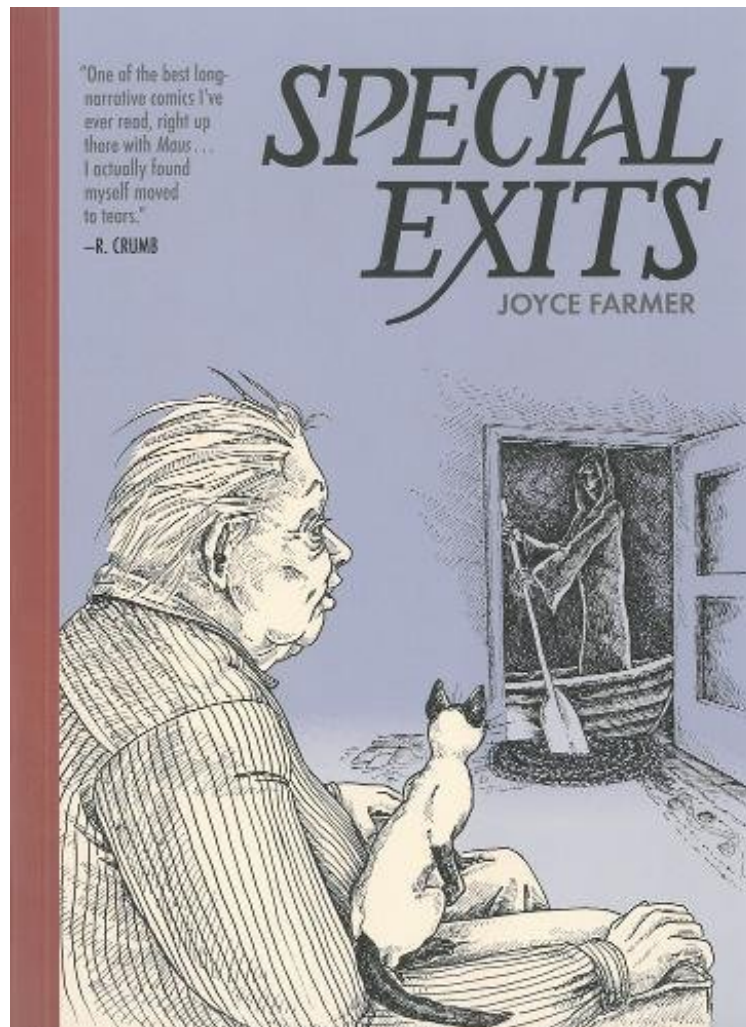


[FREE] Special Exits

Special Exits

Joyce Farmer

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Joyce Farmer : Special Exits before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Special Exits:

7 of 7 people found the following review helpful. Timely story, and not altogether darkBy MZThis graphic novel tells the story of the last years, and eventual death, of the elderly couple Lars and Rachel as they live out their declining years alone in their crumbling house in a shabby Los Angeles neighborhood. But they're not all alone: Lars's devoted daughter Laura attends them once a week, making arrangements to take this time off her business at some expense. She uncomplainingly--enthusiastically, even--cleans their house, bathes the bedridden old woman (her stepmother), does their shopping and cooking, takes their cat to the vet--basically keeps them going, and does so with affection and almost unbelievable good nature.She has a husband, son, and grandchild who also play a small part in cheering the old

people, as do a couple of nearby friends. There are tender conversations between the family members that let you know how much they have cared for each other over the years. The situation is somewhat dire: Rachel neglects her eye drops and becomes blind from glaucoma; Lars falls and injures himself, and the predictable horrors take place as the increasingly-helpless couple lives on semi-independently. They resist live-in caregivers, placing a greater burden on the uncomplaining family. The graphic novel form does the story great justice. You can see the humor, exasperation, fear, and more ordinary emotions play on the characters' faces. Little side jokes give the story extra pleasure--the mean Siamese cat, which the old couple adores and which hates Laura. It's a wonderful medium; allowing the reader to also be the viewer, and bringing one closer to the characters and their very realistic drama. Farmer's illustrations look as if they want to tell a dark story, but not so. She captures facial expressions elegantly, both funny and tragic, letting the pictures themselves describe the scenes and emotions. Needless to say, this is the story many, many baby-boom aged readers are also right in the midst of coping with.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. A Special BookBy Pierrot
This was a difficult review to write--both of my parents are deceased. I was looking for some of the same answers we all look for when a loved one fails, declines, and finally dies. Ms. Farmer has created a work where, as one turns the pages, one must laugh and cry and-sometimes-yell to the heavens. I am deliberately NOT giving away the plot for it is something to savor and reexperience more than once. Thank you, Ms. Farmer, for your poignant and witty offering of 2 human spirits and their shared journey to the other side of life on earth!

