



## Melody: Story of a Nude Dancer

*Sylvie Rancourt , Helge Dascher (Translation) , Chris Ware (Introduction)*

[Download now](#)

[Read Online](#) ➔

# Melody: Story of a Nude Dancer

Sylvie Rancourt , Helge Dascher (Translation) , Chris Ware (Introduction)

**Melody: Story of a Nude Dancer** Sylvie Rancourt , Helge Dascher (Translation) , Chris Ware (Introduction)

**"Charming, innocent and empathetic... Rancourt passes the reader a gift: the ability to experience and see a venal adult life through the forgiving, blameless and easily-wounded eyes of a child."-Chris Ware, from his introduction**

In 1980, Sylvie Rancourt and her boyfriend moved to Montreal from rural Northern Quebec. With limited formal education or training, they had a hard time finding employment, so Rancourt began dancing in strip clubs. These experiences formed the backbone of the first Canadian autobiographical comic book, *Melody*, which Rancourt wrote, drew, and distributed, starting in 1985. Later, she collaborated with the artist Jacques Boivin, who translated and drew a new series of *Melody* comics for the American market-the comics were an instant cult classic.

Until now, the Rancourt drawn-and-written comics have never been published in English. These stories are compelling without ever being voyeuristic or self-pitying, and her drawings are formally innovative while maintaining a refreshingly frank and engaging clarity. Whether she's divulging her first experiences dancing for an audience or sharing moments from her life at home, her storytelling is straightforward and never sensationalized. With a knowing wink at the reader, Rancourt shares a world that, in someone else's hands, might be scandalous or seedy, but in hers is fully realized, real, and often funny.

The Drawn & Quarterly edition of *Melody: Story of a Nude Dancer*, featuring an introduction by Chris Ware (*Building Stories*), places this masterpiece of early autobiographical comics in its rightful place at the heart of the comics canon.

## Melody: Story of a Nude Dancer Details

Date : Published June 23rd 2015 by Drawn and Quarterly (first published January 1st 2013)

ISBN : 9781770462007

Author : Sylvie Rancourt , Helge Dascher (Translation) , Chris Ware (Introduction)

Format : Paperback 352 pages

Genre : Sequential Art, Graphic Novels, Comics, Autobiography, Memoir, Nonfiction, Bande Dessinée

 [Download Melody: Story of a Nude Dancer ...pdf](#)

 [Read Online Melody: Story of a Nude Dancer ...pdf](#)

**Download and Read Free Online Melody: Story of a Nude Dancer Sylvie Rancourt , Helge Dascher (Translation) , Chris Ware (Introduction)**

---

# From Reader Review Melody: Story of a Nude Dancer for online ebook

## Sasha says

I get the concept of this graphic novel but the art style killed me. I found after a while, my eyes started to go blurry because I just couldn't invest myself in the characters. That's also probably because you just couldn't like the characters. I got nothing from them and I just could care less what happened to them. It's also very grim but that's the reality of this story. I thought it would remind me of "Call Me Sasha" but unfortunately for me, it didn't.

I just found it very hard to get through and had to quit about 70% in.

---

## Sarah says

Wow, okay that was really depressing but eye opening at the same time.

---

## Kim says

one of the best comics memoirs. i want to emphasize that the art is indeed gorgeous, not childish or elementary.

---

## Jason says

I read this because a patron contested its inclusion in the library's collection. It is definitely a book for adults, but because of Melody's optimism and childlike naivete, the reader is drawn to her and roots for things to work out well for her. There is plenty of adult content in the form of sex and nudity (to be expected if you read the title) but it isn't salacious and it's clear it's the reason Melody's telling her story is to share as opposed to titillate. Even Nick, who is as deadbeat-boyfriend as you can get, is presented as a complex person that you can't just relegate to stereotype status. Which, perhaps, is what Melody is trying to do for herself through her readers. It worked for me. Like many of us, I am guilty of dehumanizing people who work in the sex industry. Sylvie Rancourt has helped to remind me that they are all real people with hopes and dreams and relationships and complex emotions.

---

## Tom Ewing says

Chris Ware's introduction frames Melody - a compilation of Sylvie Rancourt's self-published autobiographical comics - as "innocent": the "venal adult world" seen through "childlike" eyes. From a technical standpoint you can see what he's getting at, but as a take on the content of this book it's well off the mark. Look past the untutored drawing style and this is not a childlike book - it's the venal adult world

presented the way most people who aren't highly acclaimed artists experience it: matter-of-fact, and one day at a time.

Each of Melody's adventures is introduced the same way - "This is not the beginning or the end, but somewhere in the middle". Melody is not a sex comic, and it's not an explicitly political one: it's a comic about work. Yes, the fact that the specific job is stripping matters - capturing the texture of the job, the specific hopes, hassles and headaches, is the point of any comic about work. But there's no hint of the sensational. Melody's own character isn't innocent so much as stoically optimistic without being naive - a difficult and subtle line to draw, and one Rancourt does well.

