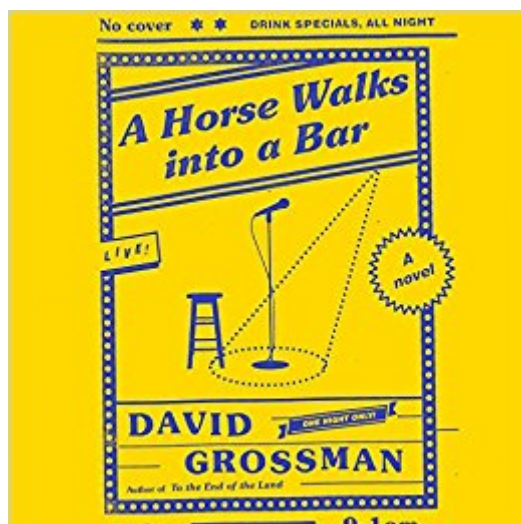


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A Horse Walks Into A Bar



Synopsis

In a little dive in a small Israeli city, Dov Greenstein, a comedian a bit past his prime, is doing a night of standup. In the audience is a district court justice, Avishai Lazar, whom Dov knew as a boy, along with a few others who remember Dov as the awkward, scrawny kid who walked on his hands to confound the neighborhood bullies. Gradually, teetering between hilarity and hysteria, Dov's patter becomes a kind of memoir, taking us back into the terrors of his childhood-his beautiful flower of a mother, a Holocaust survivor in need of constant monitoring; his punishing father, a striver who had little understanding of his creative son. Finally, recalling his week at a military camp for youth-where Lazar witnessed what became the central event of Dov's childhood-Dov describes the indescribable while Lazar wrestles with his own part in the comedian's story of loss and survival. A beautiful performance by Grossman (jokes in questionable taste included).

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

“David Grossman has attempted an ambitious high-wire act of a novel, and he’s pulled it off spectacularly. *A Horse Walks into a Bar* shines a spotlight on the effects of grief, without any hint of sentimentality. The central character is challenging and flawed, but completely compelling. We were bowled over by Grossman’s willingness to take emotional as well as stylistic risks: every sentence counts, every word matters in this supreme example of the writer’s craft.” —*Judges Citation, Man Booker International Prize, 2017* “Astounding . . . [A] magnificently comic and sucker-punch-tragic excursion into brilliance . . . He has left a trail of blood and sweat on the page that only a true master •a

Lenny Bruce, a Franz Kafka – could dream of replicating. – Gary Shteyngart, The New York Times Book Review (front cover) – “Urgent . . . Mesmerizing . . . A novel as beautiful as it is unusual . . . Grossman takes a lot of risks in *A Horse Walks into a Bar*, and every one of them pays off spectacularly well . . . It’s nearly impossible to put down. – Michael Schaub, NPR – “Blistering . . . Concise . . . Grossman masterfully weaves several complex strands of narrative [and] translator Jessica Cohen turns the performance into fluent, American-style patter. – Ken Kalfus, The Washington Post – “Accomplished and audacious . . . An Israeli offspring of Philip Roth’s Portnoy’s Complaint and Dostoyevsky’s Notes from the Underground [that is] laced with loss and leave-taking . . . Grossman has once more proved himself as one of Israel’s finest literary alchemists. – Benjamin Balint, Haaretz – “I have never read a book like this, or even thought that one could exist . . . A hard, fast, and bumpy ride through the deserts of Israel and the soul. – Rafael Alvarez, Washington Independent Review of Books – “Arresting . . . Entertaining. – Paul Wilner, San Francisco Chronicle – “Grossman brings real humanity to this heart-wrenching and well-written novel, offering insight into one man’s psychological makeup and how society has damaged him. An excellent translation; highly recommended. – Lisa Rohrbaugh, Library Journal Praise from the UK – “Grossman has transcended genre, or rather, he has descended deep into the vaults beneath . . . This isn’t just a book about Israel: it’s about people and societies horribly malfunctioning. Sometimes we can only apprehend these truths through story – and Grossman has become a master of the truth-telling tale . . . These are important questions at this moment in history, a time of trickery and lies. This is a novel for our new Age of Offence – offence easily taken and endlessly performed. – Ian Sansom, The Guardian – “A polemic of unusual power . . . Shocking, raw, and eloquent. . . Grossman has pushed down deep into the wounded heart of a despairing man . . . *A Horse Walks into a Bar* is unlike anything Grossman has yet done. – Eileen Battersby, The Irish Times – “Grossman’s latest offering is a short, shocking masterpiece . . . in which absurdity and humour are used to probe the darkest corners of the human condition . . . It is a tale of nerve-shredding psychological and spiritual torture, the kind of story that is so dark that the only defence against it is darker laughter. – Adam Lively, The Sunday Times (London) – “It takes an author of Mr. Grossman’s stature to channel not a failed stand-up but a shockingly effective one . . . This book feels far removed from *Falling out of Time* . . . Both books, however, circle around dramatic acts of mourning: the first as lyric tragedy,

the second as pitch-black comedy. "Jonathan Cape, The Economist Praise from Europe" Literature at its highest, and most enchanting." "Il Mattino (Italy)" Grossman has written a beautiful and hypnotizing book, on the friction between tragedy "both personal and collective" and life, which must go on." "Il Messaggero (Italy)" A psychological, intimate chamber drama whose choreography and eloquence captivate and pain the reader in equal measure . . . By the end, the book not only radiates humanity but demands it as well."