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Funny but so true.
By janice g gilbert
The all illustrated format was an easy and fast read. There were moments of hilarity, but unfortunately all too real. I recognized similar situations with my elderly mother. It gave me insight into the aging process that occurs when elderly parents start taking their leave of life in the "long goodbye". I am happy to say that my attitude of frustration changed for the better after reading this book. I would definitely recommend this book to anyone who is a caregiver to an elderly parent or grandparent.

In this semi-autobiographic novel, which chronicles the decline in health and welfare of an older couple, Joyce Farmer makes the case for elder care reform; now in paperback. In the vein of Alison Bechdel or Harvey Pekar, Joyce Farmer's memoir chronicles the decline of the author's parents' health, their relationship with one another and with their daughter, and how they cope with the day-to-day emotional fragility of the most taxing time of their lives. Set in southern Los Angeles (which makes for a terrifying sequence as blind Rachel and ailing Lars are trapped in their home without power during the 1992 Rodney King riots), Farmer details the slow, inexorable decline in Lars and Rachel's health, and perfectly captures the timbre of the exchanges between a long-married couple: the affectionate bickering; their gallows humor; their querulousness as their bodies break down. Black white

From Publishers Weekly
Starred . Underground feminist comic artist Farmer's account of how she looked after her aging parents is a quiet wonder. Lars and Rachel are long retired and don't venture out much from their South Los Angeles home except to go to the grocery store. Lars reads the paper, and both eagerly look forward to visits from their daughter (named Laura but presumably Farmer's stand-in) as much as they don't want to trouble her. Over the course of years that cascade through Farmer's closely detailed story, Lars and Rachel slowly become needier, but do their best to hide their decrepitude from Laura. As the years pass (the 1992 Rodney King riots threaten to make their existence even more perilous), Laura teases out small facts about her parents that she'd never known--the bags of uranium ore that Lars, an engineer, keeps in the garage, Rachel's desperately poor Missouri childhood. Farmer renders everything in busy, densely packed black-and-white frames whose cluttered look mimics the dusty house, its surfaces thick with cat hair and memories. The story is stunning for its antisentimental realism, as well as for the glimpses of fantasy (Lars's hallucination of Hades' ferryman, Charon, rowing by in the hallway) that flicker by like ghosts.

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From Booklist
*Starred *
Farmer, one of the first women underground-comics creators (Tits Clits Comix), draws on her own experience of her fathers and stepmothers last years to create this graphic memoir, which is in effect an autobiographical graphic novel though with the names of family and friends changed. The narrative proceeds like conventional realistic fiction, chronologically and without authorial commentary; its dramatic rather than ruminative and reflective. In a liney style similar to that of the late Harvey Pekar's favorite artist, Frank Stack (Dormans Doggie, 1990; The New Adventures of Jesus, 2007), Farmer portrays a middle-aged woman's ever-more-frequent visits to her parents' house in south L.A. as they reach and surpass 80, but there's much more of the old couple at home (nearly the only setting for the entire book) as first her stepmother, then her father, declines toward death. Emotional and physical crises are depicted naturalistically, never hyped up to tug the heartstrings or extort pity, and the parents' personalities are convincingly and lovingly evoked. The end-of-life literature is vast and mostly practical and advisory. Though not without value as counsel, Farmer's contribution is primarily a work of art, moving and beautiful. --Ray Olson One of the best long-narrative comics I've ever read, right up there with Gen of Hiroshima and Maus. It had a powerful effect on me... towards the end I actually found myself moved to tears. - R. Crumb (Starred) Emotional and physical crises are depicted naturalistically, never hyped up to tug the heartstrings or extort pity, and the parents' personalities are convincingly and lovingly evoked. The end-of-life literature is vast and mostly practical and advisory. Though not

