

Micro-comic Project
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English 2180.101
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An Essay of *Libby's Dad*, By Eleanor Davis

Eleanor Davis is a comic producer, humanitarian, and creative inspiration for women cartoonist. Now residing in Atlanta, Georgia, Davis lives and creates art with her husband, Drew Weing. Raised by parents who were avid comic enthusiasts, Davis grew up in a world of literary expression, punctuated by an artistic medium. Davis produced her first micro-comic at 14 years old but insists she is no prodigy. "I think because I was never particularly a good artist, I was always aware that it was not something I was good at naturally. I had to work at it really hard." She claims that her parents' fervent love for the medium gave her a head start, focusing her on expressing her story through art.

To enhance her prospects of a career in the field of comic book writing and illustration, Davis attended Savannah College of Art and Design (SCAD), studying sequential art. SCAD's Department of Sequential Art has been considered "the Harvard of comics" by USA Today and a favorite of Marvel when looking for new talent. Davis was not interested in mainstream publications using micro-publishers for her personal collection of comics and zenes.

However, her list, as published on her website for employers and clients, includes: The New Yorker, The New York Times, Google, The National Geographic, The Atlantic, The Wall Street Journal, Time Magazine, BusinessWeek, The Washington Post, The Guardian, Fantagraphics Books, Dutton, TOON Books, First Second Books, Houghton Mifflin, Workman Publishing, and Bloomsbury Books. I do not think that is where the passion for the craft is satisfied. Maybe her paychecks are high from those interests, but she lacks the satisfaction of a

room full of avid readers, with a table overflowing with floppies produced by a multitude of small and independent publishers.

Libby's Dad, a 40-page saddle stitch comic, available from Retrofit, was the winner of the Best Print Comic of 2017 and Cartoonist Studio prizes from the Slate Book Review and the Center for Cartoon Studies. Davis has a plethora of awards, all of which cannot be covered, but she has had the honor of appearing in Best American Comics 2008 (whose cover she designed), Best American Comics 2013, and Best American Comics 2015.

Libby's Dad, a favorite among Davis's work, is available for purchase to this day at Retrofit Publishers, both in print-to-order and PDF download for electronic consumption. Davis does not produce her comics, relying on several micro-publishers for her smaller floppy and zene work and a few house producers for her larger books and graphic novels.

However, this does not make her work very hard to find. Googling, Doing-Fine, maybe with her name will bring you to her website where she displays her colorfully packed art, illustrations, comics, and graphic novels. However, she does not display the names of the art, until one has clicked on it. You might think you know what you are looking for when you reach Doing-Fine, but if you don't have a clear picture of what art is contained in the piece you are looking for, one might find themselves lost for hours trying to find exactly what they were looking for, now having found more than they expected.

If you are looking for *Libby's Dad*, do not just Google the name and take the easy way out, explore and see what you can find. For those not as adventures go to Davis' section comics on Doing-Fine and look for a pool with three girls swimming, their hair floating behind them, and cacti with red flowers in the background. A link will take you to the publisher.

Retrofit, a District of Columbia micro-publisher, has this to say about themselves, “Retrofit Comics publishes cool comics and other fine comics stuff, and we distribute cool comics by our friends!” Simple, to the point, and about as easy to get as their comics are.

Libby's Dad is available for purchase from this distributor costing \$8 and will be shipped to your door floppy style. For *those* who want to miss out on the magic of holding the cream and crayon pages in hand and smelling the new print as it is opened for the first time, the PDF version is available for \$4. But let's be real here; who wants to view art through a screen? Get the paper copy and experience the world and struggles of childhood through the eyes of these girls who misconstrue adult relationships and lose themselves to manic hype.

Libby's Dad, by Eleanor Davis, is not what most consider when thinking about a comic book. There are no super-powered people in too-tight and colorful clothing showing off more than some are comfortable with. Not even the size matches these comics.

Libby's Dad is a micro-published comic and needs to be as economical as possible to produce a profit. It is a floppy, 40-color-page, 7x8.5-inch saddle-stitched comic book with two staples driven through the spine. The simplicity of its construction holds no sway over the vibrant, meaningful art contained within.

Moreover, the cream-colored pages do not resemble the rigged structure of traditional comics. Each sequence juxtaposition is not cordoned off from the others by structured panels. Like children's imagination, the action moves freely from sequence to sequence and is never content to move in a focused or clear direction. This freedom from restrictions allows readers to enter the realm of a child's mind seamlessly.

The lack of particular change moments is not the only factor that lends itself to the comic book subject. In addition, the simple yet complex speech of the girls is spectacular. The characters are dealing with a significant problem that belongs to the world of adulthood. Hence, their limited ability to process the abuse or expanded accusations of adults leading them to conclusions that frighten them. This emotional build would not be possible without Davis's masterful use of restricted textual content.

The colors are what make this comic special. Each girl has a splash of vibrancy in a world created in crayon. One can only imagine them in a state of change. Dull reds, blues, greens, and yellows are all that are needed to make a sophisticated and whimsical pool party with friends. The textures produced by the crayon accentuates the story, speaking to the subjects of the comic and the reality of youth where minutes feel like hours, hours like years, and years a lifetime.

A reader of Libby's Dad can expect a journey of linear expression about a girl who is struggling with the divorce of her parents and being in a new environment. She is not just handling the struggles of new life circumstances but also the absence of friends whose parents' objections to Libby's dad do not allow them to share each others' company.

Libby, arguably the main subject of this comic, is a minor character in the depiction of this story. She says little and is often distinguished by her back and long blonde hair. Her friends make up the action of the piece, playing, floating, and questioning the motivations of the adults who don't let their friend join them and why their world seems so strange now.

The covers of this comic best describe Libby's inner turmoil in this story. On the front, three heads bob above the water, a pool of blue, with cacti flowers behind. On the back, Libby

sits on a diving board, blonde hair covering her back. Her friends only cover the difficulties she currently faces.

The moving factor of this story is the girls' perpetuating a rumor that Libby's dad threatened to shoot her mother, which is reinforced by displays of emotion from the mother, who cries over a box of Fruit Rollups in a grocery store. It begins as a rumor. The girls giggle and make fun of it, flitting from topic to topic. It resurges as a joke again and again. Later, it is a repeated ghost story that questions the veracity of the claim. Then, the girls spill nail polish on the floor, and from their play talk and the hype of the rumor, they are too afraid of the father to ask for help.

This story is complicated despite seeming childish and straightforward on the first inspection. It deals with the damage that is done to a child in the middle of family separation. It wrestles with abuse, which leads to a divorce and rumors spread by gossiping parents, who take sides on these family issues. Of course, little mind is given to the young ears that consume the actions of their role models.

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