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A Mess of Everything

Miss Lasko-Gross

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Miss Lasko-Gross : A Mess of Everything before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised A Mess of Everything:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Excellent book, Lasko-Gross is a wonderful illustrator/storytellerBy BNPQOEEcellent book, Lasko-Gross is a wonderful illustrator/storyteller. The book itself arrived in much better condition than anticipated. I am beyond satisfied with this purchase.1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Hilarious, Great ProtagonistBy S. BarfieldThis Graphic Novel exceeded my expectations when I read it. It is such an

entertaining book with characters that (if you're under 30) remind you of being a high school outcast. So many times during reading this was I reminded of instances of being around that age. The Art is good, the coloring is great. And it's a book that you'll probably actually read more than once. 0 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Graphic Novel that captures adolescent angst By Palo Alto Art lover This graphic novel grabs you from page one. Should be "must" reading for adolescents. All the topics of the growing up years are tackled with painful honesty. The drawings are very powerful. A very thought-provoking novel. Bette Hirsch

The second volume in this semi-autobiographical trilogy finds self-effacing non-conformist Melissa now in high school facing a drug habit, alienation, accidental heartbreak and other issues in an intense, honest, and funny memoir. *A Mess of Everything* is the second volume in Miss Lasko-Gross's semi-autobiographical trilogy, picking up where the first volume, *Escape from "Special,"* left off: self-effacing non-conformist Melissa is now in high school, where the stakes are higher as she copes with an anxiety-induced drug habit and an anorexic best friend. Melissa finds herself negotiating the kinds of everyday problems facing young adults today such as alienating her friends with her uncomfortable honesty and accidentally breaking her best guy friend's heart. Eventually, her woes cause her to nearly flunk out of school, and by the end of the book Melissa faces the choice that we all do at some point: to take the risk and pursue her dreams or settle for a safer, more secure routine. The unsentimental truthfulness that is the hallmark of Lasko-Gross's work is coupled with a raw but increasingly refined visual vocabulary. *A Mess of Everything* is an intense, honest, and funny memoir that holds appeal for anyone who is navigating, or who has ever grappled with, these issues. She expresses the awkward naiveté and inexperience of a young girl with the keen insights of a mature artist.

From Publishers Weekly In this intense but humorous follow-up to *Escape from Special* Lasko-Gross's semi-alter ego must navigate the perils of high school life. Fifteen-year-old Melissa doesn't have a lot of friends and those she does have issues of their own: rebel Kylie is on the brink of another expulsion; Penny has a stutter and penchant for shoplifting; and Terry is a closet anorexic. The problems Melissa faces are common ones: rebel or not; get high... or higher; tell a boy how she feels but Lasko-Gross handles each with care so that even readers who've gone through similar situations will be convinced that Melissa's woes are unique. As her grades plummet and her parents uncover her drug stash, Melissa becomes increasingly persuaded that life will never get better. It seems that her comic book, which she sells on consignment to local record stores, is the only thing keeping her going. With full-color art whose dour color palette mirrors the sometimes painful subject matter, Lasko-Gross seamlessly shifts between real conversations and the ones that exist only in Melissa's head, painting a complete portrait of her raw, emotional and biting sarcastic heroine, and leaving readers eager for the last installment of this planned trilogy. (May) Copyright Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. From School Library Journal Grade 10 Up The cruelties, indignities, rebellion, and lack of self-confidence that form the high school experiences of many teens are well captured in this follow-up to *Escape from "Special"* (Fantagraphics, 2007), the author's middle school memoir. At 15 and 16, Melissa's biggest downfall was that she couldn't control her honesty or soften her expressions of it, leading to messy situations in the classroom, with her friends and family, and, most important, her peace of mind. She uses her given name of Melissa Gross for her high school persona, and readers get to see her earliest efforts to sell her comics and also an explanation filled with teenage righteousness for her *nom de plume*. Imagery here is fraught with some nearly nightmarish (and succinctly credible from an adolescent perspective) exaggerations of tongues, acne, and even a turd. The artwork is done mostly in muted grays; blue and yellow highlight eyes or hair, and an occasional object also receives soft coloration. This is a spot-on portrait of one girl's struggle for intellectual and emotional honesty, touching on her best friend's anorexia and realizing the humanity of those around her: classmates, her mother whom she had earlier dismissed as stock characters in the drama of her own life. More symbolic than Ariel Schrag's high school memoirs, this one will touch teens who themselves have just succeeded in negotiating the mess of learning to be a mature social being. Francisca Goldsmith, Halifax Public Libraries, Nova Scotia Copyright Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. From Booklist *Starred* The stellar follow-up to *Escape from Special* (2008) picks up the semi-autobiographical narrative right where *Escape* left it. Melissa is in high school, dealing with the problems and pressures of being a teenager as well as with an anorexic best friend, slipping grades, and experiments with drugs, not to mention attempts at romance, the class trip gone wrong, and trying to figure out how to be cool. With her own mixture of insecure angst and sarcastic smarts, Melissa manages to keep pushing forward. Given the burgeoning maturity of the main character, *Mess* is suitably more intense than *Escape*, reflecting a sort of ratcheting up of the emotional level, as it were. Heightened narrative intensity conjures a perfect atmosphere for Melissa's adventures in growing up. The art, washed and faded and varying wildly from almost abstract to more traditional comics style, also reflects the moodiness of adolescence wonderfully. The writing comes across as so genuine and true a teen's voice that the book feels more like an illustrated journal, capturing Melissa's awkward emergence from her unique personal perspective. Spot-on about the late-teen experience while avoiding overly

nostalgic feelings. --Tina Coleman