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# Petty Theft



## Synopsis

A hilarious romantic comedy about kleptomania and booklovers Pascal is in a bad place. He and his longtime girlfriend have just broken up, he's got writer's block, and when he goes out for a run to ease his frazzled nerves, he falls and injures his back so badly that he's strictly forbidden from running. What's an endorphin-loving cartoonist to do? In a bid to distract himself, Pascal throws himself into his other pleasure: reading. And while at the bookstore one day, he spies a young woman picking up his own book. But then she darts out of the shop without paying. Bemused, he decides to figure out why she did it. *Petty Theft* is a comedy of errors, a laugh-out-loud account of a man on a mission, and a testament to the addictiveness of book ownership. Pascal Girard intermingles an all-too-true-to-life snapshot of contemporary relationships with slapstick trials and dryly funny tribulations in this delightfully readable book. From the award-winning author of *Reunion*, *Petty Theft* is a deftly told, finely drawn contemporary romance that will keep booklovers on the edge of their seats from the first page until the denouement.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

“[*Petty Theft*] manages to convey both the lightness and loneliness of a recent breakup...

Drawn with simple, expressive linework, the story's trials and travails are full of humor, but the moments of Pascal alone in a room crowded with books and old possessions bring a sincere levity to the tale. *Bitch Magazine* “If you're in the mood for a sparkling entertainment of a comic to read in the sun on a summer afternoon, you won't find another book as

cheerful, or as beautifully told, as *Petty Theft*.  
The *Stranger* “Awkward humour, physical stunts, romance, babies, that white dreadlocked guy in spinning class . . . it’s all here.”  
CBC Books Holiday Gift Guide “[In] *Petty Theft*, Pascal Girard offers up a dry, humorous, and neurotic look at his own dating life . . . Much of the humor comes out in Pascal’s actions, which range from slapstick to irony, and while he and the woman of his dreams may not be made for each other, they make a good graphic novel team.”  
AV Club “A master slapstick artist with a keen sense of comic timing and a knack for pinpointing the exact moment when human interaction takes a turn for the absurd, Girard is especially skillful at extracting humour from precisely rendered body language.”  
Montreal Review of Books

Pascal Girard was born in Jonqui re, Canada, in 1981. He began filling the margins of his notebooks with drawings from his first day of school. Since he was never able to rid himself of this good habit, he naturally decided to make it his career. He is the award-winning author of *Nicolas*, *Bigfoot*, and *Reunion*. He lives in Montreal.

*Petty Theft* is the story of a recently dumped cartoonist that sees a woman shoplifting his book. It’s written vividly and drawn loosely, without panels, in an endearingly sketch-like style. It’s my first time reading a book by Pascal Girard, and I hope to read many more. On a side note, in my copy it looks like the printer skipped or something. It’s not smudged, but there is a lighter, double image on some pages. The book’s still readable though.

This was an okay book. Quick read, but it didn’t really grip me at all. I would have rather borrowed this from a friend or the library.

In *Petty Theft*, Pascal Girard is on his own after a long-term relationship ended.

He’s running as part of his new life healthy resolutions, but when he trips over a rock and injures himself, he’s told to stop exercising for a while. Without the endorphins, he’s afraid he’ll descend into depression, so he begins hanging out at the local bookstore, where he spots a young woman stealing one of his books. It’s obvious from the art that Girard (a French-Canadian) has more than the usual American art influences. The art is thin-line, with six borderless panels per page, and the content is slice-of-life and urban, a comic equivalent of Woody Allen movies. Perhaps

it's a bit too self-indulgent, assuming that we're all interested in the details of Girard's life, but the incidents are funny if cringe-inducing. I wanted to push Pascal to make choices, or better ones. His attempts at detection, at finding out who this woman is, often boil down to chance encounters. Certain pages work as gag strips in themselves, especially the work ones. Pascal is feeling blocked from drawing, so he goes back to work as a construction welder, which doesn't go well. Particularly odd yet eye-catching is one of his possessions that the ex-girlfriend sends over: a giant paper-mache head of himself. Sitting in the corner of his room (he's staying with friends, a young family who provide a contrast to his single, unfocused life), it's a mute reminder of his self-judgment. Although small, the panels have great emotion. They read quickly, in case you're just interested in what uncomfortable situation Pascal will get into next (much like Seinfeld), but their detail rewards inspection. His uncertainty about what to do in his life, with his career, about the book thief • will resonate with many. I found the ending somewhat unsatisfying, as I felt there was a lack of resolution, but perhaps that's my expectations of fiction, where I want stronger endings than we get in life. (Review originally appeared at ComicsWorthReading.com.)

Petty Theft sees cartoonist Pascal Girard in a bad place. He's nearing 30 and wants to run a marathon to mark the milestone but during a run one day he smashes his foot against a rock and throws his back out! His girlfriend of 9 years breaks up with him leaving him temporarily homeless and living in the spare room of a married friend with a new baby. He's also giving up cartooning and thinking of once more taking up a "real job" like construction. Without the endorphins he gets from running, Pascal falls into a depression and goes looking for books on positive thinking. But while browsing in a bookshop he sees a young woman stealing a book • one of his! and decides to follow her. So begins an unusual courtship as Pascal tries to figure out what he wants in this light-hearted, comedic slice of life tale. Maybe it's because he's so merciless with his character, depicting himself as this human wreck, constantly prat-falling and saying the wrong thing, misinterpreting situations and so on, but I think Pascal is a very likeable and sympathetic chap. The book is also very much in the vein of modern French comics who do fast-moving, engaging contemporary stories superbly. There isn't a whole lot to say about Petty Theft but it's a straightforward story executed beautifully. Girard doesn't bother to include scene

transitions/establishing shots, trusting the reader to fill in the necessary blanks, and this allows for a swifter, and more subtly sophisticated, narrative. Girard keeps the disparate elements in his story turning nicely so there's never a dull moment, and I was interested to see what would happen with the cute klepto and him. Will they, won't they, or what? etc. I smiled a couple times during the book and I read this straight through in a single sitting which is rare for me - and even genuinely laughed once! The comedy is at times a little strained and there are only so many times watching Pascal fall over can be amusing and I thought the imagery of his ex's giant paper mache head in the corner of his room symbolising his heartbreak was a bit obvious (as was the inevitable throwing away of said head to symbolise overcoming his sadness). But these are small nitpicks overall the comic is great. The blurb on the cover calls this a "heavily fictionalised memoir" so I expect Girard moulded the facts into a neat, cohesive narrative for the sake of the reader, and that's fine; whether knowing every part of it was true or not doesn't really add or detract from my enjoyment of the story. Also, I wouldn't say it's a "romantic comedy"; comedy sure but romance? Not really. Plus the label has negative connotations (at least, for most guys) I know if I'd seen it advertised as such beforehand I would have hesitated picking it up! After this and his last book Reunion, not to mention his moving debut Nicolas, Pascal Girard is quickly turning into one of his generation's most notable comics creators even if his work isn't "important" from a literary or stylistic viewpoint. Petty Theft is a charming and entertaining book that will appeal to all fans of quality indie comics and anyone looking for a light, fun read.

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