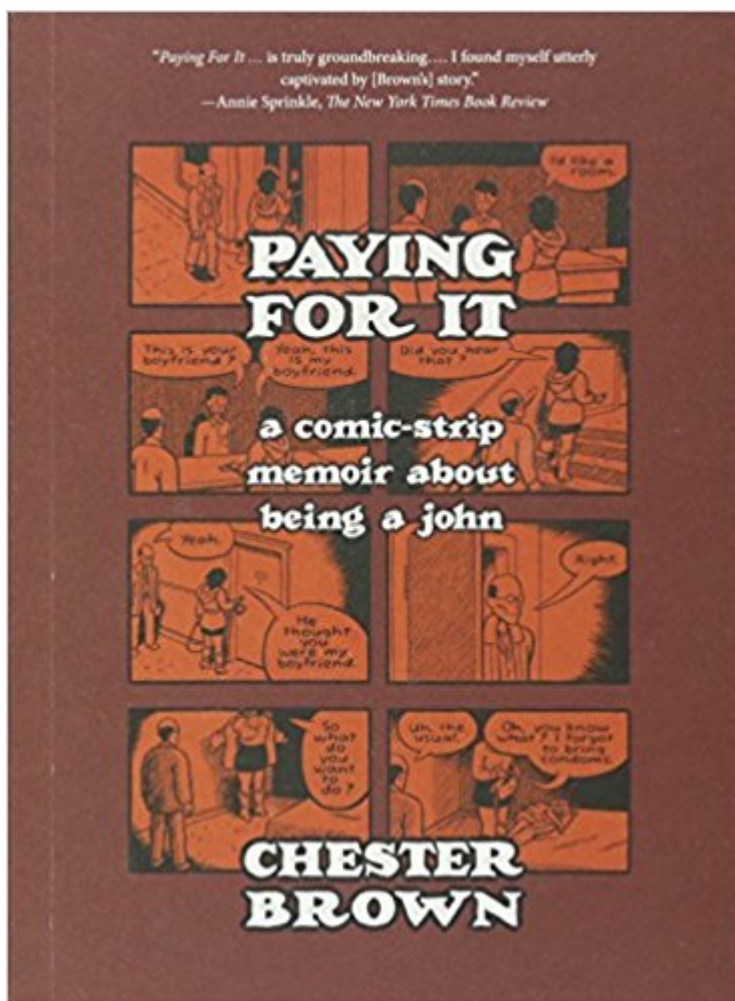


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Paying For It



Synopsis

The critically lauded memoir about being a john, available in paperback for the first time! *Paying for It* was easily the most talked-about and controversial graphic novel of 2011, a critical success so innovative and complex that it received two rave reviews in *The New York Times* and sold out of its first print run in just six months. Chester Brown's eloquent, spare artwork stands out in this paperback edition. *Paying for It* combines the personal and sexual aspects of Brown's autobiographical work (*I Never Liked You*, *The Playboy*) with the polemical drive of *Louis Riel*. He calmly lays out the facts of how he became not only a willing participant in but also a vocal proponent of one of the world's most hot-button topics—prostitution. While this may appear overly sensational and just plain implausible to some, Brown's story stands for itself. *Paying for It* offers an entirely contemporary exploration of sex work—from the timid john who rides his bike to his escorts, wonders how to tip so as not to offend, and reads Dan Savage for advice, to the modern-day transactions complete with online reviews, seemingly willing participants, and clean apartments devoid of clichéd street corners, drugs, or pimps. Complete with a surprise ending, *Paying for It* continues to provide endless debate and conversation about sex work.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

A compelling look into one man's history of employing prostitutes as a replacement for romantic love, this graphic novel is sure to create controversy. Brown has produced acclaimed but brutally honest autobiographical works before, but here he adds a new didactic element. In June 1996 Brown's then girlfriend broke up with him. After three years of celibacy and his growing conviction

that romantic love is destructively possessive, Brown works up the courage to see a legal prostitute and finds the "burden" of anxiety over whether to pursue a relationship with any particular woman forever removed. The next 200 pages are an explicit—but far from erotic—dossier of the various women he did business with, until he meets one that he ends up with in a monogamous—but still financial—relationship. Although Brown intends the work to be a compassionate look at a profession that helps people, he unfortunately goes out of his way to anonymize the sex workers—never showing their faces and telling the story in tiny, cramped panels, giving the whole thing a voyeuristic feel. A lengthy appendix arguing that a system where paying for sex is preferable to romance-based methods is unlikely to persuade many readers. (May)

