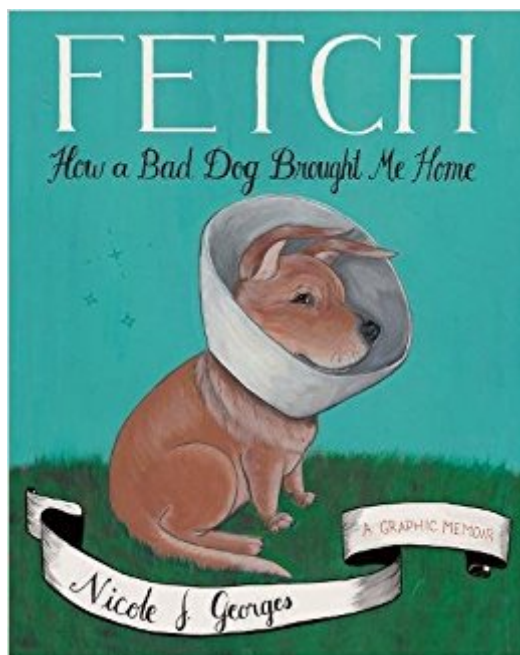


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Fetch: How A Bad Dog Brought Me Home



Synopsis

From an award-winning artist, a memoir of life with a difficult, beloved dog that will resonate with anybody who has ever had a less than perfectly behaved pet. When Nicole Georges was sixteen she adopted Beija, a dysfunctional shar-pei/corgi mix—a troublesome combination of tiny and attack, just like teenaged Nicole herself. For the next fifteen years, Beija would be the one constant in her life. Through depression, relationships gone awry, and an unmoored young adulthood played out against the backdrop of the Portland punk scene, Beija was there, wearing her “Don’t Pet Me” bandana. In Georges’s gorgeous graphic novel *Fetch* chronicles their symbiotic, codependent relationship and probes what it means to care for and be responsible to another living thing—a living thing that occasionally lunges at toddlers. Nicole turns to vets, dog whisperers, and even a pet psychic for help, but it is the moments of accommodation, adaption, and compassion that sustain them. Nicole never successfully taught Beija to “sit,” but in the end, Beija taught Nicole how to stay.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

"A touching, memorable dog tale bound to connect with animal lovers, graphic novel readers, memoir fans, and anyone intrigued with how pets and their owners reflect and sustain one another." --Lambda Literary "Fetch is beautiful. Georges's artwork is inviting and frank as she tells a touching story of companionship and personal growth. A dog pack of two, she and Beija form a special bond, a friendship that hits home." --Shelf Awareness "This book is an homage to

classic zine aesthetics that captures an incomparable friendship. An honest, moving portrayal of the essential bond between humans and animals. **STARRED** Publishers Weekly **★** “Touchingly, beautifully conveyed. Part grief memoir, part coming-of-age story, part feminist manifesto, this well-written, splendidly illustrated title will stir the hearts of misunderstood riot grrrls, owners of unruly canines, and LGBTQ readers. **★**

STARRED Library Journal **★** “Nicole Georges makes my favorite art about love and vulnerability. More than a tribute to a canine best friend, Fetch maps Georges’s journey from teen to adult with heartbreaking honesty and tender joy. I am in awe of Georges’s uncanny ability to transport me right into her world of moldy crusty punk houses and glorious vegan lesbian barbecues. Funny, gorgeous, and true. **★**

Jill Soloway, creator of Transparent **★** “From feral child to leader of the pack, Nicole Georges comes to know a thing or two about dogs, and incidentally, about herself. Her luminous, lyrical drawings of animals are charged with strange insight, and add a potent nonverbal element to the narrative of Georges’s youth. Fetch combines the best qualities of diary comics—particularity and granular detail—with the zoomed out view of someone who has completed an arduous, mythic, and expansive journey. **★**

Alison Bechdel, author of Fun Home and Are You My Mother? **★** “Nicole’s work always punches me in the guts with her unending longing for a home. Through constant disappointments and the challenges of owning a rescue dog and a rescue heart, she unflinchingly refuses to quit. A magical world so full of tenderness it might just break you, it’s a place I love to visit and rarely want to leave. I want Nicole to draw the whole world, but her hands would fall off. **★**

Sarah Shapiro, co-creator of Unreal **★**

Nicole J. Georges is a professor, writer, and illustrator, who has been publishing her own zines and comics for twenty years. She is the author of the Lambda Award-winning graphic memoir *Calling Dr. Laura* and the diary comic *Invincible Summer*. She lives in Portland, Oregon.

