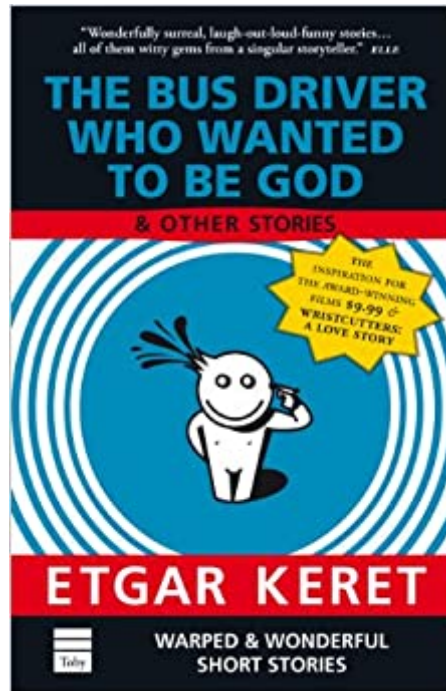




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The Bus Driver Who Wanted To Be God & Other Stories



Synopsis

Israel's hippest bestselling young writer today, Etgar Keret is part court jester, part literary crown prince, part national conscience. *The Bus Driver Who Wanted to Be God* gathers his daring and provocative short stories for the first time in English. Brief, intense, painfully funny, and shockingly honest, Keret's stories are snapshots that illuminate with intelligence and wit the hidden truths of life. As with the best comic authors, hilarity and anguish are the twin pillars of his work. Keret covers a remarkable emotional and narrative terrain—from a father's first lesson to his boy to a standoff between soldiers caught in the Middle East conflict to a slice of life where nothing much happens. *Bus Driver* includes stories from Keret's bestselling collections in Israel, *Pipelines* and *Missing Kissinger*, as well as Keret's major new novella, "Kneller's Happy Campers," a bitingly satirical yet wistful road trip set in the afterlife for suicides. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

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Customer Reviews

Etgar Keret's *The Bus Driver Who Wanted to Be God & Other Stories* stings and thrills with fierce fables of modern life. Set in landscapes ranging from "this armpit town outside Austin, Texas" to "this village in Uzbekistan that was built right smack at the mouth of Hell," these stories lay their plots' central tensions out plainly: "Dad wouldn't buy me a Bart Simpson doll," one begins. Then they take off like little roller coasters, careening through the pathos of Denis Johnson's *Jesus' Son*, the clowning of David Sedaris's *Barrel Fever*, the in-your-face violence of Quentin Tarantino, and

the bewildered alienation of Franz Kafka. But readers need not know any of Keret's sources to enjoy his stories fully. The Israeli writer's aphorisms leap off the page and lodge themselves in the mind: "There are two kinds of people, those who like to sleep next to the wall, and those who like to sleep next to the people who push them off the bed." Keret's vernacular prose is fun to read, and his vision of the world is weirdly comforting. Happiness never really flourishes, but small hopes and graces abound. --Michael Joseph Gross --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

In this collection of antic tales, Israeli writer Keret chronicles the bitter ironies that determine his characters' daily lives. Set in contemporary Israel, Keret's brief stories most are three to five pages long juxtapose a casual realism with regular flashes of unabashed absurdity, portraying characters on the brink of adulthood forced to confront life's chaotic forces death, justice, love, betrayal for the first time. Keret attempts to render often sad or tragic events with a light touch, and his plots lend a fantastical, whimsical air to simple, everyday reality: a bus driver is obsessed with keeping his schedule, a stewardess falls in love with a passenger, a man is befriended by an angel in disguise, a woman runs a convenience store at the gate to hell. The most successful stories capitalize on their brevity, their irony sharpening as the plot turns on a dime. "Cocked and Locked," for instance, portrays an Israeli and an Arab soldier in a desert standoff; a clever switch of identity reveals that the enemies we create are often born inside ourselves. But Keret's characters can be carelessly drawn, their shifts in sentiment seeming either flip or predictable, as in the story "Good Intentions," which focuses on a coldhearted killer's decision not to murder a good man. Similarly, the longest story, "Kneller's Happy Campers," which follows a young man on a quest for love in the afterlife, seems disjointed and bland after the charms of its conceit wear off. Without strong individuals, the stories here lose critical mass and remain too disparate to command attention as a collection.

