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# The Undertaking of Lily Chen

Roger Layton

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# Book Review

**Title:** The Undertaking of Lily Chen

**Author:** Danica Novgorodoff

**Reviewer:** Roger Layton

**Publisher:** First Second

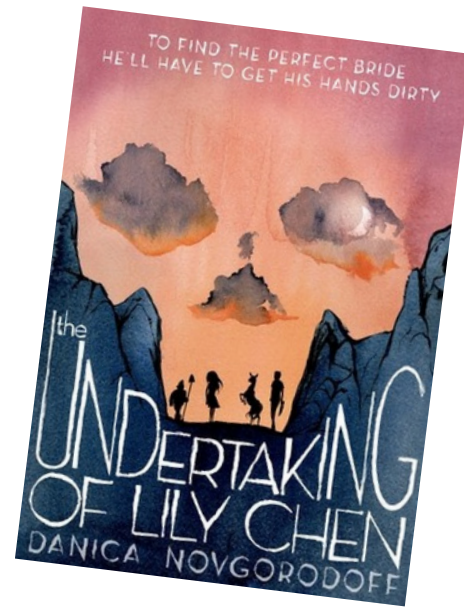
**Publication Year:** 2012

**ISBN:** 9781596435865

**Number of Pages:** 430

**Interest Level:** Young Adult

**Rating:** Excellent



## Review

Exciting books don't usually open with a quote from *The Economist* magazine, but this one does. Looking back at an old news story about "Ghost Marriages," introduces readers to families who sought out the bodies of dead women to bury next to their dead unmarried sons so that they would have a companion in the next life. This opening does set up an interesting tale. Deshi, a fighter pilot and the hero of the story, is assigned to find a bride for his dead brother. He has until Sunday, the day of the funeral, to complete the task. Lucky for him there are people who, for a price, will help with such things. The bad news is that you don't have a lot of choices when it comes to buying "eligible bodies." Not wanting to disappoint his family Deshi looks for the perfect bride and stumbles across just who he needs, Lily Chen. Except Lily isn't dead. In fact she very much wants to live. This couple has a lot to work out.

While this Graphic Novel has a great premise, a fast moving story, and fun illustrations, it falls into the category of graphic novels that are not for young readers. The main character, Deshi, is set on a task that, while based on historical facts, is outside the experience of western readers. The curious nature of his quest will interest some readers and possibly offend others. Readers might consider filtering their judgment of the book through classic stories such as *Romeo and Juliet* which has its share of violence and tragedy. Though set in China there are many aspects of the book that are universal, dealing with demanding parents, living up to expectations, and a desire to travel are good examples. The plot is simple and straight forward, but that doesn't diminish the excitement of the book because the undercurrents of the adventure are so far removed from day to day life. It may be suitable for older teens and adults who are comfortable with the themes and actions in this graphic novel. There are violent scenes and implied violence. There are scenes with sexual content, and a few strong words in the text.