

Three Apples Fell from the Sky

Narine Abgaryan

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Oneworld Publications (May 26, 2020)

Softcover \$16.95 (256pp)

978-1-78607-730-1

Narine Abgaryan's *Three Apples Fell from the Sky* is a charming novel set in a remote Armenian village that's perched on a mountaintop. Though the story acknowledges its tragedies, it also captures the warmth and resilience of a close-knit community.

The story begins with fifty-eight-year-old Anatolia lying on her bed convinced that she is dying. Along comes Vasily who, not knowing of Anatolia's illness, asks her to marry him. She says yes to make him go away so she can die in peace. When she doesn't die, she finds that she lacks the courage to turn Vasily down. As it develops the couple's story, the narrative branches out to include the lives of other villagers and the history of the town and its families.

The dual portrait of the couple and the village is focused and full of variety. Anatolia and Vasily's story unifies the narrative, while frequent digressions into village history, including war, famine, and natural disasters, result in a rich sense of the community's past and present. Vignettes describing the lives of other villagers and their interactions with the larger world deepen the novel's sense of time and place. Depictions of daily village life, aging houses and roads, and the beautiful but treacherous mountain landscape are lively and lush. The novel teems with minor characters whose quirks are at times amusing and at times heartbreaking.

Touches of fabulism enter the story: one character can see the spirits of dead people, and another can sense upcoming disasters. These supernatural elements result in an atmosphere of otherworldliness that highlights the community's near total isolation.

Narine Abgaryan's fable-like novel *Three Apples Fell from the Sky* is a warm-hearted story about family, friendship, and community.

REBECCA HUSSEY (May / June 2020)

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