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“[Brown] makes as convincing a case for the decriminalization and destigmatization of prostitution as anyone I’ve ever come across in the prostitutes’ rights movement.”
Annie Sprinkle, *The New York Times*
“Paying for It [is a] body-and-soul-baring memoir that is sure to stimulate strong reactions.”
Heller McAlpin, *NPR*

Paying for It by Chester Brown is an autobiographical graphic novel that relates Mr. Brown’s sex life from 1996 to 2010, which consists of his using professional female escorts for his heterosexual encounters. He mentions using masturbation to cool his ardor prior to these encounters, but provides no further details. To protect the women he changes their names and doesn’t provide locations or identifying features. For those of us not familiar with sex workers or their customers, this is a chance to get a glimpse into the workings of this trade. Brown is dispassionate but clearly happy with his decision to outsource his sexual needs, feeling that sex and girlfriends do not go together well for him. The text alternates visits to various escorts with discussions with his male friends and ex-girlfriends about the advantages of his chosen sexual lifestyle. He is well-read on the politics of sex workers and takes a Libertarian position condemning the present laws restricting or outlawing sex work. The body of the book is preceded by an Introduction by Robert Crumb who calls it Mr. Brown’s best work. At the end of the book there are 50 pages of Appendices and Notes that go into much deeper detail than the narrative of the book permitted. I would say that he makes as good an argument for unregulated prostitution as you will find in the popular literature.

I love the simple style of Brown’s illustrations and the point of view that he uses to approach the

world. I get the feeling Brown is either a huge nerd, or somewhere on the Asberger's scale, because a lot of his interactions with people are quite awkward. In order to avoid girlfriend-awkwardness, he starts seeing escorts. His philosophical arguments supporting prostitution are well-considered and very persuasive. However, the majority of the book is NOT boring philosophy but rather little vignettes of his visits to whores. I like the intimacy and strangeness of each of these meetings.

Meet Chester Brown, a cartoonist whose girlfriend just broke up with him for another man that may or may not even be interested in her. It's at this point in his life that Brown no longer looks for "romantic love" but instead turns to prostitutes. It must be noted that when this book was written, prostitution was semi-legal in Canada. That is, as long as you didn't solicit in public or operate out of a brothel, prostitution was tolerated. A popular concept was the "outcall" where you can call an agency and have an escort show up to your room. However, we soon discover that Chester couldn't afford the girl AND the room, so he usually went for incalls, which means he went to the prostitute. (Canada has recently changed their policy on prostitution. It is legal to sell sex, but illegal to buy it.) The illustrations are unique in that Brown attempts to draw the women as they were in actuality (breast size, body type, etc.) and I found it amusing that he changed the prostitutes names even though they were fake names to begin with. Although I see why he did it - to protect their identities from anyone who may be reading the book. A lot of common scams with prostitution are depicted in the cartoons, such as the "bait and switch", which is when a girl uses a fake/outdated picture or inaccurately describes herself over the phone and then shows up at your door. Overall, it was a quick read. I found myself agreeing with most of his philosophies during the actual illustrated portion of the book, but in the appendix of the book he uses a lot of far-fetched examples (homosexual relationships, the possibility of a "gay gene", futuristic sex in 2080, etc) to get his point across. If you're interested in the sex for money business I'd give this book a look.

I love this book and have made a few of my friends read it. It feels very genuine and autobiographical. It is just the story of someone's experience with prostitution. I changed the way I feel about sex work.

The subject of prostitution is so charged with gender-conflict that I was amazed to read a book that approaches the subject with cool compassion rather than -- take your pick -- moral outrage, salacious interest, pity, bitter hatred of women/men, cold calculation and all the rest of it. It is strangely melancholy; it seems searingly honest; it is unsparing in its presentation of the "john", the

author himself; it offers many insights into the mundane realities of the trade. I found it illuminating and provocative.

The danger of creating art instead of mere entertainment is the risk of being hated. Brown wades into a controversial area with consideration and the utmost respect, and presents it with elegant style. This could have been a titillating erotic graphic novel: it is not. Paying for It is challenging and at times squirmingly uncomfortable, but also clever, intelligent, and concise. Brown's opinions are very strong in this area but it's clear that he arrived at these opinions through extensive personal experience, fearless introspection, and demonstrably not a small amount of debate with friends and family. These are not received opinions. The extensive appendices and notes which go into the arguments for/against in rigorous detail are a greatly appreciated and unexpected bonus, and save the first half from being overburdened with walls of text. Like a hug at the end of a session, it's a thoughtful and sincere demonstration that he cares about our experience.

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