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Soviet Daughter: A Graphic Revolution (Comix Journalism)



Synopsis

Soviet Daughter provides a window into the life of a rebellious, independent woman coming of age in the USSR, and the impact of her story and her spirit on her American great-granddaughter. This is the story of Julia Alekseyeva and her great-grandmother Lola, two extraordinary women swept up in the history of their tumultuous times. Born in 1910 to a poor, Jewish family outside of Kiev, Lola lived through the Bolshevik revolution, a horrifying civil war, Stalinist purges, and the Holocaust. She taught herself to read, and supported her extended family working as a secretary for the notorious NKVD (which became the KGB), a lieutenant for the Red Army, and later as a refugee in the United States. Interwoven with Lola's history we find Julia's own struggles of coming of age in an immigrant family in Chicago and her political awakening in the midst of the radical politics of the turn of the millenium. At times heartbreaking and at times funny, this graphic novel memoir unites two generations of strong, independent women against a sweeping backdrop of the history of the USSR.

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Customer Reviews

Born in the former USSR and raised a proud citizen of Chicago, Julia Alekseyeva is an author-illustrator as well as an academic. She is a Ph.D. candidate in Comparative Literature at Harvard, specializing in the avant-garde and film practices in France, Japan, and the former USSR. Julia has received press from publications such as Reuters, The New York Times, and

Bloomberg Business for illustrating the first graphic novel legal brief, submitted as an amicus brief in U.S.A. vs. Apple. She has lived in Kiev, Chicago, New York City, Paris, Cambridge, Kanazawa, and Yokohama, and currently lives in Brooklyn with her partner.

An interesting little gem. An excellent read for those interested in seeing how the idealism of the past rears up again, every few generations.

Julia Alexseyeva's graphic novel / memoir . biography is touching and moving. Following the death of her great-grandmother shortly after her 100th birthday (and the family member with whom Julia was closest) Julia discovered her memoir which make up the bulk of the graphic novel. Lola (Julia's great-grandmother) was truly a remarkable woman whose long life witnessed many of the seminal events of the 20th century. Interspersed throughout Lola's story, Julia tells some of her own providing a contrast with her experiences of youth. Really, its not the story of a single lifetime and of dramatic events, but rather of young women (then and now) finding their way in a rapidly changing world. The interludes of Julia's life makes the story telling a bit uneven - there is no real connection or clear transition for the jumps between the two. But Alexseyeva hits the nail on the head, I think, when she writes, "It is said that Lola's generation - called the G.I. generation - is closest to Generation Y ("millennials") in sentiment and personality. Nowhere was this more evident than in my four-generation family." Looking at the narrative like this, the leaps in time and between perspectives make a little more sense. The artwork is a bit unpolished, but it reflects, I think, the utilitarian urgency of the story, almost as if Alekseyeva has to get her (and Lola's) story out - perhaps part mourning and partially an act of confession. Either way, it works well with the narrative voice of the authors. And while *Soviet Daughter* is really Lola's story (ending in 1956 with Khrushchev's "de-Stalinization" speech), I can't help but wish there was more: about the Brezhnev years, glasnost and Alexseyeva's childhood in the USSR before she and her family emigrated. Its a breezy read, with plenty of tragedy (as anyone familiar with 20th century Soviet history could tell you). But it is also a story of perseverance and above all, love and the deep connection between family.

I loved this graphic-form memoir of two Russian-Jewish women who together survived and prevailed through the disastrous 20th century (and into the 21st) in the Soviet Union/ Russia and then in America. The memoirist, Julia, identifies with her great-grandmother Lola in a way that skips generations: they're venturesome, curious, and courageous, but the intervening generations of the

family are cut from different cloth. Lola has undergone the most incredible deprivations in her long life. Julia, though safe from immediate persecution, faces a long and challenging adaptation to the new country she finds herself in from the age of 4. Her immediate family offers little support, but great-grandmother Lola understands and cherishes her great-granddaughter, helping her flourish on her road to self-discovery. The drawings are evocative and touching, the story is emotionally and historically powerful. Buy it!

We rarely get the opportunity for such a vivid and personal look into life in what was then the Soviet Union. The portrayal of the impact of culture and politics of the times on daily life shows how much we had in common with these people, though we were in intense conflict with their government. This is also a beautiful story of the love of a young woman for her great grandmother. The overarching narrative of reaching out across three generations was so hopeful and uplifting. This novel left me with images that will stay with me for a long time. I very highly recommend.

When I received this book I could not help myself- I read the whole thing in one sitting. Touching and interesting, this book manages to weave the stories of Alekseyeva and her great grandmother seamlessly. The art is fantastic and adds so much to the stories being told. I would highly recommend this book.

It is worth reading but I kept wanting more depth, more detail. At times it is just an accounting of what happened and I was left wanting more. The art work is ok but not inspired. I got this because I heard an interview with the author on NPR. It sounded like it could be as good as *Fun Home* by Alison Bechdel, but it didn't deliver. Still, it's interesting enough to be worth spend the couple of hours it takes to read it.

I am not used to reading comics and found this book quite difficult to read. The topic of the story jumped back and forth from one area to another which made it even more difficult. As a matter of fact, I did not finish it. Still, I feel the story is important and deserved an easier format so everyone could read it.

This graphic novel is truly masterful! I enjoyed it thoroughly. The author does a wonderful job of painting a both a reflective and colorful story. I couldn't have been happier with this purchase.

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