



OLD WINE IN A NEW BOTTLE

RAFIDAH RAHMAN

After shamelessly succumbing to Chetan Bhagat's *2 States*, there was no way I was going to miss his next novel, *Half Girlfriend*. The unusual title is credited to the unclear relationship statuses between men and women in India, and where a boy develops a one-sided attraction towards a girl.

The plot revolves around the socially inferior status and linguistic struggles of one Madhav Jha, a rural Bihari boy who enrolls himself into the prestigious St. Stephen's College in New Delhi. He enters through the sports quota due to his feeble command of English, and while doing so, falls in love with the rich and beautiful Riya Somani. Having a common passion for

sports they quickly form a bond of friendship, but as time passes Madhav views Riya as a prospective love interest. The latter, however, not really interested in a relationship, agrees to be only his "half girlfriend".

This book, like most of Chetan Bhagat's other works is simply and amiably written, with cute little puns and affable jokes smothered in to conceal the otherwise rehashed plotline. Just another "poor guy falls for the rich girl" tale – it is old wine served in a new bottle. The title is somewhat objectifying and the saga seems tailor-made for another Bollywood sob-fest. Well, most love stories do share the same initiation and end up having the same climax, but the plots that happen in between leading to the ultimatum is what's really there to see, isn't it? There isn't anything astonishingly different happening in the intermediate plots,

yet the author manages to engage us without trying too hard. Despite the "I've read this story a thousand times before" epiphanies in my head, I still managed to crouch like a little mushball and had my share of chuckles here and there.

Promoting negative stereotypes, it's nothing like you've never read before. But if you are into the young adult and romantic genres, and a self-proclaimed hopeless romantic like myself, you might as well like it. I'll probably read it again during the winter; I mean who doesn't like curling up with a happy, sappy light read? I know I do.

Rafidah Rahman is a teeny-tiny Hulk, she's always angry and she's always hungry. A cynical dreamer and a food enthusiast, she's your everyday entertainment. Correspond with her at <https://www.facebook.com/rafidah.rahman.39> or rafidah_topaz@hotmail.com

ANIMATED SHORT REVIEW

LA MAISON EN PETITS CUBES

A Walk Down Memory Lane

MAHEJABEEN HOSSAIN NIDHI

La Maison en Petits Cubes, also known by its English title "The House of Small Cubes," is Japanese animator Kunio Katō's most critically acclaimed work. This Japanese animated short subject film received the 2008 Academy Award for Best Animated Short Film among numerous other awards. In a span of only 12 minutes and 7 seconds, this film unravels as a beautiful metaphor for memories.

In a town where persistent floods cause water levels to rise continuously, an old widowed man has to frequently build additional levels to his house with cube-like bricks to prevent being submerged. The only connection remaining between the floors is a small square-shaped sealed hole between the new level and the one left behind.

This emotionally charged short film can be dissected to find numerous metaphors about time, memories, old age and loneliness. One of the most notable messages of the film is the flood itself; the water acts as a passage of time that compels one to move forward – the "hole" being the memories that link past and present.

This is not your typical anime with huge-eyed characters or the signature bright bold animation style. Moreover, it



does not have the smooth movement a regular anime would. In fact, it is almost like a moving sketch. The artwork is mostly done with darker hues. While it may not be what we typically call "strikingly gorgeous animation," it is nonetheless breathtaking.

Don't worry about squinting at subtitles for 12 minutes because there is no dialogue. Instead as you watch the

film progress, you have the soft moving music by Kenji Kondo. The music sways in tune with the storyline and speaks much more than any number of words possibly could.

The 12 minutes of watching this ode to nostalgia will be enough to contemplate how your own House of Small Cubes may look in retrospect. Do view this magnificent short. It might be

twelve of the best minutes you ever spend.

With a keen eye and a broken brain to mouth filter, Mahejabeen Hossain Nidhi has a habit of throwing obscure insults from classic novels at random people who may or may not have done anything to warrant them. Drop a line at mahejabeen.nidhi@gmail.com