

# 741.5

IT'S A LONG WAY BACK TO GERMANY:  
JASON LUTE'S AWARD-WINNING  
**BERLIN**

AND I, RENE TARDI, PRISONER OF WAR IN STALAG 11B

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PLUS...KUPER'S *KAFKAESQUE*

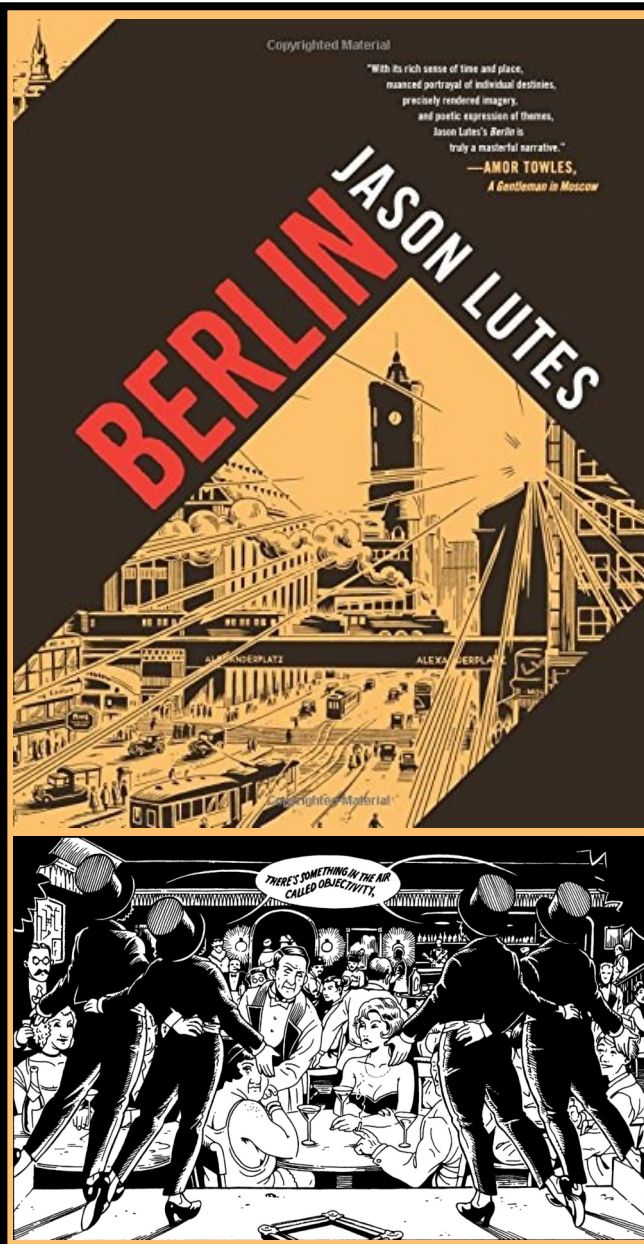


The Comics & Graphic Novel Bulletin of



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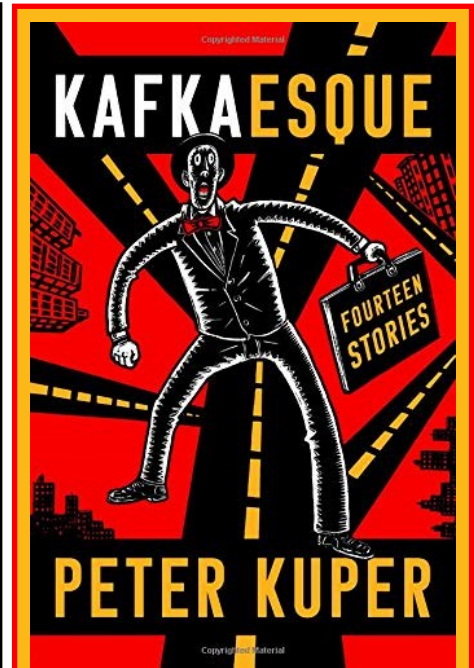


“Have you ever seen such madness? Look at them all racing about in their machines! A real affront to the German sense of order. And think of that poor fellow up there, trying to make sense of it all.” That’s how writer Kurt Severing (*top right*) introduces artist Marthe Muller to Berlin, center of German life. The city’s raging traffic is a symbol of the furious changes shaking Berlin to its foundations, the struggling government the traffic cop isolated in his tower among yet above the melee. Severing plays City Mouse to Muller’s Country Mouse in Jason Lutes’ *Berlin*. A historical epic twenty years in the making, *Berlin* follows Severing and Muller as the Weimar Republic begins to collapse. By nature observers more than actors, Severing and Muller try to stay out of the way while the streets are filled with strife and violence. But each are inevitably drawn into the conflict. Country Mouse Muller actually does a better job of dealing with the bedlam than City Mouse Severing. She takes up with the capital’s artistic community, itself in an uproar as the aesthetic verities of the past are challenged by Modernist movements such as Expressionism and the “New Objectivity”. She begins an affair with another artist, Anna (*bottom right*), a cross-dresser who introduces Marthe to the underground gay culture of Berlin. Muller also carries on an affair with Severing, which falls apart as he falls apart. His writer’s faith in words, in their power to change things for the better, fades. Like most moderates in a time of extremity, Severing stands lost and confused in the face of the Republic’s corruption and incompetence, of the fury of the Communists and the savagery of the Nazis, of the weakness of democratic ideals in a nation reared on authoritarianism. That



