarah Striker does the same with her money.

But I type this review via my iPhone app, and only know about Christopher Herz thanks to the Internet and

social media. Oh what a tangled web we weave when the drug addicts and prostitutes in this story are living a more authentic life.

How much is ever enough?

Jess says

Christopher Herz has done it again-creating a moving, surprising plot that will keep you hooked until the end in his second novel "Pharmacology"!

Herz creates vivid characters that jump off the page. Their true to life struggles and experiences pull readers in and keep them invested in the story until the last page. The plot and storyline are unique and captivating, leaving readers thinking about how modern technologies and medications have an effect on their own lives. You won't want to miss out on this thought-provoking novel and its inspiring message!

Susan says

A great book club selection.

Erin says

I received a copy of this book from Goodreads First Reads.

This is another book where the description on the back is misleading. It sounds like a great story from the synopsis, when in reality is not great at all.

The biggest flaw of Pharmacology is the main character Sarah. I understand giving a character a unique voice to help the story, it helps a lot when a book is told in first person. Sarah's voice, however, was annoying. Nearly every sentence leaves out the leading pronoun. Here is a quote from the book to give you an idea.

"Lived in that house about a year. Moved in six months after I'd landed in the city. Left after they started stealing my socks."

I can understand a few lines being like this. Many people talk like that, including myself, from time to time. This was an entire book of these types of sentences.

The second biggest flaw is the story line. Like I said before, the synopsis makes it sound like a great story, but it took half the book to even get to that part. Most of the book is a map of San Francisco and a look into the lives of junkies in the early 90's.

There were a few entertaining parts. I found it interesting to read about the pharmaceutical companies and the development of disorders that are all too common in life now. If only there were more of that, this would have been a much better book.

I cannot say I enjoyed this book at all.

This review was taken from my blog, www.theultimatebooknook.blogspot.com

Stephanie says

(Review originally posted on my blog, misprintedpages.wordpress.com)

Pharmacology is an interesting breed of book. In one big pot it melts together music, gay and lesbianism, joblessness, and biggest of all, drugs and the world we live in—how it's changed and continues to change, carried as we are on the currents of life.

The novel follows Sarah Striker, a girl who's anything but brittle and knows the value of money and will do anything she can to get her hands on it. Her cause isn't a selfish one, though. Her father is diagnosed with cancer, likely an adverse effect from his depression medication, and the insurance won't cover what was warned about in the fine print. As the bills begin to pile, Sarah leaves home for San Francisco, rooming with heroin addicts who steal her socks, eat her cereal, and sell her belongings as they try to drag her down into their dark and seedy world of vampire fetishes and sex dungeons.

Sarah won't have any of it. She survives on Ramen noodles and sends money home each month to "Moms" and "Pops," taking odd jobs to make ends meet. Pharmacology is half a coming-of-age story and half a larger commentary on the corrupt pharmaceutical industry and the submergence of drugs in our culture. When Sarah finally accepts an insidious invite to create ads and design strategies to convince people that disorders like ADD are real and morbidly profitable, she's sucked into the very world she abhors and criticizes in her underground zine, Luddite. She struggles to expose the truth in the name of her dying father and a dwindling society that's being overturned from print into the digital information age, but she's also rocked by the throes of soul-searching and identity—as the money gets better, her Dad gets sicker, and drugs pin her (and the reader) down from all sides, from the California streets to the big companies staffed with confused kids turned corporate zombies.

Author Christopher Herz realizes Sarah through a distinctive voice and well-written prose that, in its many attempts at communicating wisdom about the ups and downs of life, fails and succeeds in alternation. Sometimes what Herz writes rings painfully true, while other times his words seem to miss their mark by an inch. Lines like these were only weakly manifested in the text and failed to feel wholly graspable:

"You need to be careful of people who tell you that adventure exists at the next turn—because it turns out that they are not really walking into a story, but running away from a history that chases them throughout time."

While ones like these could be felt down to the very bones of the book:

"It's like that, I think. Only a few stick with you down the entire way because on that path, there are so many missteps and falls that cause deep wounds and lasting scars, most people shy away when the pain starts. It's the ones who walk with you through it all that allow you to understand love."

There's no doubt that Herz has a lovely handle on imagery when he wants to, shaping it into something psychedelic ...

"Stars (or birds) were flash-bulbs from the photographers."

... or something authentic:

"Dishes slapping down on the tables are rattling like the train that used to come through Kansas City before moving across the rest of the country."

I have to wonder about the deeper implications, though. The novel ends beautifully but feels ironic throughout: Sarah not only contributes to the industry she hopes to topple, but she sells drugs to junkies and experiments with them herself. Is one less destructive than the other? Or are drugs merely inescapable—one form moving into the space of another's absence?

Pharmacology puts up a good fight but just doesn't reach its nirvana, and its sub-cultural idiosyncrasies may prove difficult for many readers to penetrate.

I'll end with one of my favorite quotes from the book, aside from the one at the top:

"'But I don't write what's happening. I am what's happening. Besides, you already have what you need. You've been watching it all. That's the kind of person you are. That's your drug. Intake.'"
