



My Secret Garden

Nancy Friday

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When it first appeared, Nancy Friday's taboo-shattering bestseller "My Secret Garden" created a mixed storm of outrage and exhilaration. Those women who feared their erotic fantasies called it pornographic. Those women who read it recognized in its pages the hidden content of their own sexuality. More outspoken and graphic than any book before its time, "My Secret Garden" quickly became a classic study of female sexuality. Today, more than one million women hail this astonishing study as a groundbreaking book-- a liberating force adding a new dimension to their sexual fantasies and lives.

My Secret Garden Details

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Author : Nancy Friday

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From Reader Review My Secret Garden for online ebook

Terri Lynn says

Nancy Friday's books are so refreshing to me. The first one I read was this one- MY SECRET GARDEN. The "garden" in question has nothing to do with soil and plants. This is the first book of women's sexual fantasies collected by Nancy Friday starting in the 1970's. She was not a psychologist or social scientist. She was a woman who wanted other women in a world that was finally opening up to female sexuality to be free to anonymously unveil their deepest sexual fantasies for other women to enjoy and be inspired by. The women and girls, using first names only, described their sexual history and went on to share, quite graphically, their fantasies.

In the early 1970's, the feminist movement was cranking up in earnest and the pill had finally become available more freely to women who were not married. There was much more freedom for women and this book caught the spirit of that. For those who would like to be refreshed by the fantasies and lives of real women telling their real stories rather than porn and semi porn published by men showing what they think our fantasies are or should be, check out all of Nancy Friday's books. Enjoy!

Surreysmum says

[These notes were made in 1981:]. Naturally enough, I bought this out of prurient interest. And it is more or less what I expected - longish accounts of various types of erotic fantasy, linked with a facile tho' not by any means illiterate or vulgar commentary. It's printed on cheap paper, has a few typos (Brigid Brophy says no-one can bear to read pornography twice - hence it's never properly proof-read). It is not fiction; nor is it in any way scientific enough to be taken seriously as non-fiction. Yet, for all this, *My Secret Garden* has one purpose beyond the obvious. It is immensely reassuring. Those aspects of oneself which seemed most isolated, most perverse, have their echo in this book. One is not "sick" - or, if one is, one's in good company. (Note careful avoidance of first-person pronoun. Hypocrite!) And, of course, it was quite illuminating as to how far people will go in their fantasizing, although there is nothing here I haven't already met in the pages of *Penthouse Forum*. This book, however, lacks the almost flaunted speciousness of Forum's "reader contributions", and is in that degree more reassuring.

Laura says

My Secret Garden was helpful in opening my eyes to female thoughts on fantasy, and more importantly, female thoughts about having them. Understanding the feminine reaction (guilt, shame, etc) to desire was my main interest in reading this book. Though I am not familiar with the pool from which Friday culled her samples, the feelings of self-hate are pervasive and sad. Why women beat themselves over the head for common human emotions is a question whose answer must be found in society, in the "nurture" side of our behavioral makeup. I don't believe it is our nature, no more than the compulsion to vomit in the bathroom after eating a delicious meal. Women are messed up and confused, accepting shame rather than joy; a practice which bleeds into other situations that compromise true happiness. How can a woman/person make authentic choices when fearful of the reaction of others? Though there are many rational and healthy basis for fantasy, surely this secret world is composed of lives unlived, too.

Charlotte says

Could a collection of women's sexual fantasies from the 70s still shock a reader in the Fifty Shades era?

It sure can.

Though it's easy to become desensitised after the first 100 or so pages of orgies, horses, dogs, whips and big black men.

But telling those fantasies off as silly or deviant is exactly what this book goes in against. Your fantasies are your own, and while you risk scorn when sharing them with the world, and may experience a feeling of guilt as a consequence, ultimately it doesn't matter if it makes you feel good.

What most surprised me about this book, other than the level of openness of these 70s women, other than the large apparent attraction of Alsatians (I learned a word!), and other than the large number of women already married with children and in a not-so-happy marriage by the time they're 22... was how touching some of these fantasies were.

(No, not that kind of touching.)