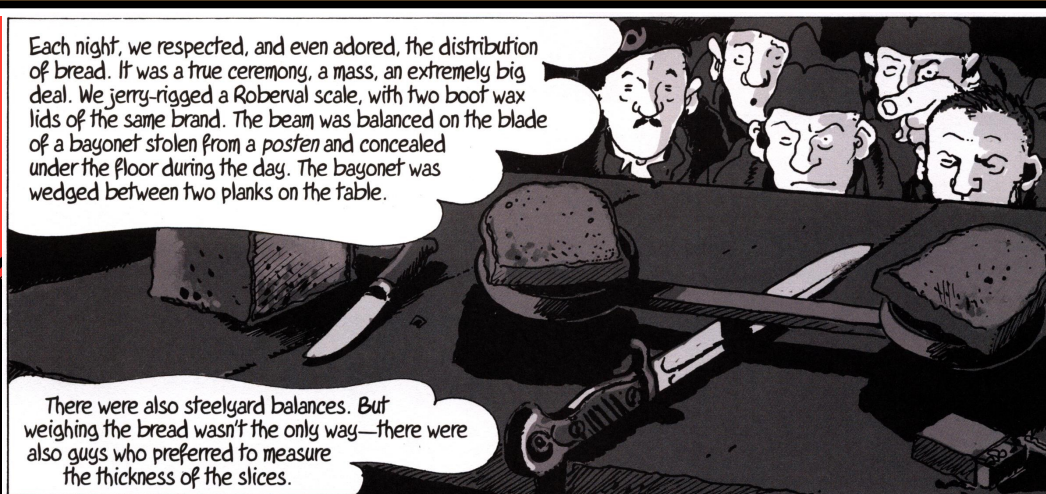
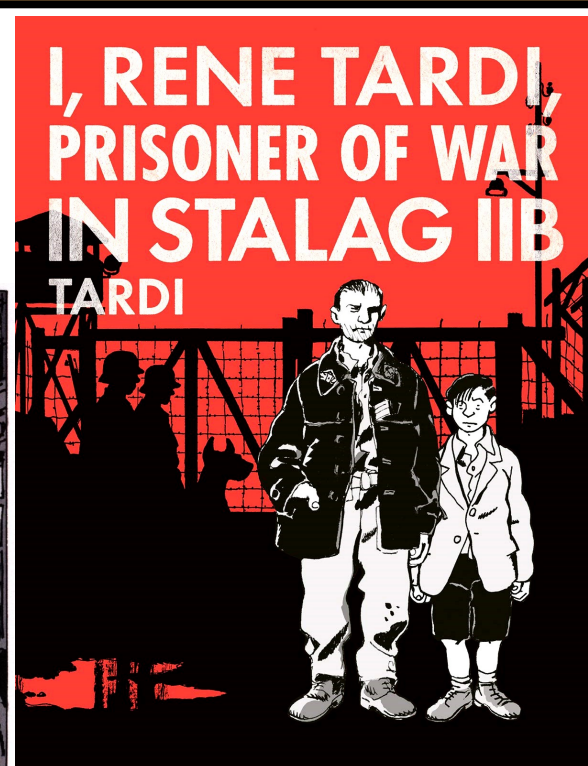
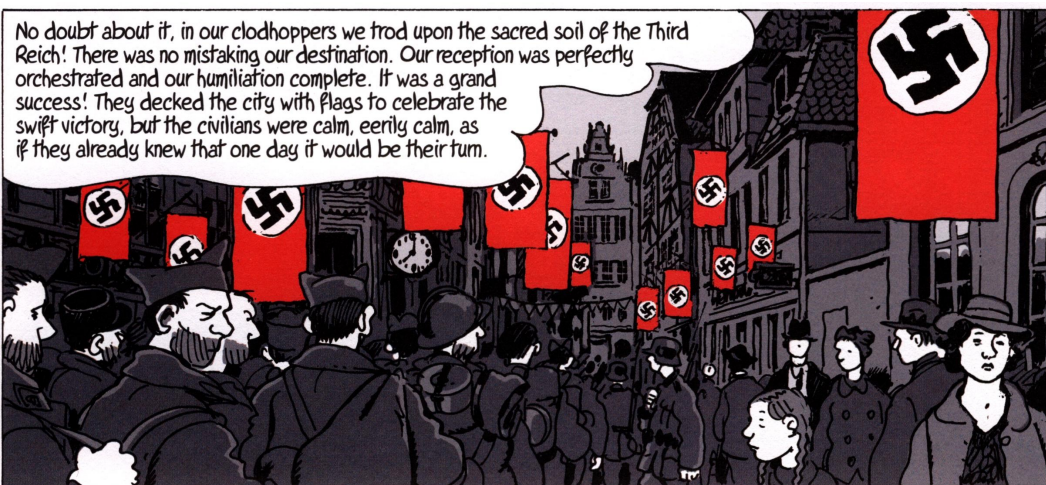
weakness comes as no surprise to those like the schoolteacher (*image right*) who hold those ideals as fervently as the radicals who strive to undermine them. Such radicals include Otto, the Red organizer who talks Gudrun Braun into attending the demonstration where she’s shot by the police, leaving her daughter Rachel (*image bottom right*) and son Heinz to very different fates. And they include various members of the burgeoning Nazi movement, from the slum-dwelling, Jew-baiting guttersnipes mentored by Gudrun’s embittered widower to Adolf Hitler himself. A bland little man who seethes with ambition, he listens to his favorite spokesman Goebbels discuss the Party’s path to power: “We schedule rallies...in predominantly Communist neighborhoods. We provoke chaos. Then, we demonstrate order. The press eats it up.” As do too many Berliners, like the burgher who says “We need someone t’keep order around here” and the decadent aristocrat Margarethe von Falkensee, who throws her name and fortune behind the “Little Corporal” and his gang. And those are just a few of the myriad characters swept up in the rush of history, each with their own story. A graphic masterpiece with many levels, *Berlin* speaks not just to yesterday, but to today.

