

My Girlfriend, the Narcissist

Experimental

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She's called Gillian. She's got brown hair,
and eyes the colour of a bleached winter sky.

She's about 5'5, but she's tough.

My girlfriend was a narcissist. She didn't
like me having friends, or seeing family.

So, I didn't really.

Gillian stuck around, though.

In fact, that's when I first met her.

A few months in.

I met her on the school run.

She was standing in a driveway nudging
gravel with the toe of her Converse.

I asked her if she'd lost something.

Her wedding ring, she said. Not that it
mattered.

He was a cheating bastard.

We walked to school together, her black
wax jacket similar to mine, though I envied
its collar, and the zip doesn't work on mine.
It broke on Melton playing field when I bent
over to pick up a bee last summer, and now
it undoes from the bottom up if you sit
down.

Gillian wore dark jeans and plaid shirts
over long-sleeved tops with four buttons at
the neck line.

She wore her hair in a pony-tail.

She was self-destructive.

I liked that about her.

And she stuck with me. Did I say that
already?

She'd help me put the shopping away,
when the Tesco delivery arrived. It wasn't
my house, but I did everything in it.

She expected that of me.

My girlfriend,

The narcissist.

Once, when she went away, we used her
land to have a bonfire in the old metal drum
that was full of weeds and earth and crap.

Gillian joked we should get all of her
clothes and stick them on the fire, but burn-
ing her clothes wouldn't do any good, we
decided. She had enough trouble keeping her
clothes on, having less of them would only
add to the problem.

We cooked our lunch on the bonfire. Pota-
toes baked in tin foil. We burned our fingers

getting them out, speared them with sticks
and dropped them on plates.

Their skins were black but we ate them
anyway, and inside they were smoky and
white and good.

Gillian would be there in the evenings,
too. I'd make my excuses and slip to the ga-
rage for another bottle of wine, and Gillian
was there, back against the wall, picking at
the fraying edge of her sleeve.

She'd tell me about her day. The sheep,
the farm, her shift at Greenhough's. She'd
hug me, properly, hold me until I'd stopped
shaking, or near enough.

Once, on fireworks night,

5th November 2018.

She had a party. Everyone was there. All
of her friends, family, neighbours.

Her dad made the bonfire bigger than was
safe. She poured everyone drinks, looked for
me to give me something to do.

I stood in the shadows with Gillian. She
was there, all nervy, jittery, bristling with
energy, possibility, magic....

She was wearing wellington boots. Green
ones, but they weren't Hunter boots, and
I was glad of that. They were bog standard

boots from an outdoors shop, or a garden centre.

She had one hand in her pocket, I could hear the clink of the keys to her Land Rover.

You need to get shot of her.

She was looking at the bonfire, into the flames. Her face was warm, golden, fire-lit and extraordinarily beautiful.

I'd never found her beautiful, my girlfriend, the narcissist.

I think that's what my friends noticed, in the beginning.

She didn't fit the type.

Gillian had a bit more about her.

She's going to kill you if you don't.

She looked at me then, Gillian did.

One way or another you'll end up dead.

She was right. I knew she was right.

But Gillian only existed in my head.