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Hostage



Synopsis

How does one survive when all hope is lost? In the middle of the night in 1997, Doctors Without Borders administrator Christophe André was kidnapped by armed men and taken away to an unknown destination in the Caucasus region. For three months, André was kept handcuffed in solitary confinement, with little to survive on and almost no contact with the outside world. Close to twenty years later, award-winning cartoonist Guy Delisle (Pyongyang, Jerusalem, Shenzhen, Burma Chronicles) recounts André's harrowing experience in *Hostage*, a book that attests to the power of one man's determination in the face of a hopeless situation. Marking a departure from the author's celebrated first-person travelogues, Delisle tells the story through the perspective of the titular captive, who strives to keep his mind alert as desperation starts to set in. Working in a pared down style with muted color washes, Delisle conveys the psychological effects of solitary confinement, compelling us to ask ourselves some difficult questions regarding the repercussions of negotiating with kidnappers and what it really means to be free. Thoughtful, intense, and moving, *Hostage* takes a profound look at what drives our will to survive in the darkest of moments.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

"Hostage shows what it's like to be held captive ... Delisle brings readers into the room with the hostage and, more importantly, into his state of mind." •The Atlantic "[Hostage is] an indelible portrait of an ordinary person facing a frightening ordeal." •Publishers Weekly, Starred Review "The location captured [in *Hostage*] is less Andre's grim little room than his mind... Delisle transmute[s] tedium into compelling suspense." •The New York Times "The account of André's experience...

would be powerful enough, if depicted in prose alone. But *Hostage* is a comic, and it's Delisle's art — his character design, his use of page and panel layout to underscore the mind-numbing sameness of solitary confinement while controlling the story's mood and pacing — that makes us feel André's plight so deeply." — Glen Weldon, NPR "This true story of a man's kidnapping in Chechnya confirms Guy Delisle's position as one of the greatest modern cartoonists." — Rachel Cooke, *The Guardian* "Harrowing and beautiful... I've felt haunted by the book since I finished it." — John Warner, *Chicago Tribune* "Delisle's new book, *Hostage*, is his best since *Pyongyang*... In its beat-by-beat, day-by-day scope, is ultimately a travelogue about the power of imagination." — Hillary Chute, *New York Review of Books* "In muted grays, André's capture is depicted as both terrifying and monotonous at once. The terror of loneliness is present in every frame — the cells, tightly centered on André, claustrophobia-inducing in their own right." — Kevin Nguyen, *GQ* "The gutters of a comic have never felt more like those prison bars than they do in *Hostage*. Still, Delisle's humane approach keeps this from become a trip to the zoo; he makes you not just see, but feel André's anguish." — Mark Peters, *Salon* "A modern master of the travelogue... [returns] with a surge of blood-pumping adrenaline." — Amos Barshad, *The Fader* — "Guy Delisle conveys great, slow-burning tension in this sublime account of what Christophe Andre endured as a hostage in Chechnya. Delisle's controlled handling of claustrophobic physical and mental spaces — and the rhythm he generates — is the work of a patient master." — Joe Sacco, author of *Palestine* — "A book about a man trapped in the corner of a room should not be exhilarating, but somehow Delisle has managed to create just that. He takes us through Christophe André's narrative of his time spent as a prisoner with an attention to detail that makes you feel like you're right there with him, chained to a radiator, counting the days to keep yourself from losing your mind. My heart was racing by the end." — Sarah Glidden, author of *Rolling Blackouts*

Guy Delisle was born in Quebec City, Canada. His bestselling and acclaimed travelogues (*Pyongyang*, *Jerusalem: Chronicles from the Holy City*, *Burma Chronicles*, and *Shenzhen*) are defining works of graphic nonfiction, and in 2012, Delisle was awarded the top prize in European cartooning when the French edition of *Jerusalem* was named Best Album at the Angoulême International Comics Festival. He lives in France with his wife and children.

Guy Delise's graphic novel *Hostage* (2016) is a return in style to his successful autobiographical graphic novels that drew on his experiences as an animator in China and North Korea as well as his

experiences with his family in his wife's job as a member of Doctor's Without Frontiers. However, this time he is writing a biography of a Doctors Without Borders administrator Christophe André who was kidnapped by armed men and taken away to an unknown destination in the Caucasus region in 1997. It chronicles the stoic experience of a hostage in Chechnya fighting depression and killing boredom by reacting famous battles from history. I don't want to give away the ending, but it is a powerful story of survival in the face of misery.

Incredible life story superbly narrated! A tale of human limits. The quality of the drawings and of the narration in such a confine environment is nailed perfectly. A must read! This book has to win Grand Prix d' Angoulême if it has not done so.

I heard the author on NPR and really enjoyed the book. I got a real feel for Christophe André's isolation and despair.

Great story. You would think that a story of a guy stuck in a room for months would be a bore to read. On the contrary, Guy Delisle makes the daily challenge of the main character to stay intellectually and emotionally "alive" a great read.

With this new book released in the U.S. in the spring of this year, French Canadian graphic artist and animator Guy Delisle takes a departure from his more usual graphic novels about his life as the spouse of a Médecins Sans Frontières physician to tell the story of a real innocent abroad, Christophe André, on his first assignment for MSF in Ingushetia, in the North Caucasus in 1997. Christophe was taken hostage, driven across the border into Chechnya, and outside of Grozny he was held for ransom for three months. He had been in his post for three months when they came for him. He spent the bulk of his captivity chained to a radiator in a small room with a mattress stuffed with straw. He was fed watery soup and allowed bathroom breaks, but otherwise had no opportunity to speak, see the sky, move freely. Ransom negotiations were slow: when he escaped, finally, the translator assigned to his office in Ingushetia told him other foreigners had been kidnapped in the time he was being held. The 400+ pages of this book are not a struggle; readers spend the time thinking about what they might do in similar circumstances, and interrogate themselves about the scene and their own strengths. André himself passed the more terrible stretches by recalling in great detail the military commanders, battles, and outcomes he had studied when he was younger, including Russian, French, and American battles. The escape at the end is

harrowing, and stomach-dropping. André simply did not know whom to trust. Eventually he made it back to his home in Paris, and six months after that went back to MSF and asked for a new assignment. He worked twenty years for MSF after that experience.

In early July, 1997, Christophe Andre was kidnapped from his Doctors without Borders office in Nazran, a town in the former Soviet Republic of Ingushetia. His kidnappers took him to Chechnya where they tried to get a million dollar ransom for Andre. This book is the story of his captivity from his own perspective. As such, there's a lot of waiting around with almost no information or changes in the situation. Christophe is handcuffed to a radiator or a bed or the floor for a great deal of the 400+ pages of this graphic novel. The monotony and the desperate speculations about what is going on outside of his prison are easily communicated in the graphic novel format. The same routine is repeated over and over, but readers don't get bored because the visual format moves faster than real time and lets the reader experience months of captivity without becoming bored. Even the smallest changes in routine or noises outside the room (Christophe is typically held in spare rooms of apartments or houses, with the occasional move between locations) become fodder for speculation or even hope that the situation will finally resolve. Despite the grim topic, I found this a fascinating tale told in a way that acknowledges the boredom but is very compelling and is not boring. Readers identify with Christophe's mood swings and his speculations about what is going on and his feelings about his captors. Christophe manages to keep his sanity in an extremely trying experience. The grey-scale art fits perfectly with the darkened rooms and hard mood of the true story. Recommended.

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