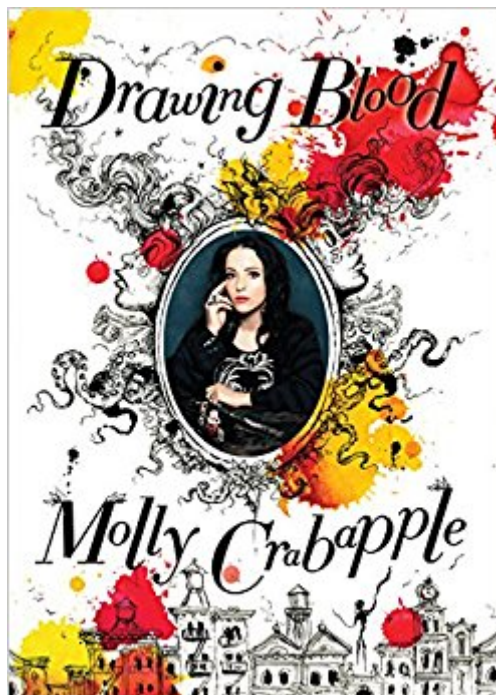


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# Drawing Blood



## Synopsis

Art was my dearest friend. To draw was trouble and safety, adventure and freedom. In that four-cornered kingdom of paper, I lived as I pleased. This is the story of a girl and her sketchbook. In language that is fresh, visceral, and deeply moving—and illustrations that are irreverent and gorgeous—here is a memoir that will change the way you think about art, sex, politics, and survival in our times. From a young age, Molly Crabapple had the eye of an artist and the spirit of a radical. After a restless childhood on New York's Long Island, she left America to see Europe and the Near East, a young artist plunging into unfamiliar cultures, notebook always in hand, drawing what she observed. Returning to New York City after 9/11 to study art, she posed nude for sketch artists and sketchy photographers, danced burlesque, and modeled for the world famous Suicide Girls. Frustrated with the academy and the conventional art world, she eventually landed a post as house artist at Simon Hammerstein's legendary nightclub The Box, the epicenter of decadent Manhattan nightlife before the financial crisis of 2008. There she had a ringside seat for the pitched battle between the bankers of Wall Street and the entertainers who walked among them—a scandalous, drug-fueled circus of mutual exploitation that she captured in her tart and knowing illustrations. Then, after the crash, a wave of protest movements—from student demonstrations in London to Occupy Wall Street in her own backyard—led Molly to turn her talents to a new form of witness journalism, reporting from places such as Guantanamo, Syria, Rikers Island, and the labor camps of Abu Dhabi. Using both words and artwork to shed light on the darker corners of American empire, she has swiftly become one of the most original and galvanizing voices on the cultural stage. Now, with the same blend of honesty, fierce insight, and indelible imagery that is her signature, Molly offers her own story: an unforgettable memoir of artistic exploration, political awakening, and personal transformation. --This text refers to the Paperback edition.

