



Mother, Come Home

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With his clean, distinctive art style and poignant storytelling, up-and-coming indie comics sensation Paul Hornschemeier has earned comparisons to and accolades from today's top graphic novelists. *Mother, Come Home* is Hornschemeier's graphic novel debut-the quietly stunning tale of a father and son struggling, by varying degrees of escapism and fantasy, to come to terms with the death of the family's mother. The story seamlessly weaves through the surreal and the painfully factual, guided by the careful, somber colors and inventive pacing unique to Hornschemeier's storytelling. *Mother, Come Home* extracts almost tangible drama from the most tranquil of moments, making that which is unspoken in each panel easily audible, and almost uncomfortably experienced.

Mother, Come Home Details

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Author : Paul Hornschemeier

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From Reader Review Mother, Come Home for online ebook

Archit Ojha says

Puissant!

Melancholy at its striking best.

There is a sweet pain and there is a bad pain. Sometimes, some souls suffer sufferings. Not a problem, not uncommon.

The problem begins when they start *loving* this suffering.

To be frank, I did not expect a book to render me clueless after 25% of its total page length. I did not know where it was heading, what the genre was or am I reading an actual book even?

And then it came to me. Hard and powerful. The keeper of the grounds and the mask he wears. I was too stunned to react this. Paul Hornschemeier threw me off-guard and I could not breathe.

The illustrations of grief are as real as it gets. Strangely honest and pin-point sharp in pointing out what sadness actually is.

Sadness is a monster that engulfs you. A creature that makes you want your own child to push you off the cliff.

Sadness is an illusion that portrays a picture of memories that never weren't as good as their nostalgia.

"I may have grown up but I was much older then..."

Intense.

Pretty intense.

Just might break your defenses.

Pooja says

My mother loved to give presents.

Ever felt as if you're so shattered after reading a book that hardly one or two sentences will come out of your mouth, not just because you are flabbergasted with the brilliancy of the book but also because you are troubled to see what situations people go through dealing with death of their loved ones?

The story is about a son and father dealing with the death of their mother/wife.

Both have different styles of handling the situation.

Made me think about *As I Lay Dying* by William Faulkner, where you don't know about the dead person but what happens to everyone else afterwards.

It is mostly narrated by the kid and that's what makes it devastating.

There are three things I did not do.

I did not watch him hit.

I want to read a happy graphic novel now, but I just can't seem to be reading anything for a while. why is there so much pain in this world. In this book.

Why isn't there much of any Happily Ever After books? Why couldn't it have a happy ending.
God! just why!!!!

Archit, We are not going to any precipice. We are not going to look for any Anya's hole. We are not going to join any Batman Fan Clubs.

Not allowed!

Licha says

1.5 stars

This was just so weird for me.

The story is about a boy and his father. The boy's mother has just died and his father is basically like a zombie that he neglects his 7yr old son. The uncle and aunt try and step in and help but it's not enough. Dad gets institutionalized and the boy goes to live with uncle and aunt.

There were just so many things wrong with this book. The print was so hard to read, I almost gave up into the first two pages. The colors were a muddy, depressing tone (it fit the mood of the book, but visually, it's just not appealing to look at). The characters are never shown before the mother's death, so it's hard to see just how much of an effect it's had on both dad and son, although we can see their current lives have been turned topsy-turvy. I just feel that if we had gotten a glimpse of who these people were prior to the death, there could have been more empathy for them.

Finally, the ending took me completely by surprise, but it was just so strange it made me uncomfortable. There was no follow-up to what happened after the ending. That might have made for a more compelling book. This was very depressing book, but it's the kind you wish you had not ended up reading.

Artwork is very basic, no wow factor there.

Nicole says

Sad and depressing, but beautiful at the same time.

El says

Shit.

This one disarmed me.

Today is beautiful outside. A little warm for my tastes, but this is the weather normal people like and they all go outside and do normal-people things. Personally I like a little gloominess, a little overcast skies, even some rain. It doesn't have to be cold, but I'm not a hot-weather kind of gal. I do not like to sweat. Or even glisten. I do not like to glisten.

But in honor of the nice weather, I took the longest walk known to man, and it was good. I went all over the place, first with the boyfriend and the dogs, and then up to the library. That last bit of the walk takes only about 20 mins, though the way there is uphill, and I was already a bit tired from the first walk, so I was pretty gross by the time I got to the library. I went to pick up some books that were on hold, this being one of them. I sat down to read a couple of them before heading back home so I could get a little less gross. I read *Fatale*, Vol. 1: *Death Chases Me* first because that was the sort of mood I was feeling, and it seemed to match what I needed. This was the second book I picked up. And I flipped through it.

