

MAUS, A Survivor's Tale:
My Father Bleeds History -
Reading Journal

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English A Block B
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Key Facts

Title: MAUS I, A Survivor's Tale: My Father Bleeds History

"Maus" is the German word for mouse

Author: Art Spiegelman

Spiegelman was born in Stockholm, Sweden. His parents were Polish Jews and Holocaust survivors who had been sent to Sweden as refugees following the end of the Second World War. The family immigrated to New York City, UAS in 1951.

Spiegelman studied art and philosophy at Harpur College, but did not graduate because he experienced a mental health crisis that forced him to withdraw from school. In 1971, Spiegelman moved from New York to San Francisco, and began to establish himself as a comics artist. He published work in several underground magazines. In 1977, he married Françoise Mouly. The couple founded *Raw* magazine in 1980. By this time, Spiegelman had begun to interview his father about his experiences in the wartime Poland and Germany, and to draw comics based on their conversations. He published the first of the comics that would eventually become *Maus* in the second issue of *Raw*, in December 1980. Over the next several years, until the magazine ceased publication in 1991, he continued to publish segments of *Maus* in each issue. The comics were published in novel form in 1986, and a second volume, which continued Vladek and Anja's story through Auschwitz and Dachau, was published in 1992. Both volumes met with critical and commercial success.

Text Type: Graphic Novel, Memoir

Date of publishing: 1980-1985

Setting: Poland and Germany (1930s and 40s); Rego Park, Queens (1970s and 80s); Catskill Mountains (1979); New York City (1987).

Perspective: First Person (Vladek and Artie); Third Person (Limited to Artie)

Antagonist: German soldiers and hostile Polish civilians are obvious antagonists for the Jews who are struggling to survive amidst persecution. However, the story also explores the many ways in which Jewish people — and others were who suffered alongside them in concentration camps and in war-torn Poland — harm and undermine one another in moments of desperation. Though Vladek and Anja are beneficiaries of amazing acts of kindness and humanity, and often do their best to help others in return, *Maus* shows clearly how danger and privation breed selfishness and callousness.

Characters

Artie

Vladek

Francoise

Mala

Anja

Lucia Greenberg:

Vladek's first girlfriend. She run after Vladek for a long time and finally got him as boyfriend. However, Vladek didn't view her as girl for marriage and refused her because she didn't have money.

Plot Summary

Places:

Vladek:

Czestochowa, Poland —> Sosnowiec, Poland

Plot Analysis

Prologue

Date: Oct 02, 2019

Pages: 1-6

Summary

In epigraph: "The Jews are undoubtedly a race, but they are not human."

Artie goes back to his childhood in 1958. He recalled an incident when he was ten or eleven years old. He was going roller skating with his friends. Artie's skate came loose and fell behind. None of his friends waited for him but laughed at him instead.

Artie was heart-broken and went home. His father was sawing. Artie was sniffing while helping, so his father asked for the reason. Artie told him and he stopped sawing. He stared at Artie and said cynically that if Artie got locked with his "friends" without food for a week, he would see what "friends" are.

Analysis

Use anti-semitic images to attract anti-semitism.

All the characters are drawn with mouse heads, implying all are jews.

The kids are depicted so that the scene seems innocent, but what happened is somewhat cruel, creating a sparkling contrast.

The father is portrayed as indifferent and practical. He doesn't seem to be bothered when seeing his son crying. Instead, he gives a harsh comment on what friends really are, which is very pessimistic and too much for a kid of ten years old.

This whole prologue uses childhood anecdote to reflect and explain the personality formed when Artie grows up later in the book.

One - The Sheik

Date: Oct 03, 2019

Pages: 9-24

Summary

The title: the Sheik

Artie has grown up now. He is visiting his father in Rego Park. He remarks that he hasn't seen his father for a long time and they are not very close. Vladek gets angry when Mala uses a wire hanger instead of a wooden one.

When Vladek is pedaling for his heart, Art asks about his father's story for his comic book. In the middle panel, there is a number written on Vladek's arm. After some resistance, Vladek started his story. He was a textile-guy. He was very handsome at that time and there were a lot of girls who run after him. He took Lucia to dance.

