



Exquisite Corpse

Pénélope Bagieu , Alexis Siegel (Translator)

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Zoe isn't exactly the intellectual type, which is why she doesn't recognize world-famous author Thomas Rocher when she stumbles into his apartment...and into his life. It's also why she doesn't know that Rocher is supposed to be dead. Turns out, Rocher faked his death years ago to escape his critics, and has been making a killing releasing his new work as "lost manuscripts," in cahoots with his editor/ex-wife Agathe. Neither of them would have invited a crass party girl like Zoe into their literary conspiracy of two, but now that she's there anyway. . . . Zoe doesn't know Balzac from Batman, but she's going to have to wise up fast... because she's sitting on the literary scandal of the century!

Exquisite Corpse Details


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From Reader Review Exquisite Corpse for online ebook

Saleh MoonWalker says

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Nat says

I read it for the art... and to satisfy my curiosity from a couple of years back regarding this book.

Zoe isn't exactly the intellectual type, which is why she doesn't recognize world-famous author Thomas Rocher when she stumbles into his apartment...and into his life. It's also why she doesn't know that Rocher is supposed to be dead. Turns out, Rocher faked his death years ago to escape his critics, and has been making a killing releasing his new work as "lost manuscripts," in cahoots with his editor/ex-wife Agathe. Neither of them would have invited a crass party girl like Zoe into their literary conspiracy of two, but now that she's there anyway. . . Zoe doesn't know Balzac from Batman, but she's going to have to wise up fast... because she's sitting on the literary scandal of the century!

Exquisite Corpse is the epitome of a graphic novel set to feature gorgeous artwork with essentially no depth to the storyline. We have flat, unmotivated characters whose actions are never explored; it's somehow a given that it'll make sense for a complete stranger to let a girl into his apartment to pee simply because she rang his intercom...

Manic Pixie Dream Girl to the max. No person, especially a stranger, talks like that.

Exquisite Corpse perfectly embodies those clichéd French novels all about *Oh, Love* *French sigh* that I've been warned about. It checks pretty much every mark from the mistreating old boyfriend to the oh-so-romantic new love interest to the out-of-nowhere mature ex-wives to Lolita-esque relationships (literally have way too many examples of this I'll share below). The warnings weren't for naught. So it became quite humorous when the novel tried to take itself too seriously.

This right here illustrates their imbalanced relationship. They don't view each other as equals, and the writer

dude (such a bland character I don't even recall his name) is beyond patronizing.

The adults are having a conversation while sending the little girl off to bed:

BLEH.

This 22-year-old needs a therapist, not someone twice her age preying on her.

Also: The clear contrast established between her old boyfriend and this writer dude was so forced, and it made all the "good" the writer represented (listening to her, complimenting her, etc.) seem like he was reading from a script or something he read in a magazine. IT'S NOT REAL. The artificial interactions bothered me all too much for a book that's supposed to be contemporary.

The ridiculously blown-out aspects of this book made it so I could never fully sink into the storyline. At one point I thought we were on the brink of a breakthrough when the main character finally realized what a douche the writer was and ran from him, but their relationship shouldn't have happened in the first place so there wasn't a lot of room for positive feelings. But then even that tiny revelation ruined itself at the very end with another lolita-esque relationship. S T O P.

I really wished the main character would've gotten some time **alone** to realize and reflect on what direction she wants her life to head into, instead of turning from one bad relationship to the other. I just felt sorry for this girl who clearly craves belonging, so she's willing to settle with anybody who can provide even a tiny slice of it. Don't settle, please.

I'll end my review on a more positive note by featuring some of my favorite pieces:

*Note: I'm an Amazon Affiliate. If you're interested in buying **Exquisite Corpse**, just click on the image below to go through my link. I'll make a small commission!*

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This review and more can be found on my blog.

Lina says

Pénélope Bagieu ha sido todo un descubrimiento. Después de haberla visto recomendar cómics en Madmoizelle, me decidí a buscar su propia obra y así pude comprobar que es una verdadera artista. La historia, que comienza siendo aparentemente sencilla aunque enternecedora, da un giro tan radical que, de ser un personaje de cómic, se me habría caído la mandíbula al suelo. Esto es, Bagieu controla las claves de la narración. Y a este guión redondo lo acompaña un cuidadísimo uso del color y un más que estudiado control de la expresividad de los personajes.

