



not simple

NATSUME ONO

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Complex, powerful, and emotionally wrenching, not simple is a novel told in visual form by one of the most acclaimed creators at work today.

Reads R to L (Japanese Style). Ian, a young man with a fractured family history, travels from Australia to England to America in the hope of realizing his dreams and reuniting with his beloved sister. His story unfolds backwards through the framing narrative of Jim, a reporter driven to capture Ian's experiences in a novel: not simple. A story within a story, a book within a book, a tale about the search for family, for an emotional home.

not simple Details

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Author : Natsume Ono

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From Reader Review not simple for online ebook

Mikael Kuoppala says

Natsume Ono at her best. She is a master of creating a special kind of atmosphere, and this time her characters and story go extremely well with that talent. "Not Simple" lives up to its title and offers a nuanced story that goes inside its main character's psychology and exposes the complexities of a young mind emerging from the turmoil of uncertainty, trauma and guilt.

The structure of the novel is also quite ambitious; it experiments with the perception of reality and the subjectivity of memory. All in all an impressive read that one won't easily forget.

Noah Nichols says

Not really sure how I feel about this book just yet...so I'm going to sit and marinate on it for a bit.

Laura says

Oof. This was a twisted maze of pain and life. Distinct art style that fits the disjointed feeling of the story. I really liked it!

Keiran Thegreat says

A mixture of warmth, compassion, and devastating sadness. In many ways a beautiful and challenging book. Several stories entwine to reveal Ian's history and life story. Characters fall in love but not all happiness is destined to last and this story begins at the end. Jim, Kylie, and Ian all feel like very real people and their problems are equally real.

Not Simple is far from a typical story and the title works on several levels.

Beth says

Great little graphic novel, sweet and sad. Really fast read, knocked it out at the library while the kids were playing.

KimberlyRose says

Way too depressing, somber, and ultimately tragic for my taste. Sure, there's a glimmer of a smile at the end, but did I really want that journey, or was it worth that journey? Hell no. Points for the unique art. It was

intriguing to look at, very liquid, flowing and simple.

Raroshnaw says

Definetly Not a book I would had read if I knew what was getting my self into,not recommend at all

Kite says

Not Simple, a title that fits the description of the story well.

I have always been a fan of works that are depressing in nature. But when I try to revisit a story, it just seems to have a less impact to me. Maybe it's the realization that the story could have proceeded in a less tragic direction. Some just lack the essence of catharsis, making it feel like the whole story is just a misery fest for the reader. You get overwhelmed the first time but it doesn't feel special anymore the second time around. However, Not Simple has been a very rare exception to this trend. Even after reading it for the fifth time, it still manages to widen the gaping hole it initially left within me.

The structure of the storyline is like a downward spiral, as it transitions back to the start after you reach the end. There are time skips, emphasizing only the key events while subtle implications of lesser details are still relevant story-wise. We witness the life journey of the protagonist Ian, a boy who comes from a complicated family. His childhood is no ordinary, a constant wreck to the point he's completely desensitized. You might expect that he's pessimistic because of his tragic backstory when in fact he's the opposite. He is an aspiring athletic runner and strives hard for that goal. He eagerly travels across America in search for her sister. He makes a promise to a stranger he met in his journey to see each other again three years later. It's that sense of optimism and innocence slowly being burned out as the story progresses that makes the story a real downer. Life just seems to be consistently screwing him over, like bashing him with a board sign "Your existence is a mistake". However, he doesn't give up easily and seeing him trying to live out his fractured life is such a bittersweet experience. Perhaps his passion for running stems from his desire to reach a destination, a place where he can really call home. In it, he seeks a confirmation that it is alright for him to exist and live with hope for the future.

The idea of broken family ties is portrayed well in the story. The father lives in Australia and the mother lives in London, they are divorced. Her sister jumps between those two areas in addition to America and always gets into trouble for the sake of making ends meet. Ian travels between those places and it symbolizes a family drifting apart, once intact but now in pieces because he was brought up to this world. In order for Ian to reach either of his parents, he needs to travel a great mile to meet them personally. This represents that his relationship with his parents are far from close, not a trace of familial love. There are noticeable efforts to make amends, re-uniting individual ties, but the cruelty of life halts that direction.

One strange thing about this manga is that it tries to be self-aware being a tragic story. Jim's character seems out of place but he represents the reader, an observer who is given the chance to be involved. Given all he knows about Ian, there reaches a point where he can decide the outcome of the story. Does he merely observe or interfere, as the protagonist gets ultimately swallowed by misery? If he interferes, then there won't be a tragic finale at all. The world will continue to move without everyone acknowledging Ian's existence. If he only observes, then we are grateful for him that we get to enjoy this incredibly saddening tale

of a wandering Australian boy. Ian even says at one point that Jim is his only friend which can be interpreted as the character's awareness of the reader's emotional attachment. Whatever the real author's intentions are, it crafts the "story within a story" scenario well.

Overall, Not Simple is a haunting tale of hope clouded with misfortune. A conscious effort to be positive amidst the negativity captures the idea that life is indeed unforgiving. There is however a merit in a life of suffering, the ultimate test of what makes a person truly human. There is an option to be either full or void of hope in the face of demise, and seeing how it all leads to a personal decision is an emotional rollercoaster. Raw and unforgettable, Ian's story is one that appeals universally. Life is what you want it to be, whether you are to be restrained by life's injustices is ultimately an individual choice. At death's door, do you think you have led a horrible life? It's not about who's got the most difficult life, it's about how one accepts both the ugliness and beauty of life. A motivational message hidden within a heart-wrenching story, the manga definitely delivers.

Woff says

Sad and brilliant.

Safen says

"You're hard to Grasp. You're not simple"

"A person unclouded by too much thought. Someone who was simply himself and nothing more"

The story of a boy who goes in search of his sister. His life is filled with moments of hope only to be replaced with tragedy.

✿ cassandra ✿ says

This story was definitely 'not simple'. ^_^

George says

Bottom panel, page 236... all the review needed:

Nervical says

Not Simple is one of the best mangas I've ever read. Its story is about as unique as its art style. It's incredibly

touching, which, for a manga, is very rare for me. The plot moves a bit like the wind. Events transpire quickly and sometimes without reason, and you just have to follow along. Regardless, Not Simple is a magnificent story I could read again and again.

Shea says

I saw this book at the library, picked it up, and put it back when I saw that the art style is, how should I put it... untraditional. Flash forward an ironic 3 years (what an amazing coincidence) and I have fallen in love with this short work. It's one of those manga's I wish I could buy and put on my bookshelf — the only manga I have bought, but unfortunately gave away as a secret Santa present was Solanin — right where all my other favorite books are. Because this is not a manga you can simply read once, as the title suggests, the story is not simple, but it grips you with its amazingly complex characters and, while never directly telling the audience anything (this story is mostly dialogue) you can correctly infer everything that is happening. That was a long winded way to say highly recommend.

Jenna says

To be honest, I didn't like the drawing style in its simplicity. But there was something about the eyes that caught my attention. Upon reading, I was at first confused by what appeared to be a non-linear plot. Then the threads of the story started to pull together and I really enjoyed it.
