

★ Keeping Two

Jordan Crane

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A young couple confronts feelings of fear, loss, grief, and love in Jordan Crane's transcendent graphic novel *Keeping Two*.

Tense from arguments and traffic, Connie and Will arrive home and make a deal: he'll wash the dishes in the sink, she'll go to the store and rent a movie. When Connie runs late, Will begins to imagine the worst. Soon after, a similar situation arises in which she's forced to envision a life without him. Through flashbacks, projections, and a parallel story within the novel they're reading, the connection between Will and Connie is explored, with a gorgeous and unforgettable ending.

The art style has its quirks, like the use of short, thick black lines to indicate motion or sound, and the critical differences between hard-line bordered panels that take place in the present, and the softer-edged panels or unlined borders that indicate flashbacks, dream sequences, or the story from the book. The fresh absence of loved ones is shown with dotted outline ghosts, resulting in many poignant and affecting scenes. Like a unique dialect, it takes some time to grow accustomed to the storytelling style, but once its mechanisms are understood, it results in intense, profound communication.

Twenty years passed between the publication of the first part of this story and this complete edition. Deceptive in its complexity and rewarding of multiple readings, *Keeping Two* is a romantic graphic novel with deep emotional impact.

PETER DABBENE (March / April 2022)

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