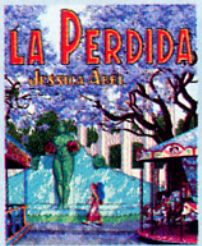
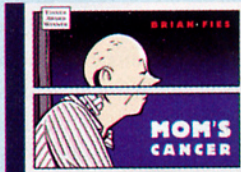


GRAPHIC NOVELS 101: DRAWN FROM LIFE



LA PERDIDA Jessica Abel (*Pantheon, \$19.95*) A self-proclaimed “crunchy ethnic wannabe,” Carla leaves the United States to explore her Latin American roots, but her expat experiment quickly heads south. **Graphic Goal** Abel brings the culture and chaos of Mexico City to life with expressive black-and-white illustrations and witty Spanglish dialogue. **Comix Effect** *La Perdida* is a sharp cautionary tale about the perils of shady friends and slippery cultural footing. **A-** —*Hannah Tucker*



MOM'S CANCER Brian Fies (*Abrams Image, \$12.95*) In this nonfiction work, Fies and his siblings struggle to cope when their mother is diagnosed with advanced-stage lung cancer. **Graphic Goal** Fies uses abrupt shifts in style and focus: He imagines his family as warring superheroes or Mom as a game of Operation with the instructions “Chemotherapy: repeat until better or dead.” **Comix Effect** Wry and poignant, *Mom's Cancer* expresses the schizophrenic reality of dealing with a serious illness. **B+** —*HT*



EGO & HUBRIS Harvey Pekar (*Ballantine, \$19.95*) Pekar jumps off *American Splendor* to explore the life of Michael Malice, who edits *OverheardInNY.com*, a website chronicling tidbits New Yorkers pick up on the street. He's also a devout Ayn Randian with a superiority complex both repellent and compelling. **Graphic Goal** Gary Dumm's thin-lined B&W style makes ugliness beautiful. **Comix Effect** You'd probably think twice about having a drink with Malice, but Pekar cuts to his heart. **A** —*Whitney Pastorek*



MY MOST SECRET DESIRE Julie Doucet (*Drawn & Quarterly, \$19.95*) Writer-artist Doucet offers a dream journal of comics: short summaries of nocturnal reveries and nightmares about everything from losing a friend on a subway to a priceless series of “If I Was a Man” fantasies. **Graphic Goal** Doucet's faux-primitive style perfectly renders dreams' messy stream of consciousness. **Comix Effect** She conveys the universal anxiety, dread, and bliss of our sleeping lives. **A-** —*Ken Tucker*

ing locals. D'Souza, an ex-Peace Corps volunteer, achieves a delicate balance in creating Jack, a white man (in Africa, even Latinos are white) who is a blatant cliché in his quest for African “authenticity,” but real enough for you to believe in his mission. Yet, as the chief in Jack's village puts it after receiving a food shipment that causes a major contretemps, “We didn't ask for that gift, or this trouble it has brought.” Like *Whiteman* itself, the statement is a subtle but damning response to the assumption that Western aid is all-benevolent. **B+** —*Gilbert Cruz*

UNHOLY MESSENGER

Stephen Singular
Nonfiction (*Scribner, \$23*)



Singular crashed out this sturdy account of Wichita's notorious BTK serial killer in the one year since the nondescript churchgoer Dennis Rader was arrested for slaughtering 10 Kansans—from a sixth-grade girl he hung on a sewer pipe to the widowed grandmother he strangled in her bed—between 1974 and 1991. (Rader entered a guilty plea and is

serving a life sentence.) The nickname “BTK” stemmed from his practice of binding, torturing, and killing his victims, and *Unholy Messenger* is packed with lurid behind-the-murder tidbits gleaned from Rader's long, enthusiastic confessions. *In Cold Blood* this is not. Singular dwells at tedious length on fallout at Rader's Lutheran congregation while skimping on details of his youth. But the story of this neb-bishy, balding family man and his appalling crimes requires little artistry to become powerful, scary reading. **B** —*JR*

FAMILY AND OTHER ACCIDENTS

Shari Goldhagen
Debut Novel (*Doubleday, \$23.95*)



When his mom dies of an aneurysm five years after his dad's fatal heart attack, 15-year-old Connor Reed is placed under the care of his slick 25-year-old lawyer brother, Jack. What follows is a heartbreaking story about two very different siblings struggling to love and relate to one another over a quarter century through relocation, illness, and relationships both broken and reconciled. Goldhagen's spare prose delicately mines the complexities of how loved ones seem close and far away—often at the same time—and how the smallest word uttered has the power to unravel or save. *Accidents* is a lot like family: relatable, familiar, flawed, at times painfully dysfunctional, and something that you embrace enthusiastically. **A-** —*Allyssa Lee*

THE NIMROD FLIPOUT

Etgar Keret
Stories (*FSG, \$12*)



Keret's stories are strangely compelling—or compelling in their strangeness. The Israeli author blends Kafka's eeriness, fairy-tale wonder, and the absurdity of everyday life, with varied results. In the affecting title story, three pals are alternately possessed by Nimrod, a longtime friend who committed suicide. At a séance, Nimrod spells out what he wants on a Ouija board: “D-o-n't-l-e-a-v-e-m-e-a-l-o-n-e.” The equally sharp “Pride and Joy” features a fourth grader who discovers that his parents shrink an inch for each one he gains. He saves them by smok-