Da gusto encontrar jóvenes artistas con tanto talento.

Sam Quixote says

Zoe's life is much less glamorous than she thought it'd be. At 22, she's a car show model, standing in front of expensive cars and getting her bum pinched by creeps before going back to her studio flat where her unemployed, weed-smoking asshole boyfriend gives her crap. Then one day by chance she catches the eye of Thomas, a wealthy, famous novelist, and the two begin a whirlwind romance. But why does Thomas never leave his fancy apartment?

Romance isn't my bag but, from what little I've read of them, the French do it the best, and Exquisite Corpse is a pretty good romance comic. Though if I didn't know the author was female, I'd say this was a male fantasy/wish fulfilment story: beautiful 22 year old girl with an hourglass figure falls for skinny and pasty middle-aged nerd? Hmm. Plus Thomas is basically rescuing Zoe from her crap life, sweeping her into his comfortable lifestyle while she lounges about, his muse/sex kitten. She's a cute character but not exactly a role model for young girls.

Writer/artist Penelope Bagieu has the charming Gallic art style of many French cartoonists: melodramatic facial and body expressions, exaggerated gestures, lots of detail spent on clothes and surroundings, and the women are always drawn either as goddesses or trolls while the men are more or less bland figures. Bagieu uses the art as much as the script to tell her story and there's a good balance between the two that leads to a quick reading experience because you get into the tale and it's well presented.

It wasn't an amazing story but it was fun for the most part – and then it all falls apart in the third act. Zoe's "arc" turns out to be a pretty dismal one. She goes from independent but unhappy to dependent and happy to be used by someone to dependent and happy to be used by someone else. She learns that theft is right and apparently female sexuality is totally malleable – one minute a woman can be straight, the next they can be gay, they don't mind!

Even with the ridiculous finale, Exquisite Corpse was enjoyable and though my suspension of disbelief was tested several times, I can't say I was ever bored. But it is flawed, especially with regards the main character's personality. It's well-drawn and quite well written but plotted like a cheap and trashy romance novel that floats off into fantasy-land by the end - Exquisite Corpse is an even stupider version of Pretty Woman if you can believe that! It's a light comic romp but definitely not a must-read.

Kelly says

Girl meets Franzen-type author who, along with his ex who also happens to be his editor, fakes his death to keep his literary reputation high. Now on the brink of outing Franzen-man for the phony cheat he is (and oh, of course she becomes his muse!), she has to make a decision: tell everyone what she knows or use her knowledge to get back at him privately.

This is delightful with a perfect twist ending. A lot of reviewers seem to take issue with the fact it wasn't developed thoroughly to get there. That's because this is meant to be subversive and a middle finger to ideas of convention. And I love this book for those very things.

Licha says

Accidentally picked up this book looking for another book with the same title. But how could I resist the cute cover on this?

Zoe is unhappy with her life, stuck in a job she hates and in a relationship with a loser who treats her horribly. One day, as she miserably eats her lunch on a bench, she happens to look up and sees a man staring at her from an apartment building. She befriends him and before she knows it she's at his apartment everyday, for once enjoying just being listened to with no expectations. But something is not quite right with Thomas, this new man in her life. I will not give away anything else.

I enjoyed reading this quick little read. I think it took me less than an hour to finish this. The artwork is all cuteness, and it's hard not to fall for Zoe, the main character. The ending was a little delicious unexpected surprise, or maybe that's just me, cause I'm always the one who never sees the ending coming from a mile away.

Another hit for those :01 First Second books.

Calista says

Set in Paris - yeah. This book was very surprising. This girl meets a new man who is an author with writers block. She becomes his muse and he begins writing again. She finds out that this author faked his death to sell more books and now writes from the grave. Our Zoe figures this is why he never leaves the apartment. Sounds like prison.

I love the story and the art gets the job done. I don't find it outstanding. I love the twist ending. Yes - so good.

It does make me wonder if Penelope is really the author though. You never know. Enjoy this delightful book..

