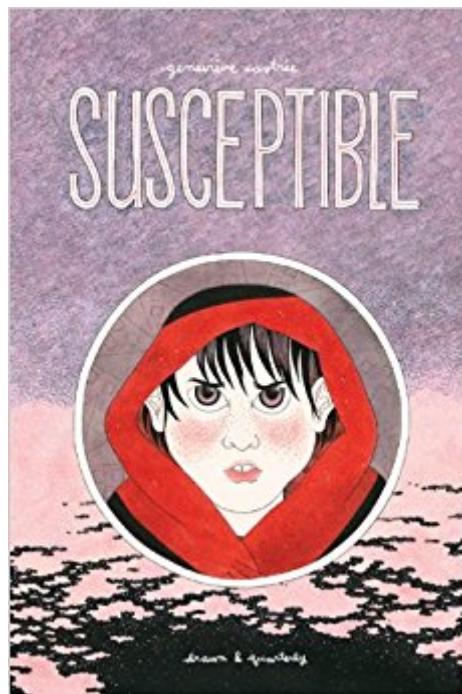


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# Susceptible



## Synopsis

"...an aching clarity [is] evident in [CastrÃ©e's] sombre grey tones and her dexterous, serpentine lines."-Globe & Mail Best 100 Books of 2013"With mesmerizing honesty CastrÃ©e resurrects the obscenely disorienting turning points of a childhood, the ones that haunt a person for a lifetime. After reading the last page I closed the book and wept a little bit about its simple, perfect ending."-MIRANDA JULY, author of *It Chooses You* and *No One Belongs Here More Than You*Goglu is a daydreamer with a young working mother, a disengaged stepfather, and a father who lives five thousand miles away. Drawing, punk rock, and the promise of true independence guide Goglu to adulthood while her home's daily chaos inevitably shapes her identity. Susceptible is a devastating graphic novel debut by GeneviÃ©ve CastrÃ©e; it's a testament to the heartbreakin

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

In a series of spare first-person vignettes, CastrÃ©e pieces together the difficult childhood of Goglu, a French Canadian girl who lives with her alcoholic, self-destructive mother and distant, resentful stepfather. Gogluâ•tomboyish and with a perpetual self-conscious blushâ•strains against the influence of her genes, wondering where her own deep sadness comes from and hoping that she wonâ•t succumb to the same troublesome lifestyle of her mother, who is desperate for her daughterâ•s attention and beset by manic episodes. As Goglu gets older, she seeks refuge in punk rock and drugs, but the strain of her destructive home life becomes too much to bear and she escapes to live with her biological father in Vancouver.

CastrÃfÂ©e's black-and-white, Scarryesque illustrations accompany tiny, precise cursive lettering that gives the whole work a whispered, confessional quality, as if each word were an embarrassing secret. At times, Goglu's story is overwhelmingly, heartbreakingly sad, but CastrÃfÂ©e leaves a glimmer of hope: a redemptive future shaped by art, independence, and unconditional love. --Sarah Hunter

Ã¢ " [Susceptible]'s pervasive melancholy is still lingering with me, a reminder of why we really read: to feel things besides our own emotions.Ã¢ • Ã¢ " ¢Paris ReviewÃ¢ " [Susceptible is] a devastating coming-of-age graphic memoir.Ã¢ • Ã¢ " ¢CBCÃ¢ " CastrÃfÂ©e's black-and-white, Scarryesque illustrations accompany tiny, precise cursive lettering that gives the whole work a whispered, confessional quality, as if each word were an embarrassing secret. At times, Goglu's story is overwhelmingly, heartbreakingly sad, but CastrÃfÂ©e leaves a glimmer of hope: a redemptive future shaped by art, independence, and unconditional love.Ã¢ •

Ã¢ " ¢Booklist

Reading Susceptible by GeneviÃfÂ©ve CastrÃfÂ©e was a devastating experience, for it progressed in the very opposite way that I had expected it to be. Rather than flowing in like a fairytale, as you'd expect a novel about a child to be, it discovered the complexity of searching for meaning without any support from a stable family. In the first few pages where the artist draws a rough timeline of Goglu's mental development, Goglu asks herself whether sadness is acquired or genetic. Throughout the graphic novel, I was looking for the answer to this question. Between drugs, alcohol, sex, deceit, domestic violence, separation, she is not only expected to "behave properly" but, she is assumed to be mature enough to understand the severity and sensitivity of such issues. At an early age, Goglu discovers that she is an outcast, and throughout the novel, she continues to believe that way. Even when she's not an outcast, she forces herself to think that she is one, and develops a fancy for boys, drugs, and alcohol, that distance her from the developmental track expected by her mother and the society. But soon when her mother realizes that Goglu is mature enough, she lets her discover her identity. The mother's experiences hint at her instability through the years, so we can believe that depression could be genetic. On the other hand, Goglu's father was having a nice time after discovering his passion and spending time with the people that were like himself. It leaves us beyond doubt that Goglu became the way she was because of her surroundings. Susceptible is the opposite of a fairytale. Goglu has a

mother, she has a step-father (instead of an evil step-mother), her appearance that entails big ears, and masculinity put her far away from what we'd expect a fairy princess to be, and she has defaulted, if we are to believe that smoking and drinking are false for her tender age. I felt very anxious and uneasy until the novel found closure when suddenly Amélie begins to understand Goglu's situation after her getting pregnant, and

