



2018

# The Undertaking of Lily Chen

Emma Patton

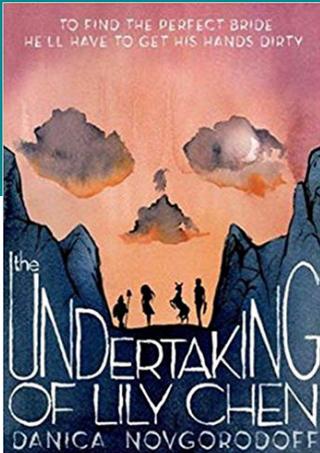
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## Book Review

# The Undertaking of Lily Chen

### Author

Danica Novgorodoff

### Illustrator

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### Reviewer

Emma Patton

### Rating

Significant Shortcomings

### Level

Young Adult

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### Pages

430

### Year

2014

### Publisher

First Second

### ISBN

9781596435865

Deshi's brother Wei is dead, and Deshi feels he is responsible. Since Wei was unmarried when he died, he is doomed to be alone in the afterlife. That is, unless Deshi can find a female body to join with his brother's in a post-mortem wedding ceremony before the burial. Deshi's parents' expectations are clear: come back with a bride for his brother by the Sunday burial, and he has a chance at earning their forgiveness. Deshi fully commits to his task, knowing that he will do anything to rid himself of the guilt he feels. He meets Lily Chen, a poor but ambitious girl from a small town, but Deshi knows that Lily has so much life ahead of her and he's not sure he can take that from her. Unfortunately, if he doesn't find anyone else, she may be his only option.

The Undertaking of Lily Chen is a graphic novel that features exquisitely beautiful art. Both the art and the story are dark and focus closely on death, the afterlife, and desperation. Though it does certainly have some humor, the overall tone is heavy and the concept is one that an American reader may find disturbing and morbid. In addition, the book is definitely for an older audience, either young adult or adult, due to mature content. Ultimately, the beginning of the novel is excellent and perfectly integrates telling through text and showing through graphics. The exposition is strong and the characterization has promising beginnings. However, somewhere in the middle of the novel, the narrative arc becomes confusing and the characters seem more unfamiliar. By the time a resolution comes, the ending seems rushed and too simplistic for the complexities of the story, so the excellent beginning is not sustained. However, the high quality of the art is consistent from the beginning to the end.

\*Contains severe language, moderate violence, and moderate sexual content.