You could speculate on how much the material production of Melody affected the approach and content: the comics were originally drawn and printed by Rancourt as things to sell in the bars she danced at, which may be why the depiction of the strip club crowds treads slyly between indulgence and pity. But she's happy to show an asshole as an asshole, and there are plenty of examples in the seven stories here. The main such, of course, is Melody's unspeakable boyfriend Nick, a lecher, failed hustler, petty crook, and layabout. Melody's failure to kick Nick to the curb has infuriated many readers, and some have criticised her as passive.

But I think this is a misunderstanding of what Rancourt is doing. Because of the apparently artless drawing, it's easy to see Melody as plainly and straightforwardly autobiographical. But Rancourt is a storyteller, and so Nick is also a literary creation - his terminal fecklessness is a thematic counterpoint to Melody's work ethic (however grudging that is) and he's a lightning rod for all the criticisms the comic wants to make about male privilege and chauvinism. His idiotic schemes also tend to push the plot along, which when you're writing a comic about the largely unchanging everyday, is sometimes necessary.

If you read the other Rancourt Melody stories - published in the 80s by Kitchen Sink with a different artist - it's obvious that she isn't some kind of comics idiot savant. The difference between them is a stylistic and generic difference between autobiographical comic and memoir - the Kitchen Sink run *\*is\** a sex comic (it knows its market) but is also an evocation of the lost world of 70s post-hippie rural Montreal: free love, generous benefits, and massive exploitation of both those things by self-entitled men.

Rancourt quit comics at the end of the 1980s, but her work here feels more contemporary than it can possibly have done at the time. The untutored style which Ware found hard to place has echoes all across the world of minicomics and webcomics, the autobiographical approach doubly so, and the subject matter - sex, work, and sex work - couldn't be more modish. The price will put a lot of people off, but Melody deserves a new audience.

---

## **Jim says**

Fascinating, hard to put down graphic collection originally published in Canada in 1985. The main character melody is quite sympathetic, and I was disappointed that the book ended as I was willing to keep reading more episodes.

Chris Ware provides an interesting introduction.

---

## Clara says

Este libro es especial.

Estaba inclinada a pensarlo cuando me lo llevé prestado, ya que una pegatina en el plastificado de la biblioteca lo anunciaba. Donde el resto de volúmenes lleva un código de barras, éste tiene un párrafo enmarcado. Dice así:

«Por fin editado en Francia, este cómic en su origen autoeditado y distribuido en Québec hace 28 años marcó la vanguardia del relato autobiográfico. Su autora, auténtica pionera, nos brinda su experiencia como bailarina de striptease en locales, algunos de ellos escalofriantes, de Montréal. Sus primeros lectores fueron sus clientes y compañeras de trabajo, y el material fue pasando de mano en mano hasta llegar a grandes autores, como Aline Kominsky y su marido Robert Crumb, y Chris Ware, que lo veneran. Su diseño naif contrasta de forma sorprendente con la dureza de su argumento.»

Es especial por su candidez. Con dibujos casi infantiles, Rancourt nos comunica un tema sórdido con extraordinaria naturalidad. Mélody es serena, y esa serenidad se transmite a lo largo de cada tira aún cuando contienen historias de violencia y abuso. Su inocencia es imperturbable. Es fácil imaginar a Rancourt repartiendo folios fotocopiados con sus viñetas sencillas en los bares en los que trabajaba, ofreciéndole a clientes, compañeras y jefes sus propios retratos incómodos sin ningún tipo de inquina, tan sólo para compartir. Quiero pensar que fue feliz bailando y desnudándose para otros, tanto literal como figurativamente. Tras su inesperado éxito y haber inspirado a toda una generación del cómic, Rancourt ha desaparecido. Dicen que se ha hecho un hueco en la heteronorma y vive con su marido y cinco hijos en una granja canadiense. Me pregunto qué estará escribiendo allí, y si algún día podremos leerlo.

Una rareza delicada y personal, Melody es el testimonio tremendamente original de una mente perspicaz.

---

## Mel Jannard says

Pour petites étoiles (que je déteste, comme vous savez), j'ai hésité, car les parties avec son chum m'emmerdaient un peu; par contre, cette relation malsaine mise de l'avant est importante. Le gars est présenté comme un total cave, du moins c'est ce qu'on « devine », mais Melody n'y voit pas grand-chose. Comme c'est un récit autobiographique, on sent bien qu'il y a un recul de l'auteure; mais jamais de « j'avais me faire un personnage full clever après coup pour pas que le monde ME trouve naïve ». (Ça, c'est d'ailleurs une plaie en littérature jeunesse, mais je m'égare. \*Melody\* N'est pas une BD jeunesse.)

J'ai été fascinée par ce livre, pour plusieurs raisons, la première étant la grande authenticité de tout ça. J'y consacrerai peut-être une vidéo entière, si je trouve les bons mots. Au grand risque de mal l'interpréter aux yeux des fins coïnoisseurs.

