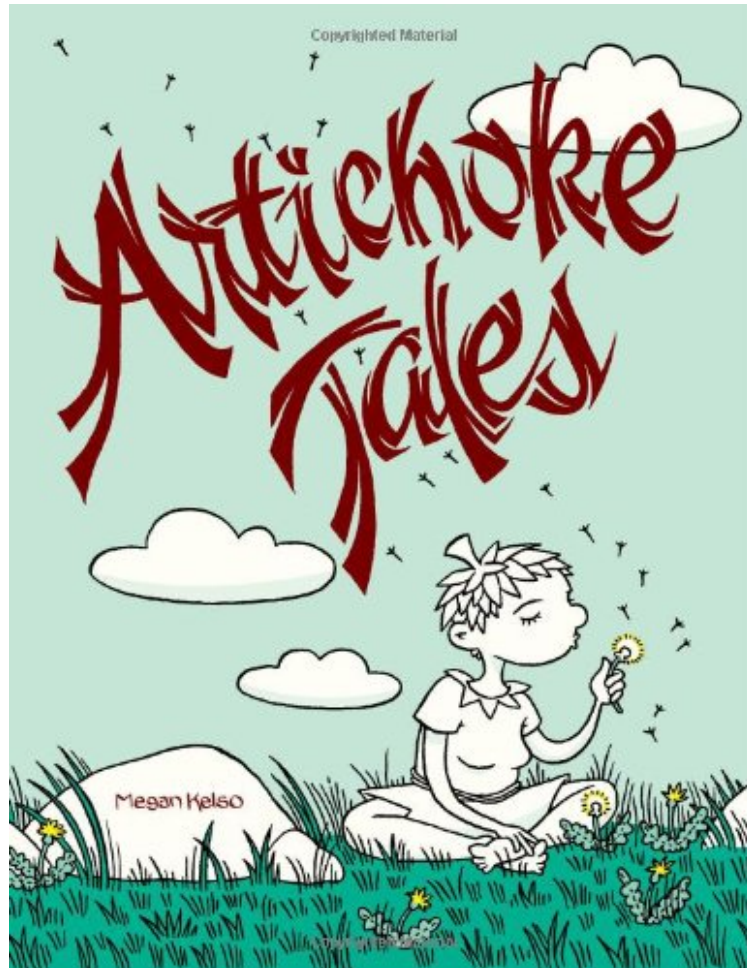


Artichoke Tales

Megan Kelso

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Megan Kelso : Artichoke Tales before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Artichoke Tales:

3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. Good, but not greatBy Dani ShupingThis is the first full length graphic novel by Megan Kelso, other works by her include The Squirrel Mother and Queen of the Black Black. This story is about a land divided by a civil war. The people are never really named, but all of them have hair like artichoke leaves, but they look like humans otherwise. And when one is born among them that has hair of a queen artichoke, she becomes ruler of the land. But despite the people's best efforts to make her feel like a part of all of the land, she identifies only with the northern half. And despite the peoples best efforts a war breaks out among the sides. South vs. North. North vs. South. Through interweaving chapters we learn of the conflict through one family's history. Three different generation of the family present their stories, some from the South and some from the North.It is a deep book and powerful in its writings as it the tale unfolds of how perceptions vary upon the truth of both sides. It can be said

that the book is an analogy for the Civil War of the United States in some ways, family against family, and outsiders being looked at somewhat askew and never quite fitting in. Where the book fails for me is in trying to figure out which point of time and which story that we're in. It goes back and forth so quickly and some of the characters look too much alike that it quickly becomes confusing in trying to figure out where we are in the story. In addition, the main character of the book, Bridgette, never really feels like a fully developed character to me. It's more that she's just a place holder for the story to be told around her and in the end we don't even get to see where she is in life. I wanted to like this book. I really did. It has such great reviews from folks saying it was one of the most powerful books that they had read in a long time. But I just had such trouble getting into it and keeping my interest. Perhaps I just need to read it in a different month and it will have more of an impact on me, but for now...it just doesn't work for me.