**JASON LUTES**  
**BERLIN**  
 (drawn & quartered)  
 741.5 L976be  
 BEAUMONT—CENTRAL  
 —TATES CREEK—



Austrian writer Franz Kafka is famous for his mordant fables of despair and stasis. New York cartoonist Peter Kuper is known for his acerbic outlook and edgy artwork. Their collaboration is a match made in hell. A fine collection of short stories from W. W. Norton, *Kafkaesque* takes its title from the adjective inspired by the author’s singular talent for portraying the simultaneous absurdity and brutality of modern life. Kuper uses scratchboard to create a look reminiscent of wood-carved prints. He perfectly captures Kafka’s perception of the medieval darkness that lies beneath the façade of industrial progress. The classics illustrated include “The Burrow”, “The Hunger Artist”, and a scourging rendition of “In the Penal Colony”. Get *Kafkaesque* from Beaumont and Central.

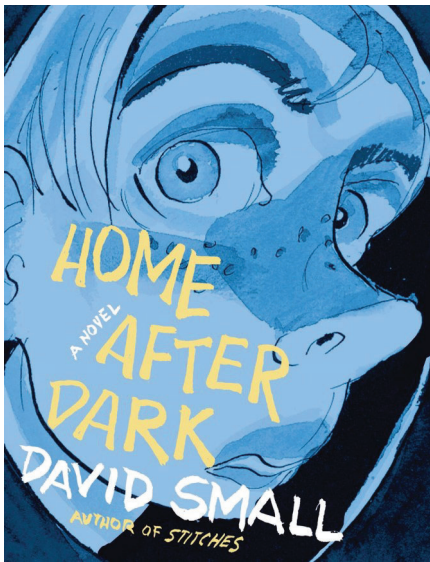
“Our magnificent leaders had given us the order to seek the enemy and destroy him. It was feed for cattle! We were soldiers!” So begins the tale of Rene Tardi, tank driver, POW, and father of Jacques Tardi. One of the preeminent creators of French comics, Jacques got his chops from his old man. During his travails in captivity under the Nazis, Tardi *pere* kept copious notes and even made sketches of his surroundings and activities, which Tardi  *fils* used as reference while drawing this album...even the sketch of prisoners using the ditch which was the only latrine for foreign POWs. Such mundane details make up the bulk of the book. After a few adventures in tank warfare at the start of World War II, Rene Tardi is captured with hundreds of other French loyalists and shipped to Stalag 11B. There he endures years