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I watched the movie "Wrist Cutters - A Love Story" which is based on a short story by Etgar Keret called "Kneller's Happy Campers". While the movie has a happier ending than the short story, I did enjoy Keret's writing style and the fact his stories are quirky and present life from a different point of view. Keret is a Jewish author and grew up in Israel. His stories have a bit of an existential feel and I think he would be an interesting person to know.

Very unique group of short stories that will definitely make you think. The author is a great storyteller and has interesting morals that he teaches along the way.

This is one of my favorite books/authors! Each and every story grabs you by the seat of your pants/skirt and takes you on an ever unexpected journey. Etgar Keret is my author idol! If I could write even half as good as him, I'd be a best-seller!

I (along with what I believe to be most of the other people reviewing) bought this book because I really enjoyed the movie "Wristcutters: A Love Story." Let me say, I was NOT disappointed!!With the exception of Wristcutters, all of Keret's stories in the book are REALLY short, even in comparison to other short stories that I have read. While I was initially concerned that I would not enjoy such short stories, I found that my initial thoughts were mistaken, and I greatly appreciated their length. This book is really easy to pick up and read when you only have a few minutes to read- say before dinner or during a break at work.I found all of the stories agreeable, but would have to say that my favorite story was "The Bus Driver Who Wanted to be God." I thought that both characters in this story were extremely likable, and I found the story to be rather sweet. However, in some of the stories, I believe that the ideas presented would be more relatable to someone more familiar with Israeli culture than I.

With this book I think the most important thing for any potential reader is to understand the genre before giving this book of short stories a read, because if you do not like this genre then you will not like this book. The stories are dark, and the author plays with irony and subtle twists. The author's worlds are not black and white but instead different shades of grey. If you don't enjoy flawed heroes who learn twisted lessons then this is not the book for you.With that said this book was an important read for me in that it illustrated just how big a role military life plays in Israeli culture and society. More than half of these stories had some theme of military service surrounding them. The author's stories tend to focus on youths, and so their eventual military service is a common theme. I guess it is difficult to understand just how much the military permeates Israeli culture when one is outside of this society. I have read a lot of books on Israel, but it wasn't really till this little book that the reality actually began to sink in that this is a very pervasive aspect of Israeli culture.As for the stories themselves the majority of them are about three pages long so expect to be sucked into this book very quickly. I found myself saying just one more until the book was finished. Of course I love this genre and style, so this book was bound to find a receptive audience with me. The author has a

very nice style that sucks you in quickly then punches you in the gut before he moves onto the next story. Once again know the genre. If this genre appeals to you then you will love this book, but if it doesn't then you should absolutely skip this work because it won't appeal to you.

I might be going a little too far by calling this the best book I've read all year, but while the high of this book still lingers with me that's what I'm calling it. I'll admit the only reason I bought this book was to read "Kneller's Happy Campers" because it was adapted into the film *Wristcutters: A Love Story*, but "Knellers" turned out to be the last story in the collection and it just didn't feel right to ignore the other stories. Etgar Keret doesn't disappoint. His style might be a little over the top for the average reader, but his imagination is just the sort of world I'd love to live in. From a town that houses the gateway to hell to a man who finds Heaven within a pipe, the book is filled with slice-of-life stories of average-joe characters who just happen to reside within the surreal. I should warn that if you're not into magical realism, bizarro fiction, or surrealism, then you should stray away from this collection. However, if you're seeking an exit from the monotony of your choice genre, this book might just be what you're looking for.

There is no way to know whether you will like this book or not, because it's totally fresh and different from any other writer out there (to my knowledge; if I'm missing something please do let me know). This is a voice like nothing I've ever read, with incredible imagination and depth. A window into modern Israeli culture as well as some of the deepest and most raw human emotions, the kind you don't access in the course of normal life. And it was liberating - finally, a vision of the place our present lives occupy in the great big eternity or whatever this thing might be that's tangible and all the more meaningful for not being swept aside for a set of answers. Keret's is an anchorless irreverence; instead of bashing its head against some existing philosophy, it just lets itself unfold. Reading him was a completely new and revelatory experience for me and I would recommend him to anyone who can sweep aside everything they might have heard or read - including this review - and just read him with wide open eyes.

Admittedly, I bought this book because I fell in love with the movie *Wristcutters: A Love Story*, and after reading an excerpt of the short story "Kneller's Happy Campers" I had to have this book. It is amazing. Etgar Keret is the master of short stories. I could not put the book down and read it in an afternoon. I am constantly finding myself going back to the book to re-read some of the stories and I enjoy them more every time. This is a book I keep by my bedside and has quickly become a

treasured possession.

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