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A Bride's Story, Vol. 1



Synopsis

Acclaimed creator Kaoru Mori (Emma, Shirley) brings the nineteenth-century Silk Road to lavish life, chronicling the story of Amir Halgal, a young woman from a nomadic tribe betrothed to a twelve-year-old boy eight years her junior. Coping with cultural differences, blossoming feelings for her new husband, and expectations from both her adoptive and birth families, Amir strives to find her role as she settles into a new life and a new home in a society quick to define that role for her.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Otoyome Gatari (its romanized Japanese title) is the latest work by Mori Kaoru, one of the most highly regarded manga authors in Japan. She's the creator of "Emma" and "Shirley", two works about turn-of-the-century England that are renowned for the quality of their art and (in the case of Emma particularly) their historical accuracy. Mori's craftsmanship is amazing. Her work abounds in detail, each panel lovingly crafted. She outdoes her previous work on "Emma" in "Bride's Story". I can't recall any other manga with such glorious attention to form, costuming, and backgrounds. This Yen Press edition does full justice to the quality of her work. Unlike a lot of Manga releases, this is hardcover and in a somewhat larger size, which allows more visible detail. Even though the paper is a little pulpy, the quality of the reproduction is as good as any I've seen. The story is set in central Asia not too far from the Caspian Sea (possibly in Turkey since the Turkish language is mentioned) in the mid 19th century. The story is a slice-of-life tale about the odd-couple marriage of a 12-year-old town boy to a 20-year-old daughter of a nomadic family. This is not played up in any

perverse manner like the age difference might suggest; the boy is wise for his age, and the woman is dedicated, cheerful, and a model wife, content to wait for him to mature. She fits into his extended family quite well, though she's maybe a bit too eager to please. Her steppe upbringing has given her some talents a bit alien to the family's town habitat, though; she's a superb horsewoman, archer, hunter, and wild game cook. This is a scenario that's not unheard-of in the culture in which it is placed, and Mori handles the story with delicacy and tact. The characters are likeable and mostly respectable.

I've been keeping up with this series since it started serialization in Japan back in 2008. For those of you into the manga/anime genres, you'll know the author's previous work ("Emma"), which takes place in Victorian England. This new historical slice-of-life story takes place several centuries earlier in central Asia, in what's hinted near Mongolia. Her talent for storytelling of worlds past has only grown since then. Yen Press brings it to us with perfection (not to mention excellent packaging) for all to see. I think what I love about Mori's style the most is that she does things slowly. It's frustrating when you want to read the next chapter of the story (it's a monthly serialization in Japan), and so collected volumes come out once or twice a year, if at that. When it's not on hiatus, that is. Anyway, you can feel the slowness of how things were back then in her stories, how life progressed from minute to minute, day to day instead of how it is now with constant connection and digitalization (not that that's a bad thing, but I think you understand what I mean). You can practically taste the food cooked by the characters, the cloth woven by its women, the smoke from the pipes of the men. You can't do that with a lot of author/illustrator combinations right now in the manga market, precisely because they would rather rush (or their publishers would). Yen Press really did Mori a solid here and put the first printing of this volume into a lovely, glossy hardback edition for North America. Seriously. I liked them before, and now I love them for doing this. Very high-quality ink and pages used, nothing scrimped or cheapened for Mori's work.

If you have to ask why this review (and reviews in general to date) have all been five stars, then you're missing out on a true manga treasure. The story: Twenty year old Amir has been sent to marry a boy eight years her junior (Karluk). This she has dutifully done, and these first five chapters dwell largely on how she and her new family are acclimating to this. Chapter four gives us a little insight on, what I'm sure will become, a future trial for the new couple (and their new family) to try and overcome. All in all, the first five chapters might be a bit slow in pace for 'throttle jockeys' but the story progresses and is told well. The artwork: I've long been a fan of series like Oh (Ah) My

Goddess for the sole reason that the artwork is so spectacular (other than Fujishimasan can't draw the frontal view of an ear to save his life). A Bride's Story puts most of the other manga that I've lavished so much time (and money) on, on notice. And what notice? The bar has officially been raised. Closeup panels are almost bursting with detail, and even though a bit of that detail slips in some of the 'pull back panels' the overall experience is undeniably first rate. Even if the story was terrible (which it isn't) the artwork would carry this title a long way. The book: I have to enthusiastically agree with another reviewer here and say that Yen Press did real justice to this title by releasing the first volume in a quality hard back. The pages are good stock, and well bound. The wrap around dust cover is very attractive, and overall the book is just a pleasure to dive in to. The total package has left me hoping that the entire run is done in the same way. The cost: Some others might make a complaint here, but I'm not going to. A \$16.

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