without value as counsel, Farmers contribution is primarily a work of art, moving and beautiful. - Ray Olson, Booklist...Special Exits avoids cheap pity and piousness by doing what any good art should: focusing on specifics the ways in which Farmers parents slide into old age and ill health; the care they require and receive. That this is also a portrait of a strong marriage is an added benefit. Frank, never shying away from the awkward indignities of aging, Special Exits illuminates two lives, as well as that of the authors. - Ken Tucker, Entertainment WeeklyIn this lightly fictionalized and unflinching account of the author's parents, Lars and Rachel stumble toward the end of life with unpredictable successes, setbacks, and flashes of joy. An excellent alert for those new to the path (for themselves or for relatives) and a validation for those already familiar with this normal yet seemly so abnormal life stage. - Martha Cornog, Library JournalJoyce Farmer... recently has emerged as one of the most provocative voices in the comics and graphic-literature landscape. Her debut book, the 208-page illustrated memoir Special Exits, chronicling the slow, freaky decline and ultimate death of her elderly parents, ...is an almost uncomfortably honest memoir thats dense with details. Its also layered with meaning and sub-themes. - Deborah Vankin, Los Angeles TimesI finally read Special Exits last weekend. And I am here to tell you: It was tough. It was not fun. But it was truthful. It was specific. And it ... helped. In this, it was utterly unlike the book on grieving that a well-meaning relative pressed into my hands.... Special Exits... is all about specificity... It's bracingly clear-eyed and unsentimental... - Glen Weldon, NPR...[T]he impressive thing about [Special Exits] is that, despite depressing subject matter, its extremely readable and fairly funny. Yes, youll think about the horrors of getting old and failing to maintain your independence, not to mention the even scarier prospect of taking care of your own parents. But if Farmers book is meant to soothe your fears, it kind of works. - Hillary Brown, Paste[Special Exits] was fueled by Farmer's personal outrage at the unacceptable treatment of her elderly parents at the hands of medical and nursing home establishments. And she'll pooh-pooh the idea that making the book was psychological therapy of any sort. 'It was in no way cathartic. It was really, really depressing,' she told me any number of times. This is classic Joyce Farmer, drawing, writing, and satirizing taboo and socially risky subjects. - Kathleen Vanesian, Phoenix New TimesStarred : Underground feminist comic artist Farmers account of how she looked after her aging parents is a quiet wonder.The story is stunning for its anti-sentimental realism, as well as for the glimpses of fantasythat flicker by like ghosts. - Publishers Weekly...Joyce Farmers Special Exits depicts old age as a wild, lurching ride from medical crises to euphoric nostalgia to an eerie calm as the end draws near. [...]

