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American Widow



American Widow

Alissa Torres

ART BY
SUNGYOON CHOI

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Synopsis

"At the heart of "American Widow" is the notion of Sept. 11 as a personal, rather than a national or political, tragedy, which, this achingly tender work reminds us, is exactly what it was." -- LA Times

Want to honor those who passed during 9-11? Turn off the stupid documentary glorifying all of those images we've seen over and over, and read this sincere account of how that fateful day effected one person that represents all of us. "Aint It Cool News" raw, occasionally maddening, bracing graphic memoir | Unbearably moving. "The New York Times Book Review" Reading it, you feel that Torres could be your friend or neighbor; she makes an epic tragedy intimate. "Newsday" On September 10, 2001, Eddie Torres started his dream job at Cantor Fitzgerald in the North Tower of the World Trade Center. The next morning, he said goodbye to his 7-months-pregnant wife, Alissa, and headed out the door. In an instant, Alissa's world was thrown into chaos. Forced to deal with unimaginable challenges, Alissa suddenly found herself cast into the role of a "9/11 widow," tossed into a storm of bureaucracy, politics, patriotism, mourning, consolation, and, soon enough, motherhood. Beautifully and thoughtfully illustrated, *American Widow* is the affecting account of one woman's journey through shock, pain, birth, and rebirth in the aftermath of a great tragedy. It is also the story of a young couple's love affair: how a Colombian immigrant and a strong-minded New Yorker met, fell in love, and struggled to fulfill their dreams. Above all, *American Widow* is a tribute to the resilience of the human heart and the very personal story of how one woman endured a very public tragedy.

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Customer Reviews

The events of September 11, 2001 will go down as the day international terror began to rule the United States and an era of battle readiness gained prominence. For Alissa Torres, and those left behind by the deaths of the thousands in the towers, a painful chapter in life began. On many levels, Torres bares her soul as she wades through the intense emotions surrounding the loss of Eddie Torres, her husband. Pregnant on September 11, 2001, the birth of her child by a dead husband put her into a situation even more intense. Betrayal, loss, anger, loneliness, and desperation ooze through in the sparse diary/dialogue laden narrative. The art by Sungyoon Choi is simple, and does not overwhelm the angst filled text. Content wise, most Americans will never get a more honest education in the politics of humanitarian aid, whether Red Cross, or government based. The frustration the survivors must have dealt with are intimidating in lowpoint emphasis. The transformation from wife, to widow, to victim, to charity dependent, and finally to independence is compelling. This will be a controversial book given the subject matter. Agree with Ms Torres or not, you will find yourself wanting to find out 'the rest of the story'. Tim Lasiuta[...]

American Widow is a graphic novel revealing the story of Alissa Torres who was left widowed at seven months pregnant by the tragedy of 9/11. The story includes that fateful day up to the one-year anniversary with alternating flash backs including scenes of Eddie at 10-years old, his life before meeting Alissa and their courtship, marriage and pregnancy. In chapter one alone, my arms were covered with goose bumps. 9/11 was just Eddie's second day at his new job with Cantor Fitzgerald. Included is Alissa's deeply frustrating struggle with several assistance agencies and the government plus you see how different friends and family react to her circumstances. The story exposed shows us just a glimmer of what surviving family members endured that I would have never imagined. When Alissa's private thoughts are shared you get a sense of how difficult and confusing this time in her life was and you can't help but be affected by this deeply personal story.

With time inexorably passing by, and amongst the far too many pointless narratives exploiting 9/11 to nobody's gain, here comes Alissa Torres' extraordinary book. The blessing of truth, unmitigated and at times scathing, as it emerges page after page in American Widow, does more for our collective and individual insight than any increasingly pale, and vain, anniversary celebration. And the splendid drawings make this book highly recommendable for any curious and intelligent child and for all New Yorkers, really.

This is a biographical graphic novel in the tradition of "Maus" or "Fun Home", with flashbacks intercut into the narrative. It's an interesting book because the author tells us both too much and not enough. There are things that you want to know, because to know them would allow you to sort your emotions about her experience into more easily labeled boxes. It's too much, in a sense, because aspects of the story (which I won't spoil) may make it too easy to sort it into boxes. It's a bit contradictory, I know, but what about 9/11 is ever easy? One of the most powerful aspects of American Widow is how the story of 9/11 changes around her, while her circumstance has not changed at all. She wakes up a widow, and she goes to sleep a widow. In the hours between the public has their own needs, their own opinions, their own exploitative desires. She just has a husband to bury. The common perception that aid flowed freely to help the victims of 9/11 due to the generosity of the American people is a bit too good to be true. Where large sums of money go, so go people invested in that money. 9/11 was no different. American Widow details the maze set up for those who lost loved ones, a maze ironically easier to navigate if you weren't lost in grief.

I was disappointed with this novel. I agreed with a previous reviewer that there are important gaps in the information. Why was Torres mad at her husband before he died? Why did she lose her job? How much money did she receive? The illustrations are wonderful, but I felt like it was poorly edited. Beyond this, I was disappointed with Torres' entirely negative perspective on the events. I understand (though I'm sure not fully) how upsetting her husband's death must have been, but were there no positive effects? She has a new baby and not once makes mention of the joy he may be giving her. She is angry at every one who is trying to help her-- the psychologists, the Red Cross, FEMA, her family. She is angry at her husband. While all this would be understandable for a period of time, I had hoped she would gain some perspective and find gratitude for something. After the end of the book, she thanks a long list of people. Why is none of their help portrayed in the book? Many people found strength and love in the aftermath of 9/11. I had hoped when I picked this up that it would be hopeful in spite of the sadness. I, too, lost my compassion for her after a certain point in the book.

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