Megan Kelso's first new book in four years is a fantastic generation-spanning saga. Megan Kelso has proved herself a master of the cartoon short story with *Queen of the Black Black* (1998, to be republished by Fantagraphics in 2010) and *Squirrel Mother* (2006, currently in its second printing). With *Artichoke Tales*, six years in the making, Kelso expands her range (and her page count) by creating a family saga spanning three generations and an entire continent. *Artichoke Tales* is a 176-page coming-of-age story about a young girl named Brigitte whose family is caught between the two warring sides of a civil war, a graphic novel that takes place in a world that echoes our own, but whose people have artichoke leaves instead of hair. Influenced in equal parts by *Little House on the Prairie*, *The Thorn Birds*, *Dharma Bums*, and *Cold Mountain*, Kelso weaves a moving story about family amidst war. Kelso's visual storytelling, uniquely combining delicate linework with rhythmic, musical page compositions, creates a dramatic tension between intimate, ruminative character studies and the unflinching depiction of the consequences of war and carnage, lending cohesion and resonance to a generational epic. This is Kelso's first new work in four years; the widespread critical reception of her previous work makes *Artichoke Tales* one of the most eagerly anticipated graphic novels of 2010. 176 pages of color comics

From Booklist*Starred * In Kelso's first graphic novel, everyone's hair looks like an inverted artichoke. Though that seems to betoken a fantasy, the only magic here is the healing effected by the herbal prescriptions old Charlotte dispenses from the Quicksand family's apothecary. This is a family saga spanning three generations and embracing a civil war between North and South whose causes are similar to some of those that produced the U.S. Civil War. The book begins with the present, postwar generation, specifically with Brigitte, Charlotte's granddaughter, and Adam, a soldier in the North's police forces. They fall in love, of course, reprising a family pattern, for Charlotte met Brigitte's grandfather, Jimmy, while studying in the North. Though the Quicksand men have important scenes, Kelso concentrates on the Quicksand women to portray a society of greater gender equity than humanity has produced and includes scenes of birth and lovemaking. Kelso's striking visual conceits (e.g., singing expressed by two lines forming an opening funnel from the mouth), turquoise-on-white drawing, jump-cut transitions, and constantly shifting viewpoints conjure a richness of implication and feeling of which her light-seeming, cartoony style would seem prima facie incapable. But here, as in the contemporary nonfantasy stories of *The Squirrel Mother* (2006), she is a thorough and intelligent artist whose work is moving and invaluable. --Ray Olson [S]urprising and wonderful... Kelso's ligne claire artwork is consistently sweet and airy. The approach provides a likable surface for a story with much darker and stickier depths, about a land whose cultural heritage is rotting away in the aftermath of a civil war. - Douglas Wolk, *The New York Times Book Review* Kelso has sharp powers of observation, and many of her characters have a blank-eyed innocence that serves as a counterpunch to the acuity of the narratives. - People Kelso uses a warm, inviting style of soft colors and rounded, almost pillowy characters to explore the mysteries of people and relationships... Kelso's stories invite contemplation. - Time Kelso perfectly marries words and images, telling stories of longing and casual cruelty with a mastery perfectly suited to the comics medium. - Publishers Weekly A coming-of-age story about a young girl from a family caught between sides in a civil war, set in a world similar to ours but where people have artichoke leaves instead of hair. ... Its delicate, rather impish black-and-white line work comes from the creator of the subtle and poignant *Squirrel Mother*. - Martha Cornog, *Library Journal* Kelso's work radiates a warmth, poetry, sympathy, and simultaneously earthy and otherworldly essence that few comics creators have brought to the table with such quiet confidence and grace. The closest comic in recent memory to match *Artichoke Tales*, both in breadth and depth, is Jeff Smith's *Bone*. [Grade]: A. - The Onion's AV Club The surface cuteness of Kelso's clear-line artwork masks strong, dangerous undercurrents that tug the reader under with heart-stopping suddenness. - The St. Louis Post-Dispatch Rather than a narrative arc, with ascensions and declines, *Artichoke Tales* feels like a series of expansions. The characters and their world grow to envelop the reader in a singular, charming way. - Paul Constant, *The Stranger* A fantastical study in a Civil War, this exquisite graphic novel shows how wide-spread political conflict tears at the very fibers of our families and ourselves [I]ts mastery is in seeming transcendent but revealing immense pain beneath every battle and rejection. - Chris Estey, KEXP-FM, Seattle *Artichoke Tales* by Megan Kelso is a strange, other-worldly story about birth and death, coming of age, dealing with war, finding love, accepting tragedy. ... The simple, comic-strip-like illustrations in teal and white express movement beautifully with a minimum of lines. - Mary Louise Ruehr,

Ravenna Record-Courier Artichoke Tales is by any definition a remarkable book... This is a beautiful book, at times a heartbreaking book. One feels the precision and thought behind every word, every line, all of it edited down and arranged to a spareness that is paradoxically lush and textured. - Jared Gardner, The Comics Journal

About the Author Megan Kelso lives in Seattle, WA with her husband and daughter. Her books include Queen of the Black Black, The Squirrel Mother, and Artichoke Tales.