



Hello! My name is Phoebe, and, well, in all honesty, the magazine took some shots of me that the editors found... unrepresentative of... the beauty within. I was going to draw a self-portrait, but when it came down to it, I just didn't want to! I've been on a photoromance kick lately, so that's what you're getting!



It's difficult working with a photographic subject who has clearly passed his peak in physical attractiveness. One hopes that a hint of character will instead be expressed in such a portrait. As a service to the reader, I shall look at myself in this context and try to sensitively choose photographs that go beyond the superficial.



It's hard to be neither old nor young. Hard from the standpoint that one's face conveys a glimpse of the decay to come, as well as the ghost of youthful ripeness that once had the power to ignite hearts and inspire lust. The combination is horrifying.



You know, it suddenly occurred to me the other day that I'm so lucky to be alive! Really! What a fluke it was that I ever got to be born! I'm alive and I know it! What greater blessing could there be?



I've got a few friends and relatives who I'll never see again on this earth because they're dead. I hope I'll see them in heaven, even though I don't believe in heaven!



Ha ha ha ha ha!! It makes me laugh! I can see my Dad up there now, in his black high-heel Superfly boots and crushed velvet suit, taking swigs off his bottle of NyQuil. Ha ha ha ha! Oh Daddy! Why did you leave me all alone here on earth with nothing but the gift of your charming and sometimes obnoxious sarcasm and the remainder of the trust fund you squandered on car parts and cocaine?



Did you say something? SPEAK UP! I can't hear you!



I wear the same type of clothes all the time. I've never had any daring when it comes to clothing or hairstyles.

Do you know how you look best? Do you like to get your picture taken?



Look, you can't respond to me in a way I can understand. I don't want to be rude, but since I can't hear you, I'm just going to change the subject.

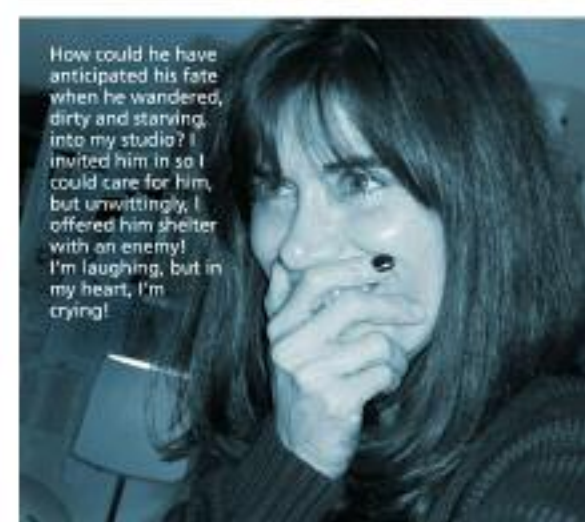
I've got a cat named Pipsqueak. He sustained some nerve damage in a fight and the vet said she'll have to amputate his foreleg because it's paralyzed and he's dragging it.



I don't know why I'm laughing. I'm really upset about my cat! I'm afraid he might die! I feel responsible for him. I want him to have a happy life! I took him in as a stray and our other cat is the one who hurt him!



I don't want him to die and I don't want him to feel pain when they cut off his leg.



How could he have anticipated his fate when he wandered, dirty and starving, into my studio? I invited him in so I could care for him, but unwittingly, I offered him shelter with an enemy! I'm laughing, but in my heart, I'm crying!

GIRL, ILLUSTRATED Teenage wasteland? Oh, yeah. Novelist and artist Phoebe Gloeckner has left an indelible mark on teen-girl literature. In her stunning underground comics collection *A Child's Life* and her groundbreaking novel *Diary of a Teenage Girl* (written in journal form, complete with illustrations and comic strips), she recounts the simultaneously heart-breaking and uplifting life and times of one Minnie Goetze, a precocious teen growing up in '70s San Francisco who looks an awful lot like Ms. Gloeckner herself. Sean T. Collins interviewed her. Here's his diary entry for the day.

I'll start by asking you a perennial question— It's not about me. Is that what you were gonna ask?