What the hell?

The illustrations were not what I was expecting, and I sort of even rolled my eyes. Because it was *not* what I wanted to read, the colors and the art and the teeny text even. I mean if I wanted to read a book I would have read a book, I wanted a graphic novel, I wanted some action, I wanted...

And then twenty minutes later I realized I was still reading. And I didn't want to put it down.

This is the saddest story I have read in a long time. This doesn't make it bad, or even good. It is simply a truly sad story about loss - loss of loved ones, loss of innocence, loss of childhood. I did not cry because I am a statue, but something inside of me ping'ed. There was a ping inside of me somewhere. It made me think of my own losses and that's not something people normally want to think about. The relationship between the boy and his father is the most heartbreaking relationship I've ever encountered, even in a graphic novel. And the illustrations that at first I wanted to smirk at? I completely forgot that I was even reading a graphic novel.

It's like a sad, heartbreaking version of *Calvin & Hobbes*. Sort of. In a way. Kinda. And not.

This is Hornschemeier's first collection. I will be looking for more of his work.

Walking home from the library I found myself wishing I had a lion mask to wear. I just sort of wanted to hide for a little bit. Which is what I am doing now this afternoon, *sans* lion mask (alas, I do not own one). I

have my pug and my books and I am just going to hide and have all the feelings for a bit..

S. says

This book happened to me like a gust of wind: sudden, unexpected and startling.

It had been a while since I read a graphic novel, so I reached for the shortest one at hand, deciding to give this a second chance. I'd started it a few months earlier and promptly set it aside because the first few pages are just... *weird*. But on this attempt, once I'd made it past the oddity that is the introduction, it proved a thoroughly captivating and completely devastating book.

This is a tale of death and loss, told through the eyes of a seven year-old boy. But it's also a tale of mental illness, the process of grieving, and coping mechanisms, told in reflection. If you've ever experienced a family tragedy, this book outlines—with very little embellishment—all that comes after: the fantasies and lies that we tell ourselves to escape the pain, and the desperation with which we cling to routine and familiar surroundings in order to build a façade.

"People create... little systems of explanation.

Things that are not really true, but are easier to digest than the intricacies of reality."

Every once in a while, I find myself pleading with unsuspecting friends, telling them they're dismissing an entire mode of expression by refusing to explore comics. I rarely succeed, but books like this one motivate me to keep trying... While it isn't representative of the tremendous heights that the medium can reach, it does transcend its constraints and achieve something profound on the level of truly moving art or haunting words:

"The house's condition suffered considerably, initially... but sporadically: my father would emerge and act with calculated intent, cleaning one patch or another such that there were scattered islands of the immaculate.

In a way, in retrospect, it was a sort of abstract of his mind.

And the islands began to dwindle."

Hornschemeier is a powerful and nuanced storyteller; he wields symbolism so subtly that the repeating motifs only became obvious after I'd finished the book. His ligne claire artwork seemed unremarkable at first, but quickly began to complement the story; both work in tandem to create an irresistible strain of melancholy.

karen says

i can't even get close to reviewing this book. ("well, who asked you to?," they sneer) i can't but i feel like i

have to. i have been putting it off for a really long time now but i think i have to get it over with once and for all. this review done, i am going to wash my hands of all complicated human emotions because this week has been far too full of mourning and apprehension and second-guessing and worry. after this, i am pure cylon and you can all go to hell with your feelings.

after this review, of course...

this book will probably make you cry. i don't know you, and i don't care how emotionally hardened you think you are, because i'm pretty sure it will make you cry. i don't know what it is in particular about it that makes it more shattering than other books that deal with death - i remained dry-eyed throughout "don't go where i cant follow", i never get emotionally invested enough in movies to be a movie-crier (although, like jen, i totally leaked at 'up') but there's something extra in this - some sort of drug blended in with the ink which causes heightened emotions upon contact. even reading other people's reviews of it had me a little emotional (especially the ones i was directly or indirectly responsible for, reading-wise). it is a powerful little piece of work.

don't read this book if you have ever lost anyone. don't read this book if you have ever felt culpable in anyone's death. don't read this book if you know anyone who has ever lost someone or had an emotion or a family or ever been confused or frustrated or was unsure where the "you" was in relation to someone else. don't read this book when you are already sad. don't read this book when you are happy. i mean, read this book - please read this book. but be aware.

and that is my final feeling.

come to my blog!

