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The Color Of Earth



Synopsis

First love is never easy. Ehwa grows up helping her widowed mother run the local tavern, watching as their customers — both neighbors and strangers — look down on her mother for her single lifestyle. Their social status isolates Ehwa and her mother from the rest of the people in their quiet country village. But as she gets older and sees her mother fall in love again, Ehwa slowly begins to open up to the possibility of love in her life. In the tradition of *My Antonia* and *A Tree Grows in Brooklyn*, from the pen of the renowned Korean manhwa creator Kim Dong Hwa, comes a trilogy about a girl coming of age, set in the vibrant, beautiful landscape of pastoral Korea.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Although Dong Hwa Kim's protagonist in *The Color of Earth*, the first book of a nostalgic Korean manhwa trilogy, is a sweet-faced young girl, it's emphatically not for children. Behind the timeless provincialism of its rural Korean setting and the subtly allusive illustrations is a Freudian-laced tale of a young woman's coming of age and sexual awakening. So while the chapter about Ehwa's first menstruation is a common theme in children's literature, her discovery that all women have a secret "persimmon" between their legs might make even some adult readers vaguely uncomfortable. Oddly, a short essay at the end of the volume calls this work "feminist." Alas, the essayist seems to have an impoverished notion of the word. A female protagonist alone does not make it feminist, and it seems doubtful that anyone in the West would consider, for example, a beautiful widowed mother and proprietress of a tavern who just smiles like a benevolent angel whenever her regulars make

vulgar, sexist remarks about her a particularly liberating turn. Fortunately, none of it is to be taken literally. Make no mistake: The Color of Earth is a folktale in sequential art form, resonating with the cross-cultural power of myth. This explains why Ehwa's maturation is so stereotyped, her romantic (but platonic) relationships with the young monk and later on with the rich kid seems so stilted and ritualistic. The painter's courtship of her mother is even more ritualized still, the strengthening bonds between them symbolized by the growing number of paintbrushes he leaves behind to be hung up with pride of place on Ehwa and her mother's wall. The characters are more archetypes than three-dimensional constructions and meant to be so. This deliberate flatness goes for Kim's artwork as well.

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