Well, you're reluctant to classify your work as autobiographical... I am an empty shell of a person, I don't have any personality and I can fake it in my character. Okay? It's not me. I don't know what to say. I don't think my work is any more autobiographical than anyone else's work. Really. For the human being there is no such thing as truth. It just sounds like existential bullshit, but I really think it's true. I would never claim to understand anything, much less to recite the truth about any event that I witnessed. So what does autobiography mean? I think it's a misnomer. I don't think there is any such thing. It's one person's perspective on things that happen.

I think people ask if it's autobiographical because it's rough stuff. They want to get a closer look at the car wreck. Look, give me anybody's life, I can make a car wreck out of it. I mean, who doesn't have a car wreck? But does it seem sensational or something?

No, it doesn't sensationalize. There's very little self-pity, but on the other hand there's very little condemnation of the other people involved, either. I'm a person who is generally full of hatred and venom.

It's hard, because we're trained to see things from a man's point of view. Even women expect the woman to take her shirt off in a movie. Those images become sexualized to women, too, because that's what sex means in this society: the naked-woman picture. This pisses me off. That's why I'm fighting against it, and I hope I'm not the only one. Maybe it's changing. I really like this magazine, because you got lots of men. Isn't there something sensual about that? I say there is. It's just as erotic as the naked women, let's face it. And women respond to it. They're just not accustomed to it, because they're so used to being bombarded with female images. Also, I wanna make this movie more like a Steven Spielberg film. Big! Beautiful! *(laughs)* This is my dream, okay? A few little button-pushing emotional things that make you cry, but big, beautiful scenes of San Francisco and shots in a helicopter. Just big. I tell my husband that and he's disgusted. He'd prefer something like *Kids*, but I'm like, "Nooo!"

There's a natural tendency toward condescension when writing about teenagers: "Look at this silly girl. Aren't you glad that you and I know better now?" How did you avoid that so completely? I never thought teenagers were silly. Never did. Even when I was a teenager. I mean, I know from experience and you probably do as well. Actually, when you're a teenager you feel things very, very strongly. Everything is new and every-

"I LIKE FEELING MAD. THAT'S A SOURCE OF ENERGY FOR ME"

Honestly. And vindictiveness and resentments of all sorts. But yet, I feel like it's always giving me power. That's a source of energy for me. I like feeling mad. And if it doesn't come out in my books, I don't know why.

When you're writing or drawing, are you pissed? Yeah, sometimes. But I've never felt sorry for myself, though. But now I'm talking about myself as though I'm that character—which of course I'm not. I think anybody in their life is drawn to experience. Some people are afraid of it but they wanna go close to it. Maybe that's what the fascination is with reading books like this: People are drawn towards experience. I mean, in a way, Minnie *is* me, because when I'm drawing a character or writing a character's part I totally feel it. I get real upset. I get angry *(laughs)*. Whatever person I'm trying to give a voice to, I get really into it. I always assumed that everyone had that experience when they're creating art. But when I describe my process or when I describe how I think Minnie isn't really me and this thing about the truth, either I'm explaining myself very poorly or I have a very different experience of creating a story than other people do. I just don't get that.

You're already an accomplished novelist and cartoonist, and I understand you're interested in filmmaking. This movie I wanna make, it's gonna be so much from a girl's point of view—like I wanted the book to be.

thing is very, very important. Why would that be silly? Because later on you become so inured to it that you're just kinda dulled? That's the sad thing. That's the thing to laugh about. Some of the things that I discovered when I was a teenager were so powerful to me and still sustain me in many ways. And I hope it didn't feel condescending to anybody, because the fact of the matter is, I love all the characters. This sounds so stupid, but a lot of my motivation for doing things is that I'm just a confused person. I love and hate things so strongly, often at the same time. I don't judge them, simply because I don't understand right from wrong. *(laughs)* Mark me as crazy!

Perhaps that's what people appreciate, and relate to so much. Look, my stuff is about me as much as it is about you. You wouldn't be able to relate to my stuff at all if it wasn't about you too. I want it to be more universal than that. I use myself as raw material, but I'm like anyone else. I don't care if it's about me—I really believe it's about you. Or anybody. People ask me if I'm embarrassed: "Isn't this personal?" Of course I'm not embarrassed! What makes me different than anyone else? It would be hubris to censor myself. I'm not trying to protect myself in any way. That would be dishonest. What do I have to protect? Once you start protecting things it's no longer true. You wanna touch people. Whether it does or not, you don't know, but you wanna be touched.

