



Monologues for the Coming Plague

Anders Nilsen

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An original graphic novel from one of the most exciting young voices in comics.

Monologues for the Coming Plague is the longest and most ambitious work to date by Anders Nilsen, the talented young cartoonist who has appeared in a variety of prominent comics anthologies over the past few years as well as in his own self-published comic, *Big Questions*, and has emerged as one of the most critically acclaimed cartoonists of his generation. In 2003 Nilsen went on a signing tour with several other artists for the book *Kramer's Ergot 4*. The enthusiasm of his fellow artists for drawing in their sketchbooks proved infectious, and he decided to employ the same spontaneous method for a finished book. "I've always worked in sketchbooks," said Nilsen, but I had lost the habit and my way of working had become very slow and deliberate. While waiting in the airport in New York, after the tour, I found myself absorbed in a series of one panel gags about a woman feeding a bird, brainstorming captions and watching ideas follow. "Taking a cue from the school of Automatic Writing, an aesthetic mode championed by Andre Breton at the beginning of the 19th century that became the foundation of the Surrealist Movement, Nilsen began work on *Monologues for the Coming Plague*. The process is born out of a stream of consciousness followed by limited editing and rearranging. The book ranges playfully from riffs on the gag cartoon to paranoid soliloquies of a surrealistic apocalypse, with references to contemporary politics, pop culture, and religion, plays on language, and sequential abstractions. Stories intertwine, branch off, dead end and double back. These are experimental, absurdist art comics, but the book is a page-turner, and some of it is laugh-out-loud funny. Reading it is not so much like reading comics as it is watching the artist make connections between ideas, find patterns, and set down the story as it happens. It's a *tour de force*, beautifully and uniquely packaged, in black and white and color, by one of the most fascinating new cartoonists of the decade.

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