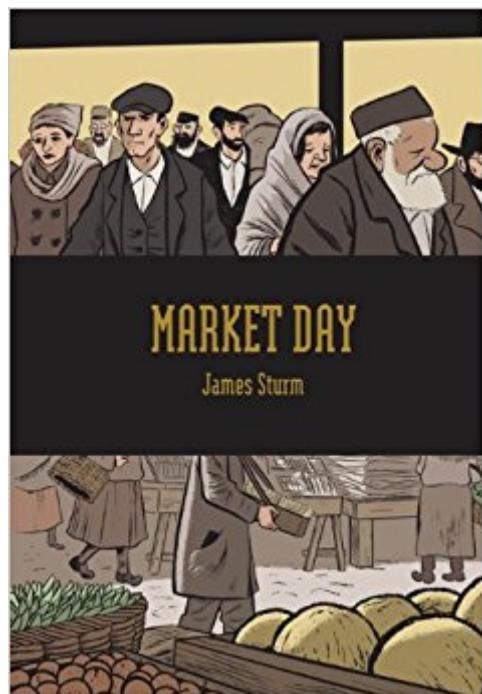


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Market Day



Synopsis

A TIMELESS MEDITATION ON ART AND COMMERCE SEEN THROUGH THE LIFE OF AN EARLY-TWENTIETH-CENTURY JEWISH RUG MAKER

Mendleman's life goes through an upheaval when he discovers that he can no longer earn a living for his growing family doing the work that defines him—making well-crafted rugs by hand. A proud artisan, he takes his donkey-drawn cart to the market only to be turned away when the distinctive shop he once sold to now stocks only cheaply manufactured merchandise. As the realities of the marketplace sink in, Mendleman unravels. James Sturm draws a quiet, reflective, and beautiful portrait of eastern Europe in the early 1900s—bringing to life the hustle and bustle of an Old World marketplace on the brink of industrialization. Market Day is an ageless tale of how economic and social forces can affect a single life. An award-winning cartoonist of the books Golem's Mighty Swing, James Sturm's America, Satchel Paige: Striking Out Jim Crow, and Adventures in Cartooning, Sturm is a true visionary, having cofounded the Seattle alternative weekly *The Stranger* and the Center for Cartoon Studies, the country's premier cartooning school.

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Customer Reviews

Starred Review. Cartoonist and educator Sturm turns in a tightly woven graphic novella about a shtetl craftsman whose life and livelihood shatter against the rising industrial behemoth of the early 20th century. Mendleman is a nervous rug weaver with a child on the way. His devotion to his craft brings him to the brink of art, but when he suddenly loses his major client to modernization, he finds

himself, effectively, patronless. Suddenly a castaway amid economic forces that render his virtues meaningless, he collapses as his previously unnamable anxieties find specific and destructive form. Sturm's tale comprises a day's cycle, and the magnitude of Mendleman's radical descent must sometimes be stated or inferred. But most of the book's important details are effectively portrayed as part of the quotidian warp and woof of life's patterns and relationships. Sturm has infused his reliably disciplined storytelling style with slow pacing and spare graphics, but some bravura sequences give the story impact. Although the details of rural Eastern European Jewish life at the turn of the century ring true, the book is less rooted in a specifically explicated setting than some of Sturm's previous historical fictions, allowing Mendleman's dilemma to function as a broader metaphor for the perpetual struggle between independent creativity and impersonal market forces. (Apr.) Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

Gr 10 Up  œMendleman is a Jewish rug maker in early-20th-century Eastern Europe. His wife is pregnant with their first child and due any minute, but he must go to the market to make money for his family to survive. He attempts to sell his wares to no avail. The shop he frequented in the past has changed owners and no longer carries quality items like his. Mendleman presses on and attempts to sell his rugs at the emporium, where they are willing to pay a fraction of what he used to make, and his pieces are thrown onto a heap of other rugs for sale. Mendleman feels he has no choice and completes the sale. This catalyzes an existential crisis for him. His work used to give him so much pride, but he is forced to surrender for money. With expressive and moody imagery, Sturm's story is at once original and universal. The struggle to maintain one's identity after losing a job is a tough one, and the author does an excellent job conveying it. With some obscene language, nudity, and brief mention of sex, this graphic novel is for mature readers.  œMelissa Houlroyd, formerly at Brighton Memorial Library, Rochester, NY © (c) Copyright 2010. Library Journals LLC, a wholly owned subsidiary of Media Source, Inc. No redistribution permitted.