As to be expected as Georges is consistently excellent. She dives into the pain of loss so profoundly, and I would read a book by her about really anything. Highly highly recommended and perhaps will be my favorite book of the year.

A touching graphic novel memoir about the author’s 16 year relationship with her reactive and well-loved basenji-dachshund. Well worth reading.

** Trigger warning for allusions to rape, child abuse, domestic violence, animal abuse, alcoholism, self-harm, and suicidal ideation. **I first discovered Nicole Georges's artwork nestled within the pages of rhymes-with-witch magazine. Instantaneously smitten, my adoration only grew when I learned that Georges was a vegan who referred to her furry sidekick Beija as her "canine life partner." Her 2010 Invincible Summer Queer Animal Odyssey calendar still rests in the plastic protective covering it arrived in. (Don't worry, I take it out every once in awhile for much-deserved admiration.) I enjoyed her debut graphic novel, INVINCIBLE SUMMER: AN ANTHOLOGY, well enough, though haven't quite gotten around to reading CALLING DR. LAURA. Even so, I can say with 99.9% certainty that FETCH: HOW A BAD DOG BROUGHT ME HOME is her best work yet. At the tender age of sixteen, Georges adopted a dog as a gift for her then-boyfriend and first love, Tom. The ensuing back-and-forth demonstrates why you should never give a dog as a gift: despite clearing it ahead of time with Tom's mother, Tom's stepfather did not sign off on the deal. Nicole's mom reluctantly allowed her to keep the dog, but Beija's many behavioral problems quickly wore her patience thin. Beija harbored an intense dislike/fear of men, children, and veterinarians; did not enjoy being picked up or touched on her sides; did not suffer invasions of space lightly; and frequently antagonized/was victimized by other dogs. She was temperamental and required patience, compassion, and understanding as much like her new human. And so, in a situation so weird and improbable that it seems like the plot of a bad Fox sitcom, you have both sets of parents conspiring to push their teenagers out of the nest and into a seedy apartment, just so they could have a Beija-free home: "Starting now, this gift would change the course of both our lives. [Beija] All of this in order to keep the dog. As if we'd had a teen pregnancy." While Nicole's relationship with Tom would soon implode, her partnership with Beija proved to be for keeps. Through unhealthy relationships, annoying roommates, professional upheavals, and the trials and tribulations of growing up and discovering oneself, there was one constant in Nicole's life. And if she just so happened to have four legs, a soft tummy, and spoke in a series of barks, whimpers, and tail wags, so what? Family is what you make of it. Most of the blurbs I've read so far focus on the coming-of-age aspect of FETCH (e.g., it's not "just a book about a dog"). And while it is indeed that after all, at the time of her death, Beija had lived with Nicole for almost exactly half of Nicole's life as much to me

FETCH is, above all else, a love letter to and everlasting celebration of a best friend. A soul mate. A patronus, to quote Georges. (A daemon, in my vocab.) The dogs, they will always come first.

PRIORITIES. There's this one Mutts comic I love: It's a lovely day, and Ozzie is walking Earl on a long leash. A little heart bobs in a thought bubble above the human's head. To the right is a quote by one W.R. Purche:

"Everyone thinks they have the best dog. And none of them are wrong. To borrow a phrase from an online friend (Marji Beach, who works at another awesome animal sanctuary called Animal Place), it's clear that Nicole considers Beija the best worst dog ever. Their love for one another shines through every panel and page, making the inevitable goodbye that much more heartbreaking. It took me a full week to read the book, just because I couldn't bear to face the last forty pages. I think it's safe to say that beauty is in the eye of the beholder, especially when it comes to Fetch, and animal lovers will take something a little extra special away from their experience.