Vijetha says

"My Heart is far too clouded."

Death. Loss. Agony. Existential Dread.

"Sometimes, when I'm sad, I think life was a commercial for something so much bigger, but then we ordered it and it was broken or didn't come. That's a bit muddled, I think. Does that make any sense? Probably not, I think up a lot of things when I'm sad that I think must be pretty great or profound, but then someone points out that they (the ideas) are foolish."

Lisa says

WOW!

I read a lot of comic books as a kid, but have not read many graphic novels as an adult because I generally find them unappealing. This book is so different from any book I have ever read. The pictures are an integral part of this story and bring meaning to the words.

In graphic novel form, this book tells the story of father and 7 year old son who have lost their wife/mom, mostly through the eyes of the son. Even though the pictures are kind of odd at times:

The pictures really captured my emotions:

As I read this book, I kept thinking, "This is what I have known all along. It is the Mom that holds the family together in a fun and loving way. It is Mom that makes the hard times bearable, and even fun. Mom is the heart and the glue of the family." Maybe I think that just because I am a Mom--I don't know. But this family of 2 that is left behind is falling apart.

It only took an hour at most to read this book and it was worth it! The only negative I have about it is that some of the print was so small that I could barely read it, and I had my glasses on.

At the end of the book on the "About the Author" page, is a photo of what looks like a Dad and a 7 year old boy. The funny thing is that the Dad in the photo looks like the Dad in the book. So I had to wonder if Paul Hornschemeier lost his Mom when he was 7. I did several internet searches but did not turn up any info about his parents.

You can even get it in Spanish:

Liam says

Spoiler-free review

My impressions.

Pros:

- Nice linework, textures, colour scheme and panels to suit the mood.
- Easy to read speech and panel transitions.
- Clear focus (albeit, not direction).
- Punch-in-the-gut morose imagery.

Cons:

- Too melodramatic and directionless.
- Plot feels claustrophobic and much too abstract/cryptic/confusing for some readers.

I'm a bit unsettled about this. This is an odd disappointment, as I tend to very much enjoy work that plays with this level of 'severity'... I feel like I have watched a film which does not clearly suggest whether the events occurred within reality or a dream. What I mean to say is that I don't think the emotions or events in

this work would play out in the same way in reality, given the same events. And that would be fine, except that I think it proposed to be realistic at some points, and that felt dishonest. The intensity, yes... maybe, the context and timescale too, but something about the mood of this tops it over into a realistic nightmare rather than a nightmarish reality. It was too unstable for me to not have an emotional distance from it. The theme just looms around every panel, but there seems to be no strong distance with it.

I am also confused by the reviews of most readers to this. I think everyone can hands-down agree that this is poignant. But is it a tearjerker? When I reread the cryptic introduction after finishing this, I felt physically sick rather than tearful. I think that this is tearful depending more on how readers relate to the given events to people they know in their real lives rather than the exact manner and people involved in these pages. Or otherwise, it draws the line between whether one feels sympathy/pity or anger/disgust for individuals who refuse to help themselves.

Also, I'd equate this with Chris Ware's Jimmy Corrigan only in that they contain some sad adult scenes. But both the aesthetic and goal of this seem pitched in completely different directions and levels. Ware's work works more on the monotony and purposelessness in everyday life events in social settings; this works more on the pessimistic idealistic struggle for fate/love/happiness during or following 'severe life-changing' events. This is much closer to the wreckage, and though the neurosis has its aesthetic charm, I think it's ultimately too unstable to be fruitful.

Lesley says

so i read this book because 1)it was a graphic novel and as of late, being a new mommy and all, graphic novels complement my short attention span very well. 2)i was familiar with this guy because of the whole jeffrey brown/holy consumption affiliation and figured it was about time to read something from him, especially because the drawings were just the right type for me when it came to graphic novels and 3)because i saw it on karen's list of books that made her cry and being the nosy me, i just needed to know what sort of stuff could make her cry...

well, i cried too, but on the inside, only because i read it at work (yes, tsk on me) and i needed to stay tough there like one needs to when it comes to retail and customer service. anyway, this book is SAD. it made my insides all knotty and my limbs limp. limpy limbs. but it was lovely and dreamlike, and went into fantasy just at the right moment when reality seemed to get too rough. i am in love with the little boy in this and wish he were real for me to take home, along with his lion mask that i so badly want to try on.

this also made me fully aware of my own mortality as a mother and i swear, all i could think while reading it was to try as hard as possible to not die anytime soon...

The Crimson Fucker says

WARNING: DO NOT READ THIS BOOK IN PUBLIC!