Aging and dying are rare topics in literature and cinema, let alone in comics, which makes Special Exits an automatic standout. But it would be an excellent book even if the shelves were full of fictionalized memoirs about elder care. - The A.V. ClubIn Joyce Farmers powerful Special Exits the people are more people-like than I have encountered in comics in a long time.... It is moving without being sentimental. Real without being pedantic; a solid graphic novel that reads, well, like a novel!... Special Exits is one of the most engrossingly human comics and, ultimately, one of the most moving... Joyce Famer has brilliantly conveyed what it is to be human. To live, to die. To ripe, to rot. And thereby hangs her tale - Paul Karasik (Eisner Award-winning cartoonist), The Comics JournalForceful, unsparing[Farmer] renders her wobbly, minutely textured characters with wit and tough affection. - Douglas Wolk, The New York Times Book Does this make Special Exits seem like a downer? Good. It is a downer. It's also funny and touching, and gratifyingly cleareyed about the messy emotions involved in caring for aging parents. [...] And thanks to the thoughtful writing and art of Joyce Farmer, [her parents'] lives and deaths will be a comfort to readers beginning to consider the end of their parents' lives or their own. - Dan Kois, The Washington PostSpecial Exits is a quiet triumph, a celebration of the unseen acts of love, protection, duty and well-meaning deception among families. [...] Anyone with an aging parent or grandparent will surely relate to Special Exits, and appreciate the heartrending honesty with which Farmer weaves this sad, sweet, and beautifully drawn tale. - Niki Papadopoulos, Bitch[W]ith its leisurely pace, confident art style and deeply touching story, this memoir will tug at your heartstrings - Allan Halsey, BizarreThe book is both funny and heartbreaking, sometimes on the same page, dealing with the quiet hopeful moments and the nerve-wracking agony that come from a situation that is all too common and spoken of far too little. - Alex Dueben, Comic Book ResourcesThis is a magnum opus no one expected to read, a brutally frank depiction of what it's like for full lives you love to end, and it has the most painfully happy ending of the year. It made me cry. Don't do what I almost did and ignore one of the year's most moving comics. - Sean T. Collins, Comic Book Resources...[W]ith Special Exits, Farmer delivers a wonderful memoir about her aging parents and their aging process. [...] This story will resonate and it will haunt you. But it will also impress you. Farmer doesnt pull punches, but she doesnt go for self-pity either. Special Exits is a loving tribute to lifes final moments, and the love that is left behind after we leave. - John Hogan, Graphic Novel ReporterSpecial Exits stands out at one of 2010s best comic books, a fitting tribute to Joyce Farmers parents that tackles, head on, the heartbreaking inevitable process of losing one's parents. The result is one of the most human and most affecting comics of recent memory... - Michael C. Lorah, NewsaramaSure, Special Exits is sad. But its also funny, touching, thought-provoking, and life-affirming. Its never trite, cheap, or hokey, like, say, Patch Adams. This is the raw, unvarnished truth about the end of life, elegantly put to page by Farmers lyrical drawings, a welcome, thoughtful evolution of the raucous underground style of the 60s and 70s. Most of all, Special Exits is powerful. Its vital; almost essential. [...] Its not for the faint of heart, but its one that everyone can benefit from reading. Your future self will thank you. - Sam Humphries, SeenThis is something that if

we have not faced yet, we know we will, and Farmers ability to capture it all is clear-eyed. Its a remarkable achievement considering the situation, and Farmer has a way of uniting the readership in one collective deep breathing session that lets us know we are not alone in the wider scope of coping with loss. ...Special Exits exists as a graphic novel of considerable depth and meaning. - John Seven, Archive 7Yes, [Special Exits] is a heartbreaking even harrowing tale, one made all the more moving and immediate by the creators nuanced gift for capturing the essence of her parents on the page. But its also a tale told with consummate skill, filled with mordant humor and real compassion, an almost embarrassing amount of candor, and a deep abiding love and respect for its subjects. [...] Ultimately, its these simple and true moments of mundane magic which marks Special Exits as more than just one of the best books released this year. It is, without a doubt, also one of the most significant contributions to the comics medium this side of the millennium, a modern masterpiece which celebrates the human condition. - Bill Baker, ForeWord sThe subject matter isnt pretty. Still, [Special Exits] is intriguing, well-written and thought-provoking. - Nick Smith, ICv2Farmers black and white line drawings are detailed and expressive, but never flashy. Her art is straightforward, as befits the story.... The end product is as honest and unembellished as a personal journal and were lucky Farmers chosen to share it with us. - Andrew Fuerste-Henry, No Flying No TightsWritten with impressive empathy and obviously heartfelt, angry frustration even years later, this memoir confronts issues that will affect every single one of us whether or not we have the guts to face it, and the light airy art and terrific supporting cast especially Ching the cat keeps the tone hopeful and ultimately upbeat even through the worst of all times. This is a book you must read. - Win Wiacek, Now Read This!Every step along the way is documented thoroughly and honestly, effectively killing any romantic notions I still had about my final years.... Reading this was like watching an incredibly slow train wreck, where you got to know everyone on board before it crashed... - Dawn Rutherford, The Unshelved Book Club