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The Backstage of a Dishwashing Webshow

Keren Katz
Secret Acres (Sep 17, 2019)
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Exquisite artwork combines with a surreal story line to create a singular reading experience in Keren Katz's graphic novel *The Backstage of a Dishwashing Webshow*.

The book follows Rivi, who, after a brief time serving as an air traffic controller, finds herself enrolled at Mount Scopus Academy, a school "specializing in transmutation." If that sounds bizarre, it's completely in keeping with the rest of the story's strangeness.

Rivi coexists at school with a roommate who hosts an internet show in which she washes dishes. A student and fan of the show, Yakov, also appears in the tale, along with Rivi's father, but despite their presences, the book is most a personal meditation on memory, childhood, and possibilities.

With an illustration on every page and many pages featuring no text at all, Katz relies most on images to tell her story. Those images are often so unusual, provocative, and intricate that they could stand alone, worthy of independent appreciation. Indeed, several drawings have been previously published in anthologies or featured in other venues.

Katz's figures sometimes show Modigliani-esque exaggerations of standard body proportions, and she makes exceptional use of patterns and color to create two-dimensional textures. People, animals, and buildings are warped, twisted, or "transmuted" in order to strike at deeper emotional truths, and they're always fascinating to just gaze at.

The Backstage of a Dishwashing Webshow may require multiple readings if one is to fully grasp the the beauty and mysterious power of Katz's work, but it's time well invested.

PETER DABBENE (September / October 2019)

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