I think the word depressive comes short to describe this comic thingy... is there a word that express more depression than well, depression??? Maybe There is a term among my people used to describe depressive songs... it translates to something like "wrist slitters" or something like that. but if there is an actual word for

it please let me know so I can update this review! When I asked a friend to pick a short comic for me the other day I was expecting something fun and quick so I could go get hammer and enjoy a movie in a really good mood... little did I knew that my plans were about to drastically change... she passed me this depressive as fuck book and told me to read it, with a really cool attitude (she may have say something in the lines of; I didn't ask you if you like the title I told you to read it) so despite the title I decided to give it a try... 20 minutes later I was in my mighty corner screaming (quietly inside my head) you are not going to cry Alfonso I repeat you are not going to cry like a little bitch in public! I think I used my last reserves of testosterone in me to actually manage that... at the end I have to go and get me a book with funny pictures of cats to cheer me up before I went to my "lets get hammer and watch a movie thing*" (I do not drink while depressed or angry)... and one more thing if you have ermm... if you ever experience how it feels to lost a love one... I do not recommend this book... trust me when I say this shit is depressive I mean is good! but is too fucking depressive for me atleast... (still looking for that word more depressive than depression)

Loranne Davelaar says

Zo hee, dit was me een partij verdrietig. De achterkanttekst zegt al wel dat het over verlies en trauma gaat, maar verwacht absoluut geen happy end. Verder doet het heel interessante dingen als graphic novel, met een veranderde tekenstijl die een soort cartoon wordt als copingmechanisme voor het kind.

Sooraya Evans says

Overall depressing.

Too wordy for a graphic novel. Even worse, the font chosen is hard to follow.

The artwork is also lame.

If possible, skip this one.

Seth T. says

It has to be a hard decision for an author to begin a book with something that moves in the direction of North-by-North-Impenetrable. Especially when the rest of the book is engaging and enjoyable. And moreso when the author hopes to secure readers.

(Those who don't write to be read are more than welcome to make not just their introduction but their entire book a roadblock to diligent readers.)

Personally, I'm working on a novel and the first chapter is a bit... high concept. And therefore, a bit obnoxious to the casual reader. It's important that it be this way, of course, but I do worry that those who might otherwise love the book will be turned off by its introduction. It was keeping that in mind that helped me through the introductory pages of Hornschemeier's *Mother, Come Home*.

Mother, Come Home's opening set is a bit oblique and I feared I had picked up another bout of art comix childishness, that kind of book where you feel like you're spending time with a stereotypical high school

theatre student (something infantile like *Monologues for the Coming Plague*, perhaps*). Hornschemeier continues on like this for six pages and by the fifth I had almost gotten into the flow of what he was doing. I was even able to sort of appreciate it. But I absolutely did not want to read 128 pages in the same vein, so turning that seventh page was like a boon from heaven. As if God in his wisdom had known exactly how much I could take and *inspired* Hornschemeier to rein it in at exactly the right moment.

Of course later, according to the ordo apocalypse, I came to deeply appreciate what Hornschemeier does in his opening. This is because *Mother, Come Home* is a Very Good Book.

Fig. 2: "My mother loved to give presents."

It won't be revealing too much to say that *Mother, Come Home* deals with some heavy topics (as seen in figure 2, above). Told largely through the eyes of a child, the reader gets a rare sense of a very difficult set of extraordinary circumstances. Hornschemeier gradually unveils his narrative topography, controlling revelation in a way that should satisfy most readers, leaving them both affected by the story told and conscious that literature was absorbed.

One of *Mother, Come home's* great charms is Hornschemeier's artwork throughout. His work is clean, uncluttered. I have seen more than one review compare him to Chris Ware, and while I cannot know how indebted the present author is to one of the obvious luminaries of the medium, common ground is aptly noted. Even beyond the book's muted palette, which recalls Ware's work in the nineteenth-century portion of *Jimmy Corrigan*, his panel focuses and strong linework evoke Ware's own. And of course the submerged tone, hollow of emotion by its very flood of emotion, is also evocative of *Jimmy Corrigan* (which some may characterize as a stoic sort of work).

Mother, Come Home is a work deserving reflection. Hornschemeier has filled his pages with mysteries of life, some demanding interpretation, others commandeering their own liberty from such shackles. In many ways I feel inadequate to speak for it, having only read the book once so far. I am going to rectify this lapse.

*note: if you are Anders Nilsen, we can just shake hands and believe that I didn't understand.

[Review courtesy of Good Ok Bad]
