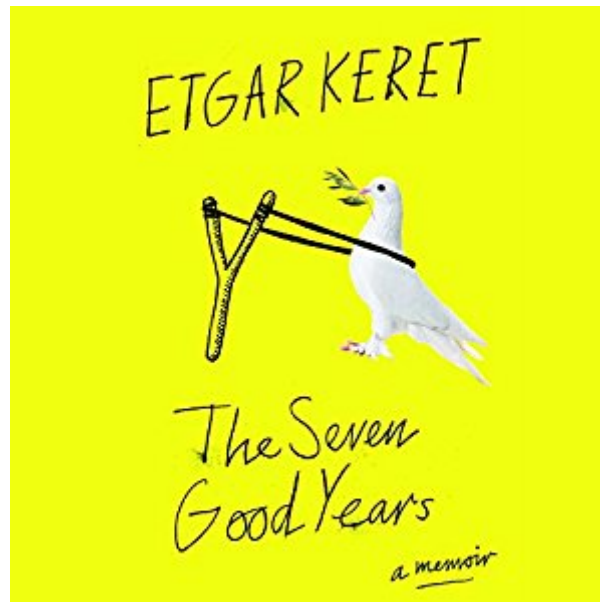


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The Seven Good Years: A Memoir



Synopsis

A brilliant, life-affirming, and hilarious memoir from a "genius" (The New York Times) and master storyteller. The seven years between the birth of Etgar Keret's son and the death of his father were good years, though still full of reasons to worry. Lev is born in the midst of a terrorist attack. Etgar's father gets cancer. The threat of constant war looms over their home and permeates daily life. What emerges from this dark reality is a series of sublimely absurd ruminations on everything from Etgar's three-year-old son's impending military service to the terrorist mind-set behind Angry Birds. There's Lev's insistence that he is a cat, releasing him from any human responsibilities or rules. Etgar's siblings, all very different people who have chosen radically divergent paths in life, come together after his father's shivah to experience the grief and love that tie a family together forever. This wise, witty memoir - Etgar's first nonfiction book published in America, and told in his inimitable style - is full of wonder and life and love, poignant insights, and irrepressible humor.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Long a fan of Etgar Keret's distilled trippy fiction, I approached his memoir with some trepidation. Memoir is a very different animal after all, I wasn't sure his skills would translate. Yet while his fiction usually revolves around the fantastical -- the girlfriend who goes to sleep every night and wakes up a middle aged man, the suicide who serially haunts his circle of friends -- that obscures much of what makes his writing so powerful: Keret's keen eye and open heart. Those characteristics work well in this new work. In a certain sense, this is mislabeled as a memoir. "The Seven Good Years"

would more accurately be described as a series of very short essays (for those unfamiliar with Keret, this is similar to his stories which usually run between 1-4 pages). While most of these essays focus on the birth and raising of his son, this short collection also includes musings on aging, airlines, the writing life, and humanities general oddness. Keret's sparse prose carry a lot of punch in this format, but to paraphrase Twain, reality is always far messier than fiction. People, at least mostly, aren't as neat as the characters conjured in the imagination. Moreover, as hard as Keret is on his own human frailties, he tends to be rather forgiving of others, which lends just a few of these essays a slightly syrupy after taste. On the flip side of Twain's observation, most readers are far more forgiving of non-fiction; the pairing of the birth of Keret's son with his father's fatal illness might raise objections for being predictable in a story, but reads here as life's tragic symmetry. The combination of that inclination towards self-criticism and that sharp eye make for a lot of really fun writing.

Though he's a bestselling author in his native Israel, Etgar Keret is hardly a household name among American readers. The publication of *THE SEVEN GOOD YEARS*, a memoir in essays, should help change that. The 36 pieces that comprise this pleasing book reveal a writer with a keen eye for life's oddities and an ability to share his insights with humor and frank emotion. The "seven good years" of the title are bookended by the birth of Keret's son, Lev, in a hospital simultaneously treating the victims of a terrorist attack, and the death of the author's father. As reflected in the story of Lev's birth, Keret is able to shift his focus effortlessly from the intimate details of family life to the wider world. All of the pieces range between three and six pages, but there's nothing monotonous about them, and their brevity permits no wasted words. "My wife says that I'm too nice, while I claim that she's just a very, very bad person" is the opening sentence of "Fare and Good," an essay describing their passionate debate over his practice of inviting cab drivers who need to use the bathroom up to their Tel Aviv apartment. "There's nothing like a few days in eastern Europe to bring out the Jew in you," Keret, the son of Holocaust survivors, writes in introducing his encounter with anti-Semitism in Germany and Hungary. Keret possesses the timing of a veteran standup comic, a skill essential to humor writing, which lacks the elements of voice or gesture the comedian can bring to bear on the stage. He's at his best in self-deprecating pieces like "Poser," where he describes how his rejection from a beginners yoga class led to his enrollment in a "special" group made up of "a bunch of women in advanced stages of pregnancy."

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