A lot of these fantasies seem to reflect a great yearning these women feel for tenderness and love. Many fantasies describe not sexual acts, but situations in which the woman is admired, told she's worth looking at and caring for. Some women just fantasise about walks on the beach. Other contributions that touched me in a way:

- The woman, who was most definitely not a lesbian, but who often fantasised about being with a woman, and who often had sexual encounters with a lesbian friend of hers, which made me feel for that friend.
- The man who wrote in to tell that his wife had no fantasies whatsoever thank you very much, and signed the letter in her name.
- The woman who had been sexually abused in her childhood by a member of the school staff, and grew up to be a member of a school staff herself, and now abused her pupils in the same way. A sad vicious cycle.
- The man who wrote in to share the fantasy of his now late wife, who confessed to him about fantasising about a certain actor. During sex they then acted out that fantasy, and the day after he went to buy an outfit reminiscent of that actor. This made his wife cry, as she had been afraid he actually wouldn't be able to look him in the eye anymore after the previous night.

Singling out these fantasies probably says something about me in return, but I'll leave it at that.

In short, this is a good bedside-table book, or train book, if you're not too much of a blusher.

Kristin says

Interesting book. Not shocking to me per say, I can stomach a lot. There's a wide variety of fantasies in this book. From your classic "I want to fuck the post man" to women who want or do, naughty things with their pets. In certain parts, this book just gets downright strange. But, I guess that's the beauty of human fantasy. It's all different and inside a fantasy bubble you can do what you want without being judged. When looked at from a physiological point of view, the book was quite interesting.

Darth says

In turns titilating and downright boring, this was an eye opener in some ways. I know plenty of guys (myself included) with a long standing history of mentally going to the highlight reel of either past experience or fantasy to get them over the hump when they are having trouble finishing during sex. It really never occurred to me that women might do the same. Once I had the idea presented to me, it made perfect sense.

The psuedo-scientific approach was very lacking in any kind of organization, short of allegorically, but the grouping was enough to know when you were about to need to do some skimming over the more disinteresting portions, so I guess there is that.

One more eye opening thing that I got from this, was the PURE fantasy. I always thought of fantasies as someting you need to make come true. The fantasy for fantasy sake is another thing that just never popped into my head. Maybe the typical guy mind set of, "Oh you want something, lets get / do / find / buy whatever it is..." is just too ingrained in our heads, but I liked the idea. It made some of the more degrading mixed domination / beastiality much easier to stomach.

Deary Darling says

One thing I will say for this book is that it can do wonders for a person (me) who feels concerned or disturbed about the things that occur in their fantasy life. Chances are you will feel virginal and innocent after reading some of the darker taboos in this book.

My first problem with this book was not its subject matter ... it was the delivery. I'm not a psychologist so anything stated here is only opinion and experience. That being said, as Mrs. Friday points out ... women's fantasies tend to be extremely complex. The setting/situation is often a means to an end be that the removal of inhibition, control, accountability or the shedding of moral/social/gender constraints. I felt this book did a very poor job of representing what these fantasies meant on a *personal* level to the person relating them and in that sense there was something akin to exploitation about packaging them as a general representation of women who have any one of the given fantasies shared in the book.

Ultimately, what I cannot abide, is the inclusion of the admission of criminal activity. If this had been a book of male fantasies and a man had confessed to having molested an 11 year old girl and then marrying her 2 years later, this would not be acclaimed as a treatise on male sexuality. That man would be rightly demonized as would the book, author and publisher. Can anyone say double standard? That poor little boy!

Don Juan Quixote says

This book changed my life. As far as I know it is the first book of it's kind ever written. I picked it up while a senior in college at the University of Mn where I was studying Theatre Arts. My idea was to get some kind of clue to what women secretly think about...

It taught me that all women have sexy little fantasies that they hide from most people, even sometimes from themselves. 25 years after I read it, I began a similar book using her basic categories, or 'types' of flowers in the secret garden. I've read all of her books, but this one is still the best. It's fresh, new, and groundbreaking...Just as it was in 1969...

My belief now, after years of interviews with various women, is that every woman has inside her a bouquet of sexual fantasies that makes her totally unique from other women. No wonder men have such a hard time understanding and categorizing them...you simply can't. You can only experience each one a beautiful and completely unique individual...Just like flowers.