---

## Emilia P says

Really? A rudimentary comic memoir (BEFORE COMIC MEMOIRS WERE A THING GUYS) about being a stripper? It's impossible to put down? Who'da thunk. It's almost like outsider art -- it's so sincere, straightforward, and wide-eyed, without being like ooh isn't this super-racy or aren't I wild and crazy for

doing these things. Just like, stripping kind of stinks but also it is just a living, and also my boyfriend is a jerk, but eh, whatever, eventually I quit that junk.

And she does, hooray! This is so oddly compelling, and funny, and sweet but not in a cloying way. Perhaps it's just how wide-eyed and ...almost naive? Melody is. Kind of like...if Flippy-Do...were a nude dancer. But that, sirs, is not a think that shall happen. Thank heavens. Thank heavens also for comic memoirs. For the Sylvies and Snakepits and Porcellinos and Gabby Schultzs of the world in all their variegated glory. HOORAY!

---

## **David Schaafsma says**

The repackaged, serialized memoirs of Rancourt, telling the somewhat fictionalized (? She calls "herself" Melody in it; she is describing a scene where her fellow characters might not want to be outed) tale of her years as a stripper. Chris Ware and Bernard Joubert write framing essays to help us understand the importance of this project, which they identify as the first comics memoir, which she began publishing in DIY fashion in 1985, only in French, selling it at strip clubs. Now, summer of 2015, it is out in English, 344 pages, so it is a substantial piece of work. It is, since I know you are curious, not particularly lewd or titillating. Definitely not pornography, though there is, of course, nudity in it. Rancourt does tell her story of various experiences she has in the trade, but the hardest-to-take aspects of the story are ones of her small time criminal ex, whom everyone hates. You will, too. But Melody never does hate him, actually, which makes her somehow more innocent-seeming than the life she depicts, in a weird way.

Melody comes off as a kind of naif, even when she is engaging in some pretty wild things (not usually explicitly depicted, I said, and no spoilers here!). I read some of it before reading Ware's terrific intro, in which he agrees it is not prurient or shocking, and helps us see the art, which is initially elementary looking, as deliberately "child-like" and innocent. And I agree, finally, though I initially DID see it as kinda simple, as art and story. But as I read on I can see the drawing is actually accomplished and the episodic stories are interesting. And over all there is an arc to the memoir, as we see how she gets into the trade (casually, at the suggestion of her dope dealer their boyfriend), and gets out of it (working at a pretty disreputable bar).

The really interesting thing about this memoir (besides its historical value, first Canadian memoir!) is how Rancourt maintains her nice and friendly persona throughout, as if she were actually skirting all the dangers of her life in some way. Very interesting project. Really! :)

---

## **Jennifer says**

This really is a classic of autobiographical comics. Rancourt is super honest in her recounting of her time as a nude dancer and the struggles she had with her not so great husband. You can see her forming herself as a person through the story and even in the writing and art of the comics. I think it is an amazing thing, so see someone emerge through art and self disclosure.

---

## **Michael says**

via NYPL - In the mid-80s, Rancourt chronicled her life as a nude dancer in clubs in Montreal. While the art is crude at best, Rancourt's honesty and lack of mission statement make this book a real winner. She's able to

share her life - with all its good intentions and bad choices - without judging anybody involved, allowing all the characters' actions and words to speak for themselves and giving readers the freedom to observe and react in their own way to her unsparing honesty. It's a worthwhile book for that alone.

---

### **Lavinia says**

The questionable reality of this zine-style comic is interesting and complements the gritty story; without that 4th-wall break at the end of every chapter, the cardboard characters wouldn't stand up. The characters are depressingly real and the scene is well-explored, for all its point-of-view limitations. That said, the art is just not good enough to tell the story properly. The graphic novel format is one that demands the art at least suffice for and at best lend additional semantic content to the text. The art in this was so bad as to actively obscure meaning: there seems to be only one mouth shape, so characters smile while expressing discontent; every panel with more than one person in it looks crowded, reducing the visual impact of larger panels depicting crowds; there are far more characters than distinguishable face/body types and identifying the person in each panel is a challenge. I do recognize that this art style is strongly associated with the zine format, but that doesn't make it good.

---

### **Adrienne says**

What a wonderful book. The complexity of the story and its subject matter pair so well with the simple drawings, dialogue, and lack of character development. And even though her drawing style seems, at first glance, to be very amateurish, her composition proves her competency as an artist. Hard to believe it was made in the 80s!

---

### **Erin Cataldi says**

I've read a lot of stripper memoirs (I have eclectic reading tastes) and this graphic novel memoir didn't really do it for me. This memoir takes place in Canada during the 1980's, Melody and her dead beat boyfriend are broke and unemployed so he pressures her into being an exotic dancer while he peddles dope. Melody starts off as young and naive and quickly grows jaded and tired of her boyfriend's lying, cheating, and stealing. Not enough to leave him though. There are multiple "chapters" and each tells a small story. One involves the cops, another involves, puppets, yet another an orgy, you get the picture. While interesting, I had a hard time feeling sympathy for Melody. The drawings are a little amateur but fit well with the story.

---