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Over Easy



Synopsis

A fast-paced semi-memoir about diners, drugs, and California in the 1970s, *Over Easy* is a brilliant portrayal of a familiar coming-of-age story. After being denied financial aid to cover her last year of art school, Margaret finds salvation from the straightlaced world of college and the earnestness of both hippies and punks in the wisecracking, fast-talking, drug-taking group she encounters at the Imperial Café, where she makes the transformation from Margaret to Madge. At first she mimics these new and exotic grown-up friends, trying on the guise of adulthood with some awkward but funny stumbles. Gradually she realizes that the adults she looks up to are a mess of contradictions, misplaced artistic ambitions, sexual confusion, dependencies, and addictions. *Over Easy* is equal parts time capsule of late 1970s life in California—with its deadheads, punks, disco rollers, casual sex, and drug use—and bildungsroman of a young woman who grows from a naive, sexually inexperienced art-school dropout into a self-aware, self-confident artist. Mimi Pond's chatty, slyly observant anecdotes create a compelling portrait of a distinct moment in time. *Over Easy* is an immediate, limber, and precise semi-memoir narrated with an eye for the humor in every situation.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

“A sublimely evocative depiction of California in the 70s.” —Guardian Best Graphic Novels of 2014
“For lovers of tawdry tales from the '70s, told with smarts and sensitivity, *Over Easy* is a gold mine.” —Los Angeles Times
“This graphic

memoir captures the funky ethos of the time, when hippies, punks and disco aficionados mingled in a Bay Area at the height of its eccentricity...Theres an intoxicating esprit de corps to a well-run everyday joint like the Imperial Cafe and never has the delight in being part of it been more winningly portrayed. — [Salon.com](#) Ten Spectacular Graphic Novels from 2014 — “Her lines are unpretentious and airy, and her people aren’t overwhelmed by their affectations; Pond can capture facial expressions with a line or two.” — [NPR](#) — “Pond’s fantastic new graphic memoir, *Over Easy*, tells the colorful story of her years employed at a restaurant in Oakland.” — [USA Today Pop Candy](#) — “Surprisingly tender.” — [Entertainment Weekly](#)

Mimi Pond is a cartoonist, illustrator, and writer. She has created comics for the Los Angeles Times, Seventeen magazine, National Lampoon, and many other publications, and has written and illustrated five humor books. She has also written for television: her credits include the first full-length episode of The Simpsons "Simpsons Roasting on an Open Fire" and episodes for the television shows Designing Women and Pee Wee's Playhouse. She lives in Los Angeles with her husband, the painter Wayne White.

I’ve been a huge, huge fan of Mimi Pond’s work ever since I found her first book, *Secrets of the Powder Room*, in the 80’s. I still have my carefully preserved but well loved copy and still think it’s the funniest, most charmingly drawn collection of comics I’ve ever seen. Mimi disappeared and now she’s back with this beautiful, elegant, deeply felt, fictionalized memoir of having to drop out of art school when her funding dries up and going to work at a restaurant in Oakland. I pulled it open on the subway and had to stop myself from cackling and snorting out loud on a crowded train.

First of all, I know Mimi Pond, we’ve corresponded extensively, she blurbed my first book, and when my (then) six-year-old son was in a heavy Pee-wee’s Playhouse phase and I discovered that her husband, Wayne White (the now famous artist), who essentially created that show (Mimi also wrote an episode) voiced the character Roger the Monster, Mimi offered to have Wayne call my son as Roger the Monster. (Terrified, my son declined). Around that time I was lucky enough to read the novel that would become *Over Easy*. The prototype was good enough to make the bestseller lists, I was convinced, but I guess (those of us who’ve taken a long time to make it like to say) it was better that she work an extra five or six years on it, painstakingly drawing the thousands of requisite frames and hand-lettering

