



The Amazing Adventures of Kavalier & Clay

By Michael Chabon

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This brilliant epic novel set in New York and Prague introduces us to two misfit young men who make it big by creating comic-book superheroes. Joe Kavalier, a young artist who has also been trained in the art of Houdiniesque escape, has just smuggled himself out of Nazi-invaded Prague and landed in New York City. His Brooklyn cousin Sammy Clay is looking for a partner to create heroes, stories, and art for the latest novelty to hit America the comic book. Inspired by their own fears and dreams, Kavalier and Clay create the *Escapists*, *The Monitor*, and *Luna Moth*, inspired by the beautiful Rosa Saks, who will become linked by powerful ties to both men.

The Amazing Adventures of Kavalier & Clay is the winner of the 2001 Pulitzer Prize for Fiction.

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The Amazing Adventures of Kavalier & Clay By Michael Chabon Bibliography

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

Like the comic books that animate and inspire it, *The Amazing Adventures of Kavalier & Clay* is both larger than life and of it too. Complete with golems and magic and miraculous escapes and evil nemeses and even hand-to-hand Antarctic battle, it pursues the most important questions of love and war, dreams and art, across pages brimming with longing and hope. Samuel Klayman--self-described little man, city boy, and Jew--first meets Josef Kavalier when his mother shoves him aside in his own bed, telling him to make room for their cousin, a refugee from Nazi-occupied Prague. It's the beginning, however unlikely, of a beautiful friendship. In short order, Sam's talent for pulp plotting meets Joe's faultless, academy-trained line, and a comic-book superhero is born. A sort of lantern-jawed equalizer clad in dark blue long underwear, the Escapist "roams the globe, performing amazing feats and coming to the aid of those who languish in tyranny's chains!" Before they know it, Kavalier and Clay (as Sam Klayman has come to be known) find themselves at the epicenter of comics' golden age.

But Joe Kavalier is driven by motives far more complex than your average hack. In fact, his first act as a comic-book artist is to deal Hitler a very literal blow. (The cover of the first issue shows the Escapist delivering "an immortal haymaker" onto the Führer's realistically bloody jaw.) In subsequent years, the Escapist and his superhero allies take on the evil Iron Chain and their leader Attila Haxoff--their battles drawn with an intensity that grows more disturbing as Joe's efforts to rescue his family fail. He's fighting their war with brush and ink, Joe thinks, and the idea sustains him long enough to meet the beautiful Rosa Saks, a surrealist artist and surprisingly retrograde muse. But when even that fiction fails him, Joe performs an escape of his own, leaving Rosa and Sammy to pick up the pieces in some increasingly wrong-headed ways.

More amazing adventures follow--but reader, why spoil the fun? Suffice to say, Michael Chabon writes novels like the Escapist busts locks. Previous books such as *The Mysteries of Pittsburgh* and *Wonder Boys* have prose of equal shimmer and wit, and yet here he seems to have finally found a canvas big enough for his gifts. The whole enterprise seems animated by love: for his alternately deluded, damaged, and painfully sincere characters; for the quirks and curious innocence of tough-talking wartime New York; and, above all, for comics themselves, "the inspirations and lucubrations of five hundred aging boys dreaming as hard as they could." Far from negating such pleasures, the Holocaust's presence in the novel only makes them more pressing. Art, if not capable of actually fighting evil, can at least offer a gesture of defiance and hope--a way out, in other words, of a world gone completely mad. Comic-book critics, Joe notices, dwell on "the pernicious effect, on young minds, of satisfying the desire to escape. As if there could be any more noble or necessary service in life." Indeed. --*Mary Park*

From [Booklist](#)

Virtuoso Chabon takes intense delight in the practice of his art, and never has his joy been more palpable than in this funny and profound tale of exile, love, and magic. In his last novel, *The Wonder Boys* (1995), Chabon explored the shadow side of literary aspirations. Here he revels in the crass yet inventive and comforting world of comic-book superheroes, those masked men with mysterious powers who were born in the wake of the Great Depression and who carried their fans through the horrors of war with the guarantee that good always triumphs over evil. In a luxuriant narrative that is jubilant and purposeful, graceful and complex, hilarious and enrapturing, Chabon chronicles the fantastic adventures of two Jewish cousins, one American, one Czech. It's 1939 and Brooklynite Sammy Klayman dreams of making it big in the nascent world of comic books. Joseph Kavalier has never seen a comic book, but he is an accomplished artist versed in the "autoliberation" techniques of his hero, Harry Houdini. He effects a great (and surreal) escape from the Nazis, arrives in New York, and joins forces with Sammy. They rapidly create the Escapist, the first of many

superheroes emblematic of their temperaments and predicaments, and attain phenomenal success. But Joe, tormented by guilt and grief for his lost family, abruptly joins the navy, abandoning Sammy, their work, and his lover, the marvelous artist and free spirit Rosa, who, unbeknownst to him, is carrying his child. As Chabon—equally adept at atmosphere, action, dialogue, and cultural commentary—whips up wildly imaginative escapades punctuated by schtick that rivals the best of Jewish comedians, he plumbs the depths of the human heart and celebrates the healing properties of escapism and the "genuine magic of art" with exuberance and wisdom. *Donna Seaman*

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Review

"The depth of Chabon's thought, his sharp language, his inventiveness and his ambition make this a novel of towering achievement."—*The New York Times Book Review*

"It's absolutely gosh-wow, super-colossal—smart, funny, and a continual pleasure to read."—*Washington Post Book World*

"Towering, swash-buckling thrill of a book . . . the themes are masterfully explored, leaving the book's sense of humor intact and characters so highly developed they could walk off the page."—*Newsweek*

"Well researched and deeply felt, this rich, expansive and hugely satisfying novel will delight a wide range of readers."—*Publishers Weekly* (starred + boxed)

"Elegant, lyrical writing meets gentle comedy."—*San Francisco Chronicle*

"Product of a sparkling intelligence, undeniable talent and consummate skill."—*Fort Lauderdale Sun-Sentinel*

"A lyrical [novel] that's exquisitely patterned...composed with detailed scenes, and spotted with some rapturous passages . . . A-."—*Entertainment Weekly*

"A page turner in the most expansive sense of the word: its gripping plot pushes readers forward...Chabon is a reader's writer; with sentences so cozy they'll wrap you up and kiss you goodnight."—*Chicago Tribune*

"This is a gladhearted novel, rich in story and character and invention, and a great escape."—*Orlando Sentinel*

"Starts out as one of the most pleasurable novels of the past few years. It ends as one of the most moving."—*Atlanta Journal-Constitution*

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Mary Ybarra:

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