Tete-d'oeuf telling her how she's different from others and that's a good thing. Was it Goglu's appearance that made her an outcast? There are many instances where Geneviève Castrée builds upon the idea. It happens in the beginning at the New Year celebrations when her mother's friends call her "Happy New Year Big Ears!" Soon after she heard that she just wanted to be alone, even though she overwhelmed herself by consistent eavesdropping. The second instance was rather subtle when Goglu visits her father's friends, and one of them was paying extra attention to her. Her father said that was because he fancied young boys. Once, her mother piggybacked her and kept enforcing that her daughter was now taller than her. All of these incidents were not intended to hurt Goglu, as they came from well-wishers. However, the author reinforces this idea by creating a freckled, tomboy with short

hair. "I'm eighteen. I have all my teeth. I can do whatever I want." Optimism. The impact of these lines is ineffable, and all the devastation and displeasure that I felt throughout the novel transformed into a ray of hope. Did she succumb to her depression, or did she realize that the events that shaped her life were not relevant anymore when she had a whole life left to live? There were times when she wanted to asphyxiate herself, but there were also times, like the end of the novel, where Goglu feels optimistic. Goglu knew what hash and cocaine were when she was in kindergarten. The casualness with which she claims to know everything is hilarious, yet sad, and reminded me of Josie from *Heroes of the Frontier* who chose to get consistently drunk in front of her children. Paul became a lot more mature than his actual age, simply because he had to deal with a mother who did not take responsibility. But Paul had Anna, while Goglu's dialogs are with herself.

I got this after reading of Geneviève's passing in an article on her husband Phil Elvrum's (the microphones, mt eerie) music made in mourning. The book is already a fairly devastating story on its own, but is quite depressing in light of her death. Having said that, I also found it achingly beautiful and poetic, both visually and linguistically. If you like autobiographical graphic novels like *Stitches* or *Epileptic* that also deal with trauma, chances are you'll like this. If you're easily triggered

by depressing subject matter, you should probably avoid this. Geneviève was clearly a very gifted artist with a lot of strength and resilience, I would have loved to meet her. RIP. Side note: reading about her influences turned me onto Julie Doucet and "My New York Diary", which was a good chaser for this.

After reading a favorable review of this book in my city's newspaper, my interest was elevated and I decided to order "Susceptible" for my 18-year-old daughter who is a fan of graphic novels and any novel that challenges and enlarges the reader's view of the world. She loved it (as did I) and is now passing it on to her friend. This graphic novel captures the isolation of growing up for main character, Goglu. Each page details Goglu's difficulty in maturing through life's stages with her family and friends. Eventually, Goglu does find a sense of her own identity and as a reader, I rejoiced with this fact. This graphic novel does not focus on fantasy for its plot but rather on real-world actions and consequences. What an interesting read this book weaved from beginning to end. The illustrations are absolutely essential and supportive of the narrative. Don't miss reading author Genevieve Castree's "Susceptible".

I enjoyed this book and I think the art was excellent, but a clearer, more definitive ending would have been good.

We follow Goglu from a very young age up to her teen years in this often heartbreakingly debut from Genevieve Castree, who writes and illustrates with soft, subtle restraint. Goglu is just barely out of diapers when she begins to learn of her mother's drinking...and how to handle it. She and her mother are living in Quebec with her mother's boyfriend, while her father is thousands of miles away in British Columbia. There's quite a bit of pain tucked away in Castree's sparse panels, in which she beautifully captures the oddness and bewilderment of a childhood spent overcompensating for irresponsible adults. Goglu is a daydreamer, and quite smart as well. She is tough and opinionated. Fascinatingly, she wonders about her own tendencies toward being drawn to sadness. It's something she struggles with, and she reflects on it often. Is she susceptible to it, as the title suggests? Or is she strong enough to become her own person? Susceptible is only 75 pages, but it's one of those books that feels twice as long. The story is gripping and powerful, without dwelling in morbidity. Instead, it's a rather impressive debut that offers hope amidst its hard-hitting narrative.

This long-awaited work from multi-talented artist & musician Geneviève Castrée is simply

gorgeous. It's a step away from Castree's more poetic and metaphorical works like the previous *À Tout Seul Dans la Forêt* *À t'en Plein Jour, Avez-Vous Peur?* [Vinyl] but the more directly narrative approach is well-suited to her talents. This book displays an ambition, a subtle politics, and depth of emotion that many autobiographical comics lack. It's funny, tender, emotionally gripping and honest about the darker parts of childhood. And the art is peerless; every delicate line seems infused with subtlety and grace.

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