every last word. I was thrilled when I heard this was coming out (at last) because years after I read the original I could still, unlike most of the other books I read in that period, recall much of it clearly and fondly. Mimi grew up in dreary sunny military San Diego (as did I), but escaped to
“seedy and gritty” Oakland where she felt useless in art school. By chance (or by fate) the money ran out and she landed a job as a dishwasher in one of the most enviable cafes in literary history, the Imperial, with real beakers of cream, the high-octane
“narcotic” smelling coffee, hard-nosed but good-looking waitresses in thrift-store dresses, KSAN blaring Elvis Costello, and anything you liked in your
“fluffy pastel yellow” omelet including crab and chicken. The customers, Mimi tells us, could flirt with each other in the mirror behind the counter. Over Easy captures the disaffection, permissiveness, motley wild nihilism and hippie-annoyance of California in the 1970s. It’s a capsule of history, required reading for those who wonder how one minute we would be nodding our heads like drugged cows to The Starland Vocal Band, the next minute shouting furiously shaved and shorn about killing the poor. She’s also nailed what it’s like to work in a restaurant (I’ve cooked in eighteen of them), the power struggles, temporary romances, luscious vapors, godawful grunge-encrusted rubber mats, intractable customers, and the dive bar where the employees convene to commiserate after the shift. Her central character, a real-life Rabelaisian she calls Lazlo, the manager and culinary patriarch of the Imperial, rules by jokes and dreams, saves and salves with drugs and charm, spontaneously turns Chinese, and issues the while such erudite phrases as
“When I got up this morning I was sure I was a minor figure from a Samuel Fuller film noir, destined to be shot dead in an alley”
Lazlo is the crown jewel in Over Easy (I feel as if I know him, wish that I could’ve cooked at the Imperial, and miss him, even though I never met him). Yes, I know (and admire) Mimi Pond, her hawk eye and razor tongue, her funny vulnerability and deftness turning a phrase, but I can guarantee that unless you don’t have a sense of humor or you get pickle-lips at the folly of men, then you will probably read this book in two days and love every minute of it.

Over Easy takes place at the end of the 1970s, that murky era when we loped groggily past the nightmare of Watergate and had not yet awakened to Morning in America. The Stones, a full two decades away from their transmogrification into today’s walker-rockers, were still making vital rock and roll that carried broad appeal as disco died, and the counterculture traded in its love beads and

fringe for black leather and safety pins. Notwithstanding the changing times, the currency of sex, drugs and rock-n-roll remained the same. Caught in the middle of this tectonic shift (rather apropos for the book's northern California setting) is Margaret, an art student who, thanks to a financial crisis, winds up working at the Imperial Cafe, a culinary Emerald City with a cast of co-workers, patrons and attendant riffraff even more colorful than those encountered by Dorothy Gale. Mimi Pond, who blends prose in the vein of Tom Wolfe, Hunter S. Thompson and even de Tocqueville at times with graphics in the vein of Roz Chast and R. Crumb, tells a broad array of stories through Margaret/Madge's experiences. At the forefront is her coming of age tale, but we also get ancillary commentary on race relations, gender identity, the sexual revolution, female empowerment, the celebration of coming out, even the emergence of the foodie movement and coffee snobbery! Early in the story, Margaret marvels at the broad and adventurous variety of omelet fillings offered by the Imperial Cafe. It makes for a nice metaphor because Over Easy is exactly that - a tantalizing offering packed with a variety of ingredients that blend surprisingly well and leave you incredibly satisfied at the end. Anyone who even has vague remembrances of this gritty little slice of time (whether that's due to youth or "other factors"), will enjoy this book immensely.

Special treat for former art students and waitresses, (is there usually a distinction?) great journal writing and great dialog.

interesting, brings to life like no other

My Goodness Gracious Mercy Sakes Alive. That is what my Grandma used to say. I never understood this till I was a Grandma myself. Being a grown up in the year 2014 sometimes is hard, but when you have had life experiences similar to Mimi Pond, in her fast paced, slow style, kick your brain into gear and remember things and places and people and stories that would curl your Grandmas hair' kinda experiences...and they are drawn and written in such a way that you literally can not put the book down...that's what I call satisfying. My 'Aurora Smorgasbord' hostessing days, my 'Burger Mountain Soda Fountain' bricking the grill and frozen fingered ice cream serving days, (Old Houston Oilers fans will remember the quarterback Dan Pastoreni and his foray into food-ball) Breakfast waitress at the Boise Holiday Inn, and on and on...for me, this book is a delight beyond measure, because, somehow, the telling of the adventures, makes me painfully and hypnotically aware that its a miracle some of us made it out alive. (Spoiler alert:) The witty banter, the music, the drugs, the customers, the underlying art in the blood, the growing pains, the sex....the freak show

and all the love.....I mean it is great to be a grown up. This is a book for grown ups , God Bless our Little Hearts and Katy Bar the door.

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