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Chicken With Plums (Pantheon Graphic Novels)



Synopsis

“Chicken with Plums is a feast you’ll devour.” —Newsweek
Acclaimed graphic artist Marjane Satrapi brings what has become her signature humor and insight, her keen eye and ear, to the heartrending story of a celebrated Iranian musician who gives up his life for music and love. When Nasser Ali Khan, the author’s great-uncle, discovers that his beloved instrument is irreparably damaged, he takes to his bed, renouncing the world and all its pleasures. Over the course of the week that follows, we are treated to vivid scenes of his encounters with family and friends, flashbacks to his childhood, and flash-forwards to his children’s future. And as the pieces of his story fall into place, we begin to understand the breadth of his decision to let go of life. The poignant story of one man, it is also stunningly universal—a luminous tale of life and death, and the courage and passion both require of us.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Starred Review. The question of what makes a life worth living has rarely been posed with as much poignancy and ambition as it is in Satrapi’s dazzling new effort. Satrapi’s talent for distilling complex personal histories into richly evocative vignettes made *Persepolis* a bestseller. Here she presents us with the story of her great-uncle Nasser Ali Khan, one of Iran’s most revered musicians, who takes to bed after realizing that he’ll never be able to find an instrument to replace his beloved, broken tar. Eight days later, he’s dead. These final eight days, which we’re taken through one by one, make up the bulk of this slim volume. While waiting for death, Nasser Ali is visited by family,

memories and hallucinations. Because everything is being filtered through Satrapi's formidable imagination, we are also treated to classical Persian poetry, bits of history, folk stories, as well as an occasional flash forward into lives Nasser Ali will never have a chance to see. Each episode is illustrated with Satrapi's characteristic, almost childlike drawings, which take on the stark expressiveness of block prints. Clear and emotive, they bring surprising force and humor to this stunning tribute to a life whose worth can be measured in the questions it leaves. (Oct.) Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

The writer and illustrator who chronicled her childhood in the best-selling graphic memoir "Persepolis" now turns to the life of her great-uncle Nasser Ali Khan. A revered musician, he takes to his bed and refuses sustenance after his frustrated wife breaks his tar - an Iranian lute - over her knee. It takes him eight days to die, and in that time Satrapi reveals the futures of his children and unearths his past. She shows her great-uncle not merely as a wayward romantic but as a conflicted man whose story embodies several aspects of Iranian cultural identity during the late nineteen-fifties. Satrapi's deceptively simple, remarkably powerful drawings match the precise but flexible prose she employs in adapting to her multiple roles as educator, folklorist, and grand-niece. Copyright © 2006 Click here to subscribe to The New Yorker --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

It is hard to separate my distaste for the characters in the book from my feelings about how Satrapi told/illustrated their story. I have no sympathy whatsoever for the main character, Nassar Ali Khan -- regardless of how great a musician he (allegedly) once was -- and had no interest in his life. Based on that, I should have given the book 1 star -- but I gave the book an additional star in recognition that Nassar Ali Khan was an actual person, this story is (supposedly) what actually transpired the last week of his life, and it is admirable that Satrapi had a desire to understand and communicate to the world at large an unusual story about one of her ancestral relatives. That said, I agree with other 1 and 2 star reviews that this book falls far short of her seminal work in Persepolis 1 & 2. I am also disgusted that she would be in sympathy with Khan and (apparently) not see that it was malignant, petulant, unloving narcissism that fueled his every action.

Marjane Satrapi gained attention with her autobiographical graphic novels, Persepolis and Persepolis 2. These stories, based on her childhood in Tehran in the 1970s and 1980s, gained

critical acclaim and led to an award-winning film adaptation. In *Chicken with Plums*, she turns from autobiography to biography, telling the story of her great uncle, Nasser Ali Khan. Nasser was a renowned Iranian tar (a Persian stringed instrument, like a lute) player whose music was his life. In a heated argument, his jealous wife destroys his tar. When he can't find a suitable replacement, he despairs unto death. As the days pass, Nasser loses more and more of his will to live, while reflecting on some good memories from his life. Satrapi tells the story with sensitivity and humor, but it did not move me like perhaps it should have. Ultimately I was not moved, and not terribly impressed with the stark, minimalist black and white presentation. I was left with the feeling that *Chicken with Plums* was an admirable labor of love by Satrapi, who wanted to honor the memory of her great uncle. *Chicken with Plums* is worth a look for Satrapi fans, and for fans of graphic novels, but the general audience, me included, can probably take it or leave it.

Nasser Ali selfishly decides to die, but before he does so, he reflects back on his life and we are given a look into his thoughts during the eight days before he passes. This book was fantastically dark and depressing, yet also very poignant and revealing. I didn't know whether to like Nasser Ali or not - but he felt so human. He plays favorites with his children, argues with his wife, can't get over the girl who got away, resents his brother for being their mother's favorite. What shocked me most was the fact that music was such a large part of his life and when he couldn't find a replacement tar he literally decided to die and die he did! Satrapi packed a lot of emotion into just 84 pages, primarily doing so through her illustrations. I have a lot of respect for her as an author and I'd be hard pressed to say whether I enjoyed this or her *Persepolis* stories more.

I thought the book was fantastic. It has many themes that are dear to my heart. Already on the second page: Nasser Ali Khan!!! What an honor to welcome you to my humble shop!! Mirza! I'm looking for a tar. A tar?! But you own probably the best one in the country! Someone broke it. In the name of God! Who dared to break the tar of Nasser Ali Khan? It is always great for me to find Rumi mentioned in the books I like, and an angel of death that helps to explain how suicides are not like normal people is also great. The wish for death is closely associated with dervish mystics in *CHICKEN WITH PLUMS*, but picturing a musician son of a mystic mother makes this story an explanation of remarkable clarity. Having nine or twelve pictures on some pages helped me read this book at the slow pace it deserves.

compared to this author's other book(s) - *Persepolis*, This is a little sad, for the subject

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