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## Customer Reviews

“Drawing Blood is packed with enough energy and edge to make Patti Smith’s Just Kids seem like a field trip to Disneyland | Candid, earthy, romantic, funny, omnivorous... A portrait of a tough woman winning (finally) in a tough profession in the toughest of cities” • (Shelf Awareness) “Crabapple is smart and wicked and wicked smart, a master of imagery and perception, and so her art always works on multiple levels. So too the book. She’s not afraid to provide contradictory thoughts and feelings. Drawing Blood might be the sexiest thing you read this year.” • (Daily Beast) “This beautiful book, generously graced with so many illustrations, is artfully designed and fun to browse for the images alone | But Crabapple’s tight, vibrant, jabbing prose, and prescient asides are the reason to buy this work. Her narrative is well-crafted, expertly told, and completely compelling.” • (Seattle Times Book Review) “The book reads like a notebook of New York, a cultural history of a certain set. Filtered through her eyes, we see 9/11, the aftermath of the crash, Occupy Wall Street, Hurricane Sandy and onward... [Crabapple is] a new model for this century’s young woman. (New York Times Book Review) “Celebrated New York journalist Crabapple is also one of America’s best, most original artists. Her memoir tells the story of her remarkable life, from her days modeling for Suicide Girls to her groundbreaking Dr. Sketchy’s Anti-Art School and her work with Occupy Wall Street.” • (Men’s Journal) “Hers is a story of art as liberation | Molly detects the bright and beautiful as well as she does the dark and fearful in the world not just because her eye is keen, but also because her eyes are so wide open.” • (Alana Massey, BuzzFeed Books) “Among the book’s delights are the frequent examples of her work, from jittery sketches to lush, colorful paintings | both words and images are the product of a keen eye and devastating pen.” • (Boston Globe) “Jaw dropping, awe inspiring, and not afraid to shock, Crabapple is a punk Joan Didion, a young Patti Smith with paint on her hands, a twenty-first century Sylvia Plath. There’s no one else like her; prepare to be blown away by both the words and pictures.” • (Booklist (starred review)) “Lavishly illustrated, the book offers a candid portrayal of an artist’s journey to self-knowledge and fulfillment.” • (Kirkus Reviews) “Artist, writer, and activist Crabapple was compelled from a young age by the need to draw because it gives her a sense of self worth. Her struggles as an impoverished artist are rendered here in raw, vivid prose,

accompanied by her arresting illustrations. • (Publishers Weekly) • Using illustrations to bolster the written material, *Drawing Blood*, out now, is a more intimate memoir than we're used to seeing, one that is blazingly honest and unafraid to offer up something real to chew on. • (Paper Magazine) • Artist Molly Crabapple delivers a violently felt and intimately revealing memoir. • (Book Riot) • Hands down, the best book I've read all year | an incredible book that has everyone talking | This raw, unrepentant memoir sheds light on Molly Crabapple's early career, her first forays into reporting, and her tireless quest to improve as an artist. The lavish illustrations are just the icing on the cake. • (Heavy.com) • Molly Crabapple's pen is a scalpel, and she's not afraid to turn the blade on herself. Beautifully excruciating. • (Patton Oswalt) • Molly Crabapple could be this generation's Charles Bukowski. She's a great artist whose life is also a work of art. • (Matt Taibbi) • In a few short years, Molly Crabapple has proved to be one of the most determined and effective political artists working in these sorry times. I wish there were a hundred or even two or three like her. • (Joe Sacco) • Molly writes like she draws: the spare lines have a reporter's keen accuracy, but can barely contain the boisterous, messy, soulful life splashing about within. Inspiring, intimate, and just a bit intimidating, this book is a must. • (Joss Whedon, creator of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* and writer-director of *The Avengers*) • Molly Crabapple is turn by turn irreverent, respectful, enraged and then trembling with awe, and all of this is a tender meditation on the power of art to transform a singular life into one that can be emblematic for us all: powerful and magical. • (Chris Abani, author of *The Secret History of Las Vegas* and *GraceLand*) • Molly Crabapple writes that her pen is a lockpick, and with it she has revealed truths about life, culture, and politics in America that are compelling, artistic, and memorable—as is this revealing new memoir. An engaging read by one of the nation's most gifted activists. • (Bryan Stevenson, author of *Just Mercy*)