Andrew says

This is the sort of distinctly European comic that you don't really see much of from North American cartoonists - a deliberately lightweight farce for adults with no genre trappings or major literary ambitions. Bagieu's artwork alternates between charming and too-cute, and the story's punchline (so to speak) is emotionally satisfying but doesn't make a whole lot of sense. This won't become anybody's new favorite comic, but it's a pleasant way to spend your commute.

First Second Books says

One of the reasons that I really like this book is that with all the diversity that the comics medium now has, one thing I still think we're seriously lacking in is straight-up women's fiction. If you're a fan of Emily Giffen or *THE DEVIL WEARS PRADA* or Jennifer Crusie, where are you going to go from there in the world of graphic novels?

There's really not a whole lot for you in the realm of narrative long-form romantic comedy (or even straight-up romance)!

So now: *EXQUISITE CORPSE*!

Eilonwy says

Since I've been enjoying Penelope Bagieu's *Brazen: Rebel Ladies Who Rocked the World* so much, with its entertaining and clever asides and charming artwork, I wanted to see what kind of book she writes with her own storytelling.

And this was ... just a little too weird for me.

20-year-old Zoe works as a "product rep" at trade shows, i.e., as one of the decorative young women who are supposed to make men want the products, and lives with a boyfriend who leaves much to be desired. One day while eating her lunch, she sees a man peeking through the curtains of an apartment, and invites herself in to use the bathroom. And at this point -- when she decides to pee with the door open, in a complete stranger's apartment, and makes sure he knows !!! -- I knew this book and I probably weren't meant for each other. Granted that it's set in Paris. But, um, still.

The man turns out to be Thomas Rocher, a famous and prize-winning author, who Zoe has never heard of because she's a bit of a philistine. (Her table manners are atrocious. And we readers see her first-ever visit to a bookstore over the course of this story.) He is charmed and inspired by her ignorance. They begin hanging out during her lunch breaks, during the evenings, etc. But Thomas never leaves the apartment, and Zoe wants to know why.

The story then takes a pretty big twist. And I don't want to say any more.

This was a clever story, with cute if not particularly memorable artwork. I wish I'd liked the second and third twists better than I did. The second twist is a bit of just deserts, but the third twist left me a little mystified

(view spoiler).

On the bright side, this probably took all of 30 minutes to read, and was decently entertaining and unexpected. But I can't imagine ever wanting to look at it again.

Jan Philipzig says

For the most part, I felt the story was a bit too "adorable" and "cute" for its own good... until it took a rather unexpected feminist turn about two thirds into the book, that is. I found myself welcoming this turn on a theoretical level, but in terms of character development I'm afraid it did not make much sense to me. As a result, *Exquisite Corpse* felt a little clunky and contrived, though it is not without its charms. For a conceptually similar but more organically executed story of female empowerment, check out Lawrence Marvit's *Sparks: An Urban Fairytale*!

Claudia Ramírez says

3 stars for the plot, but I had to add half a star because I LOVED the artwork <3.

Holly says

*4.5 stars ?

emily says

i honestly just SCREAMED at this ending. i'm laughing so hard, this is best queer/feminist surprise i've ever had in my entire life. i thought this was going to be some mediocre love story with an asshole boyfriend glorified to seem like he was great, but NOPE. i don't want to give anything away, but if you want beautiful (really, i loved dreamy art in this) illustrations of paris, a book about books, and a good laugh at the end, pick this up. this made me incredibly happy, such a wonderful surprise--i will definitely be picking up more of Bagieu's graphic novels EDIT: except i can't, because this looks like her only release in English :-(

Raina says

Breezy hijinks, fun to read. Think I finished it in two sittings at most.

The author of this one is just a little older than I am, and I feel like you could psychoanalyze the shit out of what she's saying about gender in this piece. Or, more specifically, about being a woman in today's world.

Basically, there's this chick who's working as a model-of-sorts, who is kinda sick of being objectified, and falls into a relationship with an ::ahem:: reclusive author, with an ::ahem:: complicated relationship with his

fame.

It's adult (nudity nudity nudity), and blends a pretty muted jewel-toned color palette over free-spirited, thin-lined drawings.

I liked it, but had to flip through it to remember what it was about, so apparently didn't find it particularly memorable.