The story of Mendleman, a rug maker in a turn-of-the-century Eastern European village, is woven with exquisite care by graphic novelist James Sturm. Using a sepia-infused palette that pays homage to the photographs of Roman Vishniac and Alter Kayczne, and the postcard collection of Gerard Silvain, Sturm takes us on Mendleman's journey to the marketplace where he sells his finely-loomed masterpieces - "my rugs are always 16 ends per inch! ALWAYS!" At Market

Day, Mendleman encounters old friends and a reliable old world: a Mezuza maker, a gravestone carver, a fortune teller, a knife grinder. They are comforting touchstones in a world built on a tradition of honor, duty and diligence. But when Mendleman must sell his rugs to a new vendor far below their previous value with his old connection, his sense of order violently unravels. The world view that used to inspire his creations now looks bleak and cheap. He gets drunk and vows to sell his loom. Mendleman's crisis of artistic confidence comes at the same moment as a personal one: he's about to become a new father. These colliding forces are literally ripping apart the fabric of Mendleman's life warp by weft. Sturm takes the simple story of a rug maker and turns it into a mediation on the sacred and the profane, art and commerce, and devotion and duty. The book ends obliquely, yet with blue color, signifying that perhaps Mendleman will find life and art in a changing world.

Set in the early 20th century, James Sturm gives us a glimpse of life in Jewish Eastern Europe where the old ways of life are succumbing to the new pace of the faster lifestyle of the industrial revolution. This graphic novel centers itself on one day in the life of Mendelman who is a highly skilled maker of fine quality rugs. Sturm shows one significant day in going to the market when Mendelman sees the old ways of doing business evaporating into the new and cheaper ways which have come to pass with the industrial onset of mass marketing and poorer quality. In modern terms this highly thought out graphic novel shows what would be called today as downsizing. Sturm's story telling is thought provoking and fast paced. His drawing depicts the surroundings and pictures the Jewish way of life much as seen in the movie "Fiddler on the Roof". The scenes are beautifully graphic and haunting. The conclusion of the story is complex and thought provoking. Such is the beauty of the story and conclusion which will make one want to re-read and pick up the missing thoughts and intentions of such a strong work from Sturm's hand. This work is very deserving of the maximum 5 Star rating.

Market Day is the story of a poor rug maker and peddler in the early years of the 20th century in Eastern Europe, told and drawn with great feeling and restraint. It shows a grey world, and Sturm portrays it (in shades of grey, black and white), and the life and people that would soon disappear, with such empathy, one can feel the weight of the rugs and the growing hopelessness as the poor man trudges from one possibility to the other, only to have them all evaporate. The illustrations are lovingly drawn, the landscape nostalgic, the faces of the characters so individual and full of life that they seem all too real and their loss all the more tragic.

"Market Day" is a beautifully-drawn, subdued portrait of a day in the life of Mendleman the rug maker, somewhere in Eastern Europe in the early 1900's. The storyline, however, is universal and immediate. It captures the current maelstrom of our world today, and the hard choices we are forced to make. There is a timeless urgency to the day's events for our hero, Mendleman, and those of us who have suffered in the last economic decline understand the dilemmas confronting our protagonist all too well. This is a wonderful book. Mendleman's day at the market will haunt me.....as there are no easy answers for any of us.

This book is a brilliant picture of exactly where the American economy is now and how lives are being affected. More words will detract from the meaning. This is a book you can read in an hour that will affect you forever. Hopefully. Chris Reich[...]

This book is sick.

Whenever I'm feeling my age, I dip back into the pages of MARKET DAY and remind myself that yes, every generation faces a 'changing of the guard' and yes, all things must pass. It's a rare graphic novel these days that imparts wisdom—true wisdom, lived & learned—and MARKET DAY is one of those rarest of books. Carefully attuned to its chosen time, place, and people, attentive to every nuance of its character(s) and the passing of a fateful day, MARKET DAY eases into and through its metaphoric emotional center with deft storytelling that feels, with its every step (panel/page), like a life observed, rather than a story woven (like a carpet); it feels LIVED, reads experientially, so that you're unaware of the teller, because you're so engaged with the tale. I can't offer higher praise than this. Most highly recommended, and keep it at hand for frequent revisits.

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