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Hostage



Synopsis

How does one survive when all hope is lost? In the middle of the night in 1997, Doctors Without Borders administrator Christophe André was kidnapped by armed men and taken away to an unknown destination in the Caucasus region. For three months, André was kept handcuffed in solitary confinement, with little to survive on and almost no contact with the outside world. Close to twenty years later, award-winning cartoonist Guy Delisle (Pyongyang, Jerusalem, Shenzhen, Burma Chronicles) recounts André's harrowing experience in *Hostage*, a book that attests to the power of one man's determination in the face of a hopeless situation. Marking a departure from the author's celebrated first-person travelogues, Delisle tells the story through the perspective of the titular captive, who strives to keep his mind alert as desperation starts to set in. Working in a pared down style with muted color washes, Delisle conveys the psychological effects of solitary confinement, compelling us to ask ourselves some difficult questions regarding the repercussions of negotiating with kidnappers and what it really means to be free. Thoughtful, intense, and moving, *Hostage* takes a profound look at what drives our will to survive in the darkest of moments.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

"Hostage shows what it's like to be held captive ... Delisle brings readers into the room with the hostage and, more importantly, into his state of mind." *The Atlantic* "[Hostage is] an indelible portrait of an ordinary person facing a frightening ordeal." *Publishers Weekly*, Starred Review "The location captured [in *Hostage*] is less Andre's grim little room than his mind...

Guy Delise's graphic novel *Hostage* (2016) is a return in style to his successful autobiographical graphic novels that drew on his experiences as an animator in Chin and North Korea as well as his experiences with his family in his wife's job as a member of Doctor's Without Frontiers. However, this time he is writing a biography of a Doctors Without Borders administrator Christophe Andr  f     was kidnapped by armed men and taken away to an unknown destination in the Caucasus region in 1997. It chronicles the stoic experience of a hostage in Chechnya fighting depression and killing boredom by reacting famous battles from history. I don't want to give away the ending, but it is a powerful story of survival in the face of misery.

Incredible life story superbly narrated! A tale of human limits. The quality of the drawings and of the narration in such a confine environment is nailed perfectly. A must read! This book has to win Grand Prix d' Angouleme if it has not done so.

I heard the author on NPR and really enjoyed the book. I got a real feel for Christophe Andre's isolation and despair.

Great story. You would think that a story of a guy stuck in a room for months would be a bore to read. On the contrary, Guy Delisle makes the daily challenge of the main character to stay intellectually and emotionally "alive" a great read.

With this new book released in the U.S. in the spring of this year, French Canadian graphic artist and animator Guy Delisle takes a departure from his more usual graphic novels about his life as the spouse of a M  f    decins Sans Fronti  f    res physician to tell the story of a real innocent abroad, Christophe Andr  f    , on his first assignment for MSF in Ingushetia, in the North Caucasus in 1997. Christophe was taken hostage, driven across the border into Chechnya, and outside of Grozny he was held for ransom for three months. He had been in his post for three months when they came for him. He spent the bulk of his captivity chained to a radiator in a small room with a mattress stuffed with straw. He was fed watery soup and allowed bathroom breaks, but otherwise had no opportunity to speak, see the sky, move freely. Ransom negotiations were slow: when he escaped, finally, the translator assigned to his office in Ingushetia told him other foreigners had been kidnapped in the time he was being held. The 400+ pages of this book are not a struggle; readers spend the time thinking about what they might do in similar circumstances, and interrogate

themselves about the scene and their own strengths. Andr  f   himself passed the more terrible stretches by recalling in great detail the military commanders, battles, and outcomes he had studied when he was younger, including Russian, French, and American battles. The escape at the end is harrowing, and stomach-dropping. Andr  f   simply did not know whom to trust. Eventually he made it back to his home in Paris, and six months after that went back to MSF and asked for a new assignment. He worked twenty years for MSF after that experience.

In early July, 1997, Christophe Andre was kidnapped from his Doctors without Borders office in Nazran, a town in the former Soviet Republic of Ingushetia. His kidnappers took him to Chechnya where they tried to get a million dollar ransom for Andre. This book is the story of his captivity from his own perspective. As such, there's a lot of waiting around with almost no information or changes in the situation. Christophe is handcuffed to a radiator or a bed or the floor for a great deal of the 400+ pages of this graphic novel. The monotony and the desperate speculations about what is going on outside of his prison are easily communicated in the graphic novel format. The same routine is repeated over and over, but readers don't get bored because the visual format moves faster than real time and lets the reader experience months of captivity without becoming bored. Even the smallest changes in routine or noises outside the room (Christophe is typically held in spare rooms of apartments or houses, with the occasional move between locations) become fodder for speculation or even hope that the situation will finally resolve. Despite the grim topic, I found this a fascinating tale told in a way that acknowledges the boredom but is very compelling and is not boring. Readers identify with Christophe's mood swings and his speculations about what is going on and his feelings about his captors. Christophe manages to keep his sanity in an extremely trying experience. The grey-scale art fits perfectly with the darkened rooms and hard mood of the true story. Recommended.

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