Even though Vladek clearly showed no interest in Lucia, Lucia was always around and even insisted going to his apartment. Vladek seems to be awkward to acknowledge that he got more involved with Lucia. In the next panel, just after having sex, Lucia hoped to get engaged with Vladek, but he quickly changed the topic and noted that the girl has no money.

Vladek met his cousin at the train station and got invited to live in their house. The cousin recommended him Anja, a clever and wealthy girl. When the next day Vladek met Anja, the cousin talked with Anja in English and went away soon. Anja said he was nice and handsome. Vladek told Anja afterwards that he understand English and Anja was a little embarrassed. But they had a nice chatting afterwards and began phoning each other.

Analysis

Sheik is a Slang referring to a man held to be masterful and irresistibly charming to women.

In several panels, the author reveals several traumas: father's aging and diseases, mother's suicide, unhappy remarriage. Also, Vladek seems to very welcome his son but is very ill-tempered towards his second wife.

The number on Vladek's arm is what he get at during the Holocaust. It is the symbol of the indelible damage that the Holocaust brings to the survivors.

There is an allusion to Rudolph Valentino, a famous actor, and the 1921 American silent film *the Sheik*.

The nature of this relationship gets gradually revealed when Vladek kept refusing Lucia. He clearly didn't plan to marry Lucia at the beginning of the relationship. Also, Vladek is presented as a mammonist because even though he thought Lucia's family was nice, he looked down upon them because they were poor. He views marriage more as an exchange of money.

Through the train ticket and the conversation with his cousin, we can feel that Vladek was very close to his big family. Both Anja and Vladek presented their best selves and had a nice time together. Vladek shows that he was knowledgeable and Anja behaved decently. When she got embarrassed knowing that Vladek understood her personal comment on him, she cleverly turned the topic.

Summary

Anja sent Vladek a photo. He framed it and when Lucia saw it, she got extremely angry, but Vladek just coldly told her that he and Anja were going to get engaged. Lucia threw herself at him and begged him to leave Anja.

Artie remarks that Anja was not as attractive, and Vladek admits. He loved talking to Anja because she was intelligent and sensitive, as described by the director from her school. Vladek invited Anja to his house, but Anja politely refused by saying that her mother was too conservative to let her to that. Instead, Anja invited Vladek to her family for dinner.

Before dinner, Vladek peeked at Anja's closet to see how tidy she was, but found some pills. He took some and got a friend examined it. He didn't want to marry Anja if she was sick. The pill turned out to be nothing serious and they got married in 1936.

Before Vladek moved to Sosnowiec, Lucia once again went find him. Regardless of Lucia's begging on the floor, Vladek slammed the door indifferently and got the friend that introduced them to comfort Lucia. He stopped hearing from Lucia since then, but Anja either. All that was because Anja received a letter saying Vladek had a lot of girlfriends. Vladek finally comforted Anja by addressing Lucia as "and old girlfriend who won't leave me alone" and "nothing to me." In the end, Vladek got one department and a gold watch from his father-in-law as wedding gifts and lived happily with Anja.

Analysis

Vladek had fallen in love with Anja regardless of his girlfriend Lucia. He was much more considerate with Anja when he carefully bought a frame for the photo she sent him. Anja wore nice coat in the photo, also indicating her wealth.

There was a huge contrast between Anja and Lucia in terms of visiting Vladek's apartment. Anja was much more demure and met the expectation of a good woman at that time. Also, Anja got great education and reputation, which can be seen through the conversation with her director.

Despite his love for Anja, Vladek was still very aware when he saw the pills she took. He was rational enough to not marry a woman if she is sick or cannot do housework well.

Vladek once again discarded Lucia. He didn't view her as a girlfriend but rather a pet. But he received punishment for that. In the end, Vladek got what he wanted: Anja and her family's wealth.

After telling these stories, Vladek warned his son not to put them on his comic book, because he realizes that it is not proper or respectful. Artie promised not to write about it.

It is clear that Artie doesn't keep his promise and put all these stories on the book. It also shows that Artie and his father has very different views regarding the book: Vladek wants to present the real objective story, yet Artie wants to real human nature through the Holocaust.

Two - The Honeymoon

Summary

Analysis