

Fly Already: Existential Angst and the Absurd in Etgar Keret's Short Stories

In the realm of contemporary literature, few authors navigate the labyrinthine corridors of existential angst and the absurd with as much finesse and humor as Etgar Keret. His short story collection, *Fly Already*, is a testament to his unparalleled ability to dissect the human condition with a blend of wit, melancholy, and profound insight.



Fly Already: Stories by Etgar Keret

★★★★☆ 4.6 out of 5

Language	: English
File size	: 1094 KB
Text-to-Speech	: Enabled
Screen Reader	: Supported
Enhanced typesetting	: Enabled
Word Wise	: Enabled
Print length	: 221 pages
X-Ray	: Enabled



Keret's stories transport the reader into a topsy-turvy world where the mundane intersects with the surreal, the ordinary with the extraordinary. His characters are a kaleidoscope of eccentrics, misfits, and dreamers, who grapple with the complexities of love, loss, and the search for meaning in a seemingly meaningless existence.

Existential Angst and the Absurd

At the heart of Keret's stories lies a palpable sense of existential angst. His characters are often haunted by a nagging awareness of their own mortality and the futility of their endeavors. In the story "Malka Germania," a man named Tommy finds himself trapped in a never-ending loop of grief and longing after the death of his beloved grandmother. Despite his attempts to move on, the past relentlessly claws at his present, threatening to consume him entirely.

Keret deftly juxtaposes this existential dread with moments of absurdity, creating a surreal and unsettling atmosphere. In "Kneller's Happy Campers," a group of seemingly ordinary individuals embark on a bizarre camping trip that descends into chaos and violence. The line between reality and fantasy blurs, leaving the reader questioning the nature of the world they inhabit.

Love and the Fragility of Relationships

Despite the prevailing existential angst, Keret's stories are also deeply rooted in the human experience of love and relationships. His characters yearn for connection and intimacy, yet they often find themselves stumbling through misunderstandings and missed opportunities. In "Crazy Glue," a couple's relationship is tested to the brink when a bottle of glue accidentally bonds them together, forcing them to confront the complexities of love and commitment.

Love, in Keret's universe, is both a source of profound joy and unbearable pain. His stories capture the fragility of relationships, the ephemeral nature of happiness, and the haunting emptiness that can linger long after a love has ended. In "Pipelines," an elderly woman attempts to mend her broken

heart by forming an unconventional bond with a young stranger, only to discover that the past will not let go so easily.

The Search for Meaning in a Chaotic World

Underlying these existential and romantic themes is a profound exploration of the search for meaning in a seemingly chaotic and meaningless world. Keret's characters grapple with the big questions of life: What is our purpose? Is there any inherent significance to our existence? In "The Bus Driver Who Wanted to Be God," a man named Yaakov embarks on a quixotic quest to create his own religion, only to find that his efforts are met with indifference and ridicule.

While many of Keret's characters struggle to find concrete answers, they nevertheless persist in their search for meaning. They experiment with different philosophies, delve into spiritual practices, and engage in surreal and often humorous escapades. Through these experiences, they gain a deeper understanding of themselves and the world around them, even if they do not always find the definitive answers they seek.

Etgar Keret's Unique Storytelling Style

Etgar Keret's short stories are not merely intellectual exercises but also showcases of his exceptional storytelling ability. His writing is characterized by wry humor, vivid imagery, and an uncanny ability to capture the nuances of human emotion. His sentences are often short and sharp, creating a sense of urgency and immediacy. He employs unexpected metaphors and similes that illuminate the absurdity of everyday life and highlight the fragility of human existence.

Keret's stories are also known for their fractured narrative structure and nonlinear progression. He frequently jumps between time periods, juxtaposes different perspectives, and weaves dream and reality into a rich tapestry. This fragmented approach reflects the chaotic nature of human thought and experience, drawing the reader into a world that is both familiar and utterly surreal.

Fly Already is a masterful collection of short stories that delves into the depths of human existence, exploring existential angst, the absurdities of life, and the indomitable spirit of the human heart. Etgar Keret's unique storytelling style and profound insights into the human condition create an unforgettable literary experience that will resonate with readers long after they finish the last page. His stories remind us that even in the face of mortality and the chaotic nature of life, we have the capacity for love, humor, and the relentless pursuit of meaning.



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