



Lemon

Lawrence Krauser

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Lemon is the story of the passionate love between a man and a citrus fruit, told with a fluid mixture of prose, drama, and about twenty pages of rhymed couplets. Krauser's inimitable style is at once richly convoluted and light as air. Krauser has also written the plays Wall Street Made Simple and Horrible Child.

Lemon Details

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Author : Lawrence Krauser

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Joel says

I *almost* feel bad giving this two stars. It's not that it's a bad book, but it didn't work for me. I thought the writing was intriguing and exhibited skill. There were stretches that I found really engaging. But ultimately this was more poem than story--and it just didn't work for me. Not as a whole, anyway. I don't regret reading it, but my time would have been better served elsewhere.

On the other hand, I could totally understand someone else giving it five stars. This book is definitely a question of taste.

Alex says

There is a part of me that believes I might give this book the benefit of the doubt... a two and a half seems fair, or at least some scratch above the two-star mark. I've always felt a rating system that doesn't allow for halves, or at least go to ten, to give a wider gradation, is a bit unfair. Every book is potentially vastly different from the next, and how I feel about two books of similar quality is going to be equally different. Factoring in questions of avant-garde, difficult-yet-important, books-you-are-meh-about-but-see-the-greater-worth-of, and books-you-loved-but-are-hesitant-to-praise-because-you-accept-and-noticed-their-flaws, some wider grading system is necessary.

But before I Calvino all over this review, let us discuss Lemon, which is not strictly good or bad. There are moments where the prose drifts into something sublime, bits where the tensions twist into something one can feel from across the page, decided humor in the absurdity. But at the end of the book, it is a story about a lemon fetish.

If this sounds weird to you, you are human.

Now, far be it from me to condone the faulty logic that a fetish is beyond deviant, a proclivity that can only be spawned from a mind warped past recognition. We as a society have fostered that chestnut for far too long. But there are still some things which, quite rationally, should still sound odd, and I should hope that human/vegetation love/eroticism will remain one of them for at least a bit longer. The point being, the book does itself incredibly few favors when it comes to relatability.

That is, quite literally, what the book becomes by section II. Navel gazing over the subject of a lemon. Metaphysical rambling about the fruit. Waxing poetic, like the most frivolous Petrarchan blazon, the lemon standing in for Beatrice or Julia or Dulcinea or whoever. We see strained human relationships. We see irresponsible, crazy behavior. We are never told to find the relationship normal, yet asked to accept it as serious. That tends to be a lot to ask, even if some of the best scenes are when Wendell is torn between the rational world and his deep-seated love affair with the citrus. When the book ends with very little story having happened, we are left solely with heavy theoretical reflection on the nature of lemon, lemon as symbol for all. It's not a device which stands up.

Added to this are the plot points which never fully resolve: Wendell's obliviousness to his co-workers' advances, the importance he assigns to high-minded discussion and thought, though we never see him give

the same thought to anything but a lemon (and for that matter, there's that love for music, so central early on but little more than a footnote, an excuse to abandon a date for a lemon, and a passion we do not see again). Most frustrating is Wendell's allergic reaction. It comes as his obsession begins, and simply becomes part of the furniture of the character. There is no reason given for why it began, no obvious links... his face was puffy just because it could be. When the swelling goes down, it doesn't usher a real change. There is no hint of symbolism. It is a hefty plot point created for no obvious reason. Little things like this make the book irritating... the questions that, when answered, make you regret thinking they were really questions. The text is consumed by lemon imagery, much as Wendell's mind is. This may well be what Krauser intends, but it comes at the decided detriment of the book itself. We are left with a story which is not only one-note, but the note itself is too discordant to grip us.

Matt Musselman says

I hesitate a little to give this book four stars: it's bizarre, disturbing, and gross. But it was compelling to read, and it's stuck in my mind ever since, so it certainly packs a punch. Just don't consider this a recommendation, exactly.

Maxwell Harwitt says

Sometimes fun read, but also the epitome of Master's In English fiction (I have no idea if the author actually holds this degree). The author conjured an absurdist platform for exploring an imagined psychology. The development of the obsession the main character has with the citrus seems really lazy, as if the author had already spent an advance and just wanted to get it over with. There is also no journalistic impulse in the story. You get the sense that the author has very little in the way of life experiences to inform his writing.

Mike says

Who would have ever thought that a story about a man falling in love with a lemon would be entertaining?

Clark says

Dude fucks a lemon. Pretty okay if you ask me.

rebecca says

i bought this for my dad a long time ago. it is weird. the cover is hand-painted by the author. needless to say my dad never read it. once it enabled me to say something smart about lemon tree cultivation to a stranger in a garden at an awkward moment that may or may not have been made even more awkward by my showing off knowledge. smudge pots.

Beuysjoycean says

I was drawn to this book by its personalized cover, Lawrence Krauser illustrated the first 10,000 copies of the book himself. I've since purchased a second (and third copy) with the blank white, untouched face, just because I find it to be such an interesting concept in book jacket design. The writing was masterful as well, a very unconventional topic, expressed with great intelligence. Totally captured my twisted heart.

Jill says

Clever and funny in some parts, too artsy for its own good in others. I'm glad it was not any longer than it was.

Ron says

I obsessively bought seven copies of this book for the hand-drawn covers. I was thinking of starting a flickr pool to collect which ones are scattered all over the place. If you're interested, send me a message.

Molly says

The memory of this book still occasionally sends a little shudder down my spine whenever love turns frantic or a ritual to turns to compulsion. The unfolding of the story is compassionate and gentle, its content mortifying and unflinching while sometimes managing to just be nice. Like a consuming love that doesn't last, I'd forgotten about this book completely until a moment ago, and then remembered that I feel something residual from it quite often. This will happen again, I'm sure.

Misty Cripps says

What can you say about a book about a man's love affair with a lemon? The writing was wonderful, and I had some hope toward the middle-end of the book that this would reveal some sort of existential truth about love and life and fruit. Sometimes a lemon is just a lemon.

Valerie says

a dude effs a lemon

Kirsten says

it's a strange one folks. you really need to ask yourself before you read this book, do i want to spend a few hours reading about a man in love with a lemon?

Lorraine says

On the back cover of this book is the lone description of its contents: "One man's tale of possession." Intriguing, and then you find that the self-absorbed and insolent main character is possessed by a citrus fruit. And yet, this book is somehow still likeable - part epic poem to a lemon, part parody of the romantic novel, and part waste of time. The cover image is hand-drawn, which is pretty great. Otherwise, this book can only really be loved in snippets of really well written lines.
