

★ **And the Bride Closed the Door**

Ronit Matalon

Jessica Cohen, Translator

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A dark and comic family drama, Ronit Matalon's *And the Bride Closed the Door* takes place in Tel Aviv and begins with Margie making a big announcement through her bedroom door: "Not getting married."

The ensuing action takes a few short hours. Those left on the door's other side scramble to understand Margie's motivations. Matalon is a unique literary stylist whose pitch-perfect novel focuses on the spectacle of the big day, two families' lives, and the couple's relationship as it falls apart.

As Margie's declaration wrests the day from its expected trajectory, everyone who's used to having control spirals out. Acrid as burnt hair, emotions waft through relationships and conversations as parents and the abandoned groom struggle to cope. Desperation mounts, and their collective efforts to make Margie emerge become more chaotic and absurd.

Matalon nails how families relate to each other. Her scenes are cinematic and evocative, every gesture packed with emotional tells. The tiny fractures hidden in daily life become rifts until no one moves; "Roped inside the circle of their breaths, they looked neither at one another nor at themselves, as though they'd been emptied out like a soft egg from its shell, and left hollow."

Jessica Cohen's translation gives Matalon's winding sentences the easy, metrical rhythms of speech, and Matalon's layering of language, emotion, scene, and cultural references comes through. This novel is a masterful rendering of a failed wedding day and the embedded failures that individuals, a family, and a culture accrue in the process of trying to manage their circumstances.

As complex and chaotic as life is, *And the Bride Closed the Door* is lightning and molasses, a true "blend of aromas that contained allusions and hints, mere allusions and hints of different smells, which slipped away and evaporated the moment they were defined."

LETITIA MONTGOMERY-RODGERS (September / October 2019)

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