"Leipziger Volkszeitung (Germany)" A magnificent book about the different levels of being that we carry within ourselves." "Le Monde (France)" Resonant of Dostoyevsky and Kafka . . . The novel is not about one man alone; its significance lies in the exposure of the failings of humanity. We knew that stand-up comedy is inflammatory, but we didn't know that it can reveal the flames of hell." "Transfuge (France)"

David Grossman was born in Jerusalem. He is the author of numerous works of fiction, nonfiction, and children's literature. His work has appeared in The New Yorker and has been translated into more than forty languages. Joe Barrett has been a working stage, screen, and recording booth actor since 1974 and an award-winning and eight-time Audie Award-nominated audiobook narrator since 1999. He also practiced law for five years-but don't hold that against him. Joe is married to actress Andrea Wright, and together they have four children.

A Horse Walks Into a Bar is remarkable. Certainly it's not like any novel I've read before. Dov (eleh) Greenstein is middle-aged, manic and more-than a bit embittered by life. By comparison, Lenny Bruce seems like one of the "take time to smell the flowers" crowd. Dov's standup routine serves as frantic memoir of a childhood raised by (or more accurately, watching over) a Holocaust surviving mother and the cold indifference of a distant father. The audience contains a sprinkling of acquaintances from his life whose presence serves as a springboard to memory. Childhood cruelties, crushes and adolescent torment pile up. Strangers are the butt of crude and often cruel observation--as an id run amok lashes out. The story or standup routine is a novella, fewer than 200 pages but packed with pain and sorrow. It reads as a continuous monologue with narrative interruptions by the childhood friend and others. The method brilliantly captures the atmosphere of a comedy club and the exhaustion a comic would feel as he bares his soul and tears down the props of propriety exposing repressed or painful memories. The interspersed narration anchors the story as a novella. The whole experience is rather like watching a train wreck. It seems indecent to keep staring--you want to look away but can't. A Horse Walks Into A Bar is that riveting.

The main theme - grief and abandonment - is disturbing by definition, but Grossman manages to balance the sadness and pathos with humor, self-awareness/depreciation, forgiveness and grace - which is all any of us can wish for or aspire to from life....In addition to its riveting format, it is rich in universal truths and insights (the tragic basis for comedy) Even when perplexed the reader cannot help but identify with the comic's need to be seen, understood and redeemedand of course, there is plenty of political polemic going on too - a holocauste victim who epitomizes mercy (she scrubs her hands whenever there is a news report about soldiers killing Palestinians) ... Bullies who torment the weak and non-conforming ... Those who pretend not to notice the suffering of others In short, a thought-provoking, roller coaster ride that is as disturbing as it is exhausting Like a roller coaster, I couldn't wait to get off, but I feel richer from the experience

The novel is a page- turner, sometimes terrifying and sometimes even funny, though that was not really Grossman's intention. Israelis will recognize the background and references better than others. The translator did an admirable job rendering idiomatic Hebrew - even gutter Hebrew - into its American English equivalents. However, her faulty knowledge of Yiddish, especially standard YIVO transliteration, is apparent.

A very unique way of presenting a controversial subject. Quite hard hitting at times about Arabs in Israel. Sadly presented with an injection of humour from time to time. His writing did deserve recognition especially for his unique way of presenting his subject.

A comedian and a judge walk into a standup routine and we are beguiled by the comedians personal rant for the whole book. It all takes place in a small town in Israel, but stretches us through time and space in his monologue. Excellent story telling.

While this novel continues Grossman's concerns about the future of Israel, the contentious relationships between Israelis and Palestinians, I found the main character so unlikeable ,so hyperbolically gross, I found it difficult to get beyond that. I enjoy Grossman's writing and adored " To the End of the Land."

One of the most outstandingly novels that I have ever read. I really could not put the book down. And, when I did finished it, I, then, started it all over again. An incredible story teller, a truly brilliant

novel. He's clearly right up there with A.B. Yehoshua. Absolutely an outstanding book!

A good read, but not completely engrossing. I can understand why it would have greater appeal to Israelis and those familiar with Israeli society and culture. I'm certain I missed a lot as someone ignorant of Israeli life.

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