• Molly Crabapple could be this generation's Charles Bukowski. She's a great artist whose life is also a work of art. • "Matt Taibbi In language that is fresh, visceral, and deeply moving" and with illustrations that are irreverent and gorgeous "here is a memoir that will change the way you think about art, sex, politics, and survival in our times. From a young age, Molly Crabapple had the eye of an artist and the spirit of a radical. After a restless childhood on New York's Long Island, she left America to see Europe and the Near East, a young artist plunging into unfamiliar cultures, notebook always in hand, drawing what she observed. Returning to New York City just before 9/11 to study art, she posed nude for sketch artists and sketchy photographers, danced burlesque, and modeled for the world-famous *Suicide Girls*. Frustrated with the academy and the conventional art

world, she eventually landed a post as house artist at Simon Hammerstein's legendary nightclub the Box, the epicenter of decadent Manhattan nightlife before the financial crisis of 2008. There she had a ringside seat for the pitched battle between the bankers of Wall Street and the entertainers who walked among them—a scandalous, drug-fueled circus of mutual exploitation that she captured in her tart and knowing illustrations. Then, after the crash, a wave of protest movements—from student demonstrations in London to Occupy Wall Street in her own backyard—led Molly to turn her talents to a new form of witness journalism, reporting from places such as Guantánamo, Syria, Rikers Island, and the labor camps of Abu Dhabi. Using both words and artwork to shed light on the darker corners of the American empire, she has swiftly become one of the most original and galvanizing voices on the cultural stage. Now, with the same blend of honesty, fierce insight, and indelible imagery that is her signature, Molly offers her own story: an unforgettable memoir of artistic exploration, political awakening, and personal transformation. --This text refers to the Paperback edition.

I have an on/off love affair with the book reviews in "The Economist". Sometimes I love the books they recommend and sometimes I loathe them. Drawing Blood falls into the "it's great" category. Drawing Blood is Molly's personal memoir of her career so far, her struggles to be recognised as an artist, the people she's met and her political world view. It's unusual for a young artist (b. 1983) to write a memoir so young but her life has been crammed with experiences that make this a meaningful, thought provoking book. Some people will undoubtedly be horrified that Molly chose to work in the adult industry to fund her early career but in noughties NYC that was, perhaps, the only way a struggling, working class, female artist could make her way without a wealthy patron. Molly gives vivid descriptions of strip clubs, burlesque dancers, artists, protests, and a lifestyle that many can only imagine. The characters leap off the page illustrated by a vivid written style that draws in words as well as Molly makes art. The book has been described as an unflattering mirror held up to conventional middle-class lives. This is a true but harsh description. I don't sense that Molly regrets her life. Life is to be enjoyed, struggles are to be overcome. If you have self-belief and talent Molly shows you can succeed. Is this a feminist tract? No! The point is made that it is harder for women to succeed in the art world just as it is in many other endeavours. It is also too easy to sneer at the routes someone has to take before they reach a point of success. The book starts out with an angry tone. It mellows towards the end but is increasingly cynical about conventional political society. The book is lavishly illustrated and the drawings show an evolving artistic style that remains lush and vivid. Here's to raising an absinthe to Molly Crabapple and her art and future success.

Art was a stranger making eyes through the smoke of a foreign dive bar. Drawing Blood is such an engaging read that I couldn't put the book down until I had devoured all of its contents and yet, there were so many lines and passages to savor and to reread, so many artworks by Molly to let your eyes linger over. This may not be an art catalogue but it's probably the most beautifully illustrated memoir I've ever read. Some passages I had read in the reviews or articles by Molly over the past week but they were even more enjoyable the second time around placed in context and elaborated on more fully. I came to Molly's work after she was both writing and creating visual works of art. She seemed so established, so sure by the time I encountered both her writing and her artworks that it was good to get the backstory on her journey as an artist and a writer. I've never had the privilege of meeting Molly or attending an exhibition of her work but she and many of the characters in her book seem so familiar as part of my mental landscape that in some ways reading the book was like visiting distant friends and filling in all the gaps of what they've been up to between the various stories they've told you, you heard about, or read in their Facebook posts.

Fear is a doorway. Drawing Blood is a book that by the time you finish you've already thought of ten or twenty friends that you'd recommend the book to: young nieces and nephews to encourage them to dream of travel to distant lands; artist, writers, and poet friends who are toiling away in oblivion because it is either they must write, they must make art, or they will die inside; friends who are politically active in fighting against the status quo, against the establishment; friends who've grown cynical from the endless stream of headlines that make this feel like the darkest of times growing darker; to friends who compulsively color outside the lines; to women young and old who are fighting the patriarchy; and to friends who enjoy reading a good memoir.

