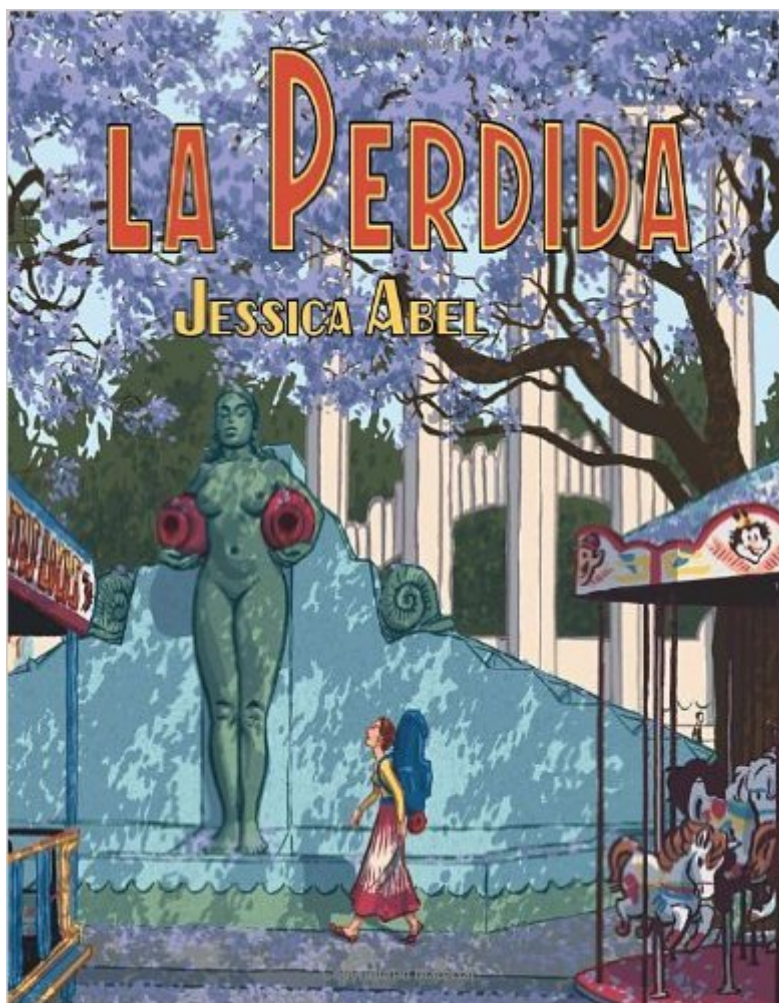


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La Perdida (Pantheon Graphic Novels)



Synopsis

From the Harvey and Lulu award-winning creator of *Artbabe* comes this riveting story of a young woman's misadventures in Mexico City. Carla, an American estranged from her Mexican father, heads to Mexico City to find herself. She crashes with a former fling, Harry, who has been drinking his way through the capital in the great tradition of his heroes, William S. Burroughs and Jack Kerouac. Harry is good-humored about Carla's reappearance on his doorstep until he realizes that Carla, who spends her days soaking in the city, exploring Frida Kahlo's house, and learning Spanish, has no intention of leaving. When Harry and Carla's relationship of mutual tolerance reaches its inevitable end, she rejects his world of Anglo expats for her own set of friends: pretty-boy Oscar, who sells pot and dreams of being a DJ, and charismatic Memo, a left-wing, pseudo-intellectual ladies' man. Determined to experience the real Mexico, Carla turns a blind eye to her new friends' inconsistencies. But then she catches the eye of a drug don, el Gordo, and from that moment on her life gets a lot more complicated, and she is forced to confront the irreparable consequences of her willful innocence. Jessica Abel's evocative black-and-white drawings and creative mix of English and Spanish bring Mexico City's past and present to life, unfurling Carla's dark history against the legacies of Burroughs and Kahlo. A story about the youthful desire to live an authentic life and the consequences of trusting easy answers, *La Perdida* is at once grounded in the particulars of life in Mexico and resonantly universal. It is a story about finding oneself by getting lost. From the Hardcover edition.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Jessica Abel crams heaping handfuls of story into each chapter of her gripping tale of self-discovery and self-deceit, an excellent, completely engaging and essential graphic novel that belongs on every discerning comics fans' bookshelf. Carla, Abel's titular "la perdida" -- lost girl -- is a half-Mexican twenty-something who moves to Mexico City on a whim, looking to get in touch with her Mexican roots by fully immersing herself in the culture, quickly rejecting her fellow American expatriates in favor of two natives who (with a peculiar mix of selfish sincerity) embrace her: Memo, a Communist pseudo-intellectual, and Oscar, his good-looking if somewhat simple-minded friend. The first three chapters are Carla's story of trying to fit in and find her place in a culture that is completely foreign to her and not always welcoming, despite and in spite of her half-Mexican blood, and Abel does an excellent job of establishing a rather large cast of supporting characters so that in the fourth chapter, when things take a dramatic shift that in lesser hands would qualify as jumping the shark, she's able (no pun intended) to pull it off without derailing everything that's come before. Because she tells the story from Carla's perspective looking back on what happened, the reader is cued into details that Carla herself is missing at the time, so as events unfolded, I found myself cringing at some of her choices while always remaining engaged with her story. When it ended, somewhat abruptly, I found my head spinning a bit, chock full of images and anecdotes from Carla's experience as if she had shared them with me personally over coffee.

This is a beautifully rendered story with great artwork and decent writing in the service of a story about a horrible woman who is only rendered tolerable by the kind of abusive creeps that she chooses for company. I respect this story more than I like it because the writer has the ability to convey the worst moments of the young adult life with all its stupidity and excesses - not just drinking or sex but also politics and excuses for bad behavior. Yet, the main character Carla never rises much above the stereotypical clueless American role that she takes for herself. The book begins with Carla being a parasite and living off of her ex-boyfriend who uses her for sex but doesn't like her very much. He's pretentious and useless enough to give anyone with any memory of wanting to be an artist or loving the beats chills. He's all about living like William S. Burroughs in squalor and writing about his experiences in Mexico even as he stays exclusively with the expatriates. Carla eventually does call him out but only after she gets involved with even worse human beings in the form of Memo and Oscar. Oscar is just as useless as the ex-boyfriend but without the money. Memo is a Communist who is spouting speeches full of Marxist cliches which he uses as a weapon against Carla - taking every opportunity he can to wear her down and insult her

(at one point she tears apart a Frida Kahlo poster after being worn down by Memo's bullying in the form of "Frida Kahlo is a revolutionary rendered mute by being commodified and you are simply part of the hegemony with your white girl privilege, etc., etc." Eventually she does tell Memo off but it's a long time coming and there is just way too much time spent listening to the horrible creep and putting up with his abuse.

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