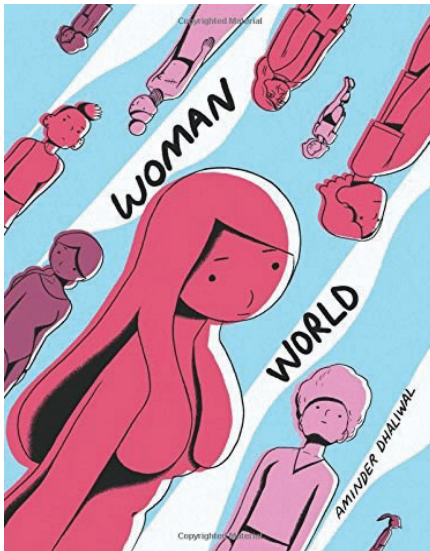
of tedium interrupted only by cruelty. There’s no heart-pounding action, no revolt by the prisoners. Just five years of slaving for the Reich at one awful job after another. Five years of daily violence at the hands of the guards, especially after the war starts going wrong for the Nazis: “That made the *posten* malicious and even more brutal...in all corners of the camp, Mauser butts and *gummis* (rubber hoses) came down hard on the skeletal backs of POWs of all nationalities.” Five years of starvation: “Hunger is the strong, obsessive, constant preoccupation of a prisoner’s life...” Yet Tardi persevered. He survived. And raised his talented son to be the rebel, the artist, the humanist he is. An intimate study of human fortitude in the face of organized evil, *I, Rene Tardi...* is available from Beaumont, Cental and Tates Creek.







“Kurt was the Man. He knew all the forms, the brands, and the mystery lingo that maleness seemed to ask of us.” Or so it seems to Russell Pruitt, protagonist of *Home After Dark* (Liveright/W.W. Norton). Russell is abandoned by his adulterous mother and, in time, his alcoholic father. He in turn abandons the people who truly care for him while keeping company with Kurt and Willie, trying to find refuge in the shadow of tougher boys. Russell moves through life like a ghost, always an observer, never an actor. His alienation leads to an act of violence that forces Russell to face himself and take action. Set in the 1950s of Buddy Holly and Kukla, Fran & Ollie, *Home After Dark* is the latest from **David Small**, creator of the medical autobiography *Stitches*. Small’s spare, spectral line and masterful use of ink washes captures both the sun-swept emptiness of mid-century California and the gangly discomfort of adolescence. *Home After Dark* is a coming-of-age classic available from Beaumont, Central, Eastside and Tates Creek. *Stitches* is still available under **B Sm187a1**.



## MEANWHILE

The issues of masculinity are the last thing troubling the citizens of *Woman World* (Drawn & Quarterly). All the men are gone. An ever-growing dearth of male births have left the world to women. This collection of the oft-shared Instagram comic by **Aminor Dhaliwal** follows a group of women and girls trying to make a new society in the absence of men. But what sounds like a set-up for a grim and gritty Vertigo series is actually one of the funniest books of the year. The episodic story involves the central cast of Gaia, the always nude mayor of the community of Beyonce’s Thighs; the fractious couple Lara and Layla and their friend Ina, who carries a torch for Layla; Doctor, the new doctor from the Capital; Ulaana, the only woman old enough to remember men, and her granddaughter Emiko, who fixates on a copy of *Paul Blart, Mall Cop* as a totem of the mysterious 21st Century. There are other women, too, moving through the two-



to-three page gags rendered in **Dhaliwal’s** loose, expressive style. Most of the book is monochrome, but there are some beautifully colored pages, especially the three-color introduction explaining the origins of *Woman World*. Find it at Central, Eastside and Tates Creek. Meanwhile, another apocalypse happens to Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, when a large chunk of the city—and the 300,000 people living in it—are enveloped by another dimension. It’s a monster-ridden world called “Oblivion” by those hardy souls who have ventured into it and escaped. Foremost among them is Nathan Cole, who has made it his life’s work to retrieve the lost from the other world...especially his brother Ed. But it turns out Ed and his companions in Oblivion aren’t exactly champing at the bit to get back to the “real world”, carnivorous flocks of giant gut-birds or no. The struggle within and without Oblivion is described in the first chapter of *Oblivion Song*, the latest Image series by *The*



*Walking Dead’s* **Robert Kirkman** and hot Italian artist **Lorenzo De Felici**, available from Central, Eastside and Northside. Two exotic cities that actually existed on this Earth are the subjects of our final two graphic novels. In *His Dream of the Skyland* (Top Shelf) our hero Song lives and works in China’s fabulous Walled City of Kowloon during the 1920s. **Anne Opatowsky** captures the people’s struggle between tradition and modernity, while **Aya Morton’s** exquisite artwork mesmerizes with its balance of color and white space. Get it from Central. That location and Beaumont have the latest adventure of the classic European comics hero, Corto Maltese. *Fable of Venice* (EuroComics) finds **Hugo Pratt’s** globally beloved mercenary mixed up in pre-war plots involving hooded Freemasons, Italian blackshirts (based on the creator’s own cousins) and stand-ins for rabble-rouser Gabriele D’Annunzio and actress Louise Brooks. This edition of EuroComics’ popular series of reprints is rich with historical background, including fold-out maps of the city’s canals. Reserve your copy at [lexpublib.org/](http://lexpublib.org/)!



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