

Portugal

Cyril Pedrosa

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Cyril Pedrosa transforms his personal experience of discovering family roots into a semi-autobiographical masterpiece, the award-winning graphic novel *Portugal*.

The fictionalized protagonist is Simon Muchat, who finds himself uninspired in his career and romantic life. Muchat lives in France, but when he's invited to a comics convention in Portugal, he takes the opportunity to reconnect with the relatives who stayed in Portugal when Simon's grandfather moved to France permanently.

Simon learns Portuguese and delves into his family history while adapting to a simpler way of life. The process leads him to a new understanding of his sometimes-distant father Jean, his deceased grandfather Abel, and the decisions that changed the course of their lives.

Portugal is divided into three sections, based on the perspectives of Simon, his father, and his grandfather, but the book's narrative is seamless, flowing naturally from one point of view to the next.

The art of translating a book from French to English while keeping intact large amounts of Portuguese dialogue is not without its dangers, but it's done well here, maintaining the relaxed tone of Simon's Portuguese relatives, as well as the often clipped tone of Simon's interactions in France.

Pedrosa's art is outstanding, combining the warmth and vitality of sketchwork with an eye for detail and facial expressions. The book's palette of colors also helps to draw outsiders into the very personal experience of *Portugal*—a book that deserves every bit of the attention it has garnered.

PETER DABBENE (January/February 2018)

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