Anna says

And before internet porn and Shades of Grey there was one clever lady who collected other people's fantasies and packaged them neatly into a book with only the bare minimum of pseudo-intellectual, psycho babble around it as was required to make it past censorship - and hey presto a multimillion dollar book was born. I still take my hat off to Mrs Friday for letting others do the work but also thank her for the copy that existed in my parents' house and that introduced me to fantasising beyond meeting the object of my desire in the first place...although, personally, I could have done without the incest and the bestiality. Tongue in cheek aside: an important book in the liberation of women that deserves its status.

Sheila says

A friend here on Goodreads (thanks Petra) reviewed this book today, and one look at the cover, title and author and it all came flashing back. I have read this book! Some 20+ years ago, but oh yes, I remember it.

This is a book of short sexual fantasies of women. Dirty little short stories. The book was passed on to my with some other books by my older (and more experienced) sister when I was in my early 20's. Or it might have been my late teens, but I'm pretty sure it was my early 20's because I would not have been caught dead reading this in my parent's house! But at the time I read it, this book was a totally new, exciting, "oh my goodness", experience for me. I mean I did read my mom's Cosmopolitan magazines, but this was WAY past all of that!

I can't say I remember any of the specific stories from the book, but I remember THE BOOK. I remember the illicitness (at least for me, at the time) of the book. Thank you Nancy Friday for the memories.

Tressa says

This book made me feel so NOT like a freak. It was nice to know other women were fantasizing, too.

Cristina Garcia says

Great book. It makes you feel like less of a weirdo for your own fantasies lol. And if you're an aspiring erotica writer its a great source of inspiration. Didn't really enjoy her interjections but I just skimmed over them.

Definitely worth the read.

Petra X says

Reviewed Feb. 18th, 2013

Like so many older books on sex that purport to have a sociological raison d'etre. In this case, the (at the time) ground-breaking discussion of women's fantasies but in actuality it's just a not-very-well written collection of extremely dirty stories that unless you neither fancy women nor are one, are probably going to get you hot, just as the author intended.

Natasha Walker says

Delicious. Back in the seventies this book proved that women were naughty, dirty and utterly erotic. Anyone sitting at home ashamed of their fantasies now should pick this gem up and be liberated. No matter how obscene your fantasies are Nancy Friday is here to show you not only that you are not alone but that you're not even really trying.

There is one sad addendum - if you read later books by Friday you'll find that with the rise of porn, the internet and a general openness in society about sex the originality and bizarre nature of the fantasies declines. With freedom, it seems, comes uniformity.

Sue says

It was purely research...no, seriously!

I don't remember how I first heard about this book, but I think it was one of the first "erotic" pieces I read. It's a collection of fantasies submitted by anonymous women, at a time when repression was the norm. Some of the fantasies are vanilla, some are a bit scary, and some are quite hot. By the time the author/editor began compiling the later books in this series, women grew bolder in revealing their secret desires, and the later books grow hotter and raunchier, but this is an interesting introduction, and in a way a glimpse into the pre-

sexual revolution.

Tony says

Always good for us blokes to get a window into a world like this. Have to be in the know... and all that.

Angelina says

Omg, I heart this trashy little piece of "research" on female sexual desire. Let's face it, if you can make it one page without your hands going into your pants you're probably dead.

This thing is like the penthouse forum except it admits it's all fantasy. Yes, there are busloads of nuns and cheerleaders and maintenance men but nobody's trying to pass them off as actual experiences.

Hope says

NOT for the faint-hearted about sexuality. I was not only surprised, but pretty deeply shocked at some of the fantasies women told for this book. I learned that I am still pretty much a prude AND that my own fantasies are more emotionally and romantic based, than having to do with pure sexuality.

Part of me wishes I had not read this book, but part of me is glad that it helped me learn a few things about myself and my morals and boundaries.

The Scarlet Pervygirl says

Filthy, irrational, pointless, and rather badly written, like all of Nancy Friday's books, *My Secret Garden* offers what pretty much amounts to a guarantee to get me off.

♥Marie Gentilcore says

I read this as a young teen, I think I was either 12 or 13. I got my copy in a thrift store. I was always shopping for books in the thrift store back then. I kept it secret because I'd never read anything so explicit before. I'm giving it 5 stars because it made a big impact on me at that young age.