I began to find the art that came from my flaws as well as my virtues—that art as intrinsic and unfakeable as handwriting. In reading Molly's journey of becoming an artist and a writer I thought of William Blake's lines, Improvement makes strait roads, but the crooked roads without Improvement, are roads of Genius. Molly didn't follow anyone else's prescribed path on her journey. She tested herself constantly and expanded herself by walking through the doors opened by facing her fears. She followed her curiosity wherever it led her. She never let anyone else define what it is to be a woman, to be an artist, or to simply be human though she took in a wide net of counsel.

Come back tomorrow, gorgeous. We've always wanted our own Toulouse-Lautrec. I really had no clue about many of the scenes of the playgrounds of the wealthy (why would I) Molly describes but wow is it delicious to see them

through her critical eyes. I'd want to time travel to these scenes just to see the art in the context for which they were created. Molly though does a wonderful job of recreating this for the reader. However, Molly's never some court artist. She's moved equally well in rural villages in Turkey as in the wild excesses of The Box. Sometimes the muse shows up at your doorway wearing black stockings & ties you to the bed. I'm of the school of thought that artist should be questioning the status quo, they should be pushing the boundaries of what society deems acceptable, for by doing so they expand the space we all live in. Vicarious as it may be it was good to journey with Molly as she pushed herself, as she put herself in situations where she wasn't entirely comfortable and often not entirely safe. To see my art held on the streets meant more to me than to see it hanging in any gallery. Molly has been identified as the Occupied movement's most prominent artist. Drawing Blood helps put that label into flesh and blood context. It's not a label Molly gives herself and she pushes back where she's being given credit that is due to others. Even so, she's fully engaged with all her being in the times we live in and doesn't shy away from confronting the monsters and the hypocrisy rather she finds that inside herself or on the street. I found so much to enjoy in Drawing Blood that I'll be getting a second copy that I can mark up an annotate on a second reading but I do want to keep one first edition spotless so that I can go back from time to time and look at the art and remember the inspiring day I spent with Molly reading Drawing Blood from cover to cover. In these dark times Drawing Blood is a ray of hope, though it's far from pollyannish.

I'm joining the chorus of raves here for Molly Crabapple. I have followed her on Twitter where she writes about peace, civil liberties, and other important issues. I was floored when I first saw her lively drawings of pictures from Guantanamo and of Muslim women. The big debate one can have -- is she a better writer or a better artist? She is superb at both. Molly was a rebel in school, and as she details that I think the reader will experience sympathy because we all wanted to run out of the building at times even if we were basically obedient. She was not, however. Now she is grown up and still making waves -- and beautiful art.

I am not a person who likes going to art museums in general, but I do like art in some way. I collect rave/party-flyers for over 20 years because of their art, and I really like Molly's drawing style. I knew some stories about Molly's life but when I read that she was going to write her memoir I was very interested. This book is 'that memoir' and it is definitely worth a read if you want to learn more about

Molly. I am sure you didn't know everything that she writes about herself in this book. She is very open and honest and I love the artwork of the book as well of course. I personally like her for being so honest and not closing her mouth when others would because of e.g. shame. She is intelligent and interested in many parts of society and people in general. She doesn't close her eyes for black people, Syria, etc. She knows what is really happening in the world and she tries to tell it as much people in the world who are open to see it as well, by a.o. making great art of the different situations she encountered.

I have the kindle version... very well done, candid and often very un-filtered recount of life in the arts. Thoroughly enjoyed the writing style as well as the story. Bravely written. I listened to her interview on NPR Fresh Air and simply placed my order via Kindle. I probably missed out by not having a printed version, particularly for viewing the artwork. I would definitely recommend the book...

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