When I say "animal lovers," I mean both in the conventional sense i.e., those who care for culturally appropriate animals, such as dogs, cats, horses, and rabbits as well as those of use who extend that circle of compassion to all nonhumans. There are precious few comic books that I could call overtly vegan only two come to mind, namely Matt Miner's *rLIBERATOR* and *THE ANIMAL MAN* by Grant Morrison and I'm happy to add *FETCH* to the list. While Georges only drops the v*-word (vegetarian or vegan) a handful of times, she does introduce readers to animal rights issues in a gentle, subtle way. If you're not on the lookout (and I always am!), you might just miss it. Though all the better to sneak into your subconscious, worming and niggling and prodding you to think about the face on your plate or the skin on your back to see them as someones rather than somethings, more alike than different from the dog snuggled up next to you or fast asleep at your feet. I especially loved Beija's manifesto, "I am not a stuffed animal," which surreptitiously introduces readers to the idea of intersectionality:

"It's kind of like feminism, but for dogs. That line (along with countless others) literally had me squealing for joy. Little Beija-Boo is she a shar pei-doxy mix? corgi and beagle? who knows! is adorable and tubby, even as she's telling you to back the eff off. I could go on and on about the many weird parallels between Georges's life and mine; about how I see pieces of Beija in my own dogs; about the many ways, both large and small, that my loved ones and

I have adapted our everyday routines and very existences to better accommodate our four-legged family members. It's not just about the dog, but suffice it to say that *Fetch* is a must-read for anyone who's ever loved (and lost) a dog (though you may want to wait until the loss isn't quite so fresh as the ending is freaking brutal). Ditto: anyone who just likes good storytelling or quirky artwork. I know I've focused on the nonhumans for most of my review, but hey, that's how I do it. But even those rare scenes sans doggos are beautifully rendered and engaging. In summary: *FETCH* is easily my favorite book of 2017 thus far, graphic novel or no. ** Full disclosure: I received a free copy of this book for review. **

Not the tried and true heartwarming tale of a young woman and her dog, this book succinctly illustrates the real-world difficulty and weighty responsibility of sharing life with a less than perfect dog. The work also captures youthful impetuosity and its inevitable consequences. It also conveys the depth of a hard forged relationship between human and canine, along with the comfort it can provide. No excuses or explanations, the author simply shares her story. The book is unblinkingly honest. The life lessons contained in this memoir are revealed largely through actions necessitated by being the young guardian of a badly behaved dog. After being raised by a less than present mother the author does not have a solid life blueprint to follow when it comes to caregiving. But, she does not gloss over or round-off the corners to make her story more palatable. Instead, she quietly yet precisely presents the method by which we humans, sometimes painfully, learn and grow through a series of mistakes and missteps. As I read I sometimes cringed but hoped she would find her way through, but part of the way through the book I stopped worrying. The work is somewhat dark but compelling reading and valuable if for no other reason than this story may result in fewer dogs finding their way into unstable situations through casual acquisition. I found the artwork engaging and the perfect accompaniment for the story. If an issue, there is a small amount of obscenity. Perhaps better suited for an older teen, but like all books it is best to choose based on the individual recipient.

This sweet, funny, bodacious (meaning it is LARGE, and packed with great drawings!) and wonderful book is a comic about a dysfunctional girl and her equally ODD dog. Nicole and her dog Beija, a fierce mix of sharpei and dachshund wrangle their way through life's ups and downs trying to understand what is important and what isn't. It was hard for Nicole until she got Beija. When Beija came into her life she finally learned what love is really all about. If you love animals (especially

dogs) and you like to laugh, *Fetch: How a Bad Dog Brought Me Home* will draw you in and keep you engaged through all of its copious pages. It even has the rainbow bridge in here, so watch out if you tend to cry, I thought this was terrific!

This graphic memoir of a troubled girl growing up with her mixed-breed dog is much larger than I thought it would be, with over 300 big pages, most of which contain detailed drawings in a comic book format. There's not much funny about this story, though, which is at least as much the story of the author's unhappy childhood, struggles with depression and self-harm, and her search for her sexual identity as it is the story of a bad dog. I am a dog-lover, and I anticipated laughing at misbehavior that was funny, but poor Beija is a timid dog whose problems just aren't funny, either to the owner or those around them. The focus is instead on the bond between the owner and her pet, and how love for Beija shapes her life. I suspect teens will enjoy this book more than their parents, who might find themselves noticing that the author's mother's help is instrumental in her being able to keep her dog, despite her many complaints about her upbringing. Teens can focus instead on the author's life in Portland's punk scene, her romantic entanglements, and her desire to tell animals' stories. Anyone who has ever lost a pet can empathize with Beija's last days and the way owners can start out making fun of the Rainbow Bridge poem and end up sobbing. Ultimately this is an authentic and affecting memoir.

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