
Nick Abadzis

Laika



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Description

Laika was the abandoned puppy destined to become Earth's first space traveler. This is her journey.

Nick Abadzis masterfully blends fiction and fact in the intertwined stories of three compelling lives. Along with Laika, there is Korolev, once a political prisoner, now a driven engineer at the top of the Soviet space program, and Yelena, the lab technician responsible for Laika's health and life. This intense triangle is rendered with the pitch-perfect emotionality of classics like *Because of Winn Dixie*, *Shiloh*, and *Old Yeller*.

Abadzis gives life to a pivotal moment in modern history, casting light on the hidden moments of deep humanity behind history.

Laika's story will speak straight to your heart.

Laika is the winner of the 2008 Eisner Award for Best Publication for Teens and an Eisner Award nominee for Best Reality-Based Work.

Insightful reviews

Betsy: Dead dog books used to be a dime a dozen. Time was a kid couldn't walk into a bookstore without getting whacked over the head with "Old Yeller", creamed in the kisser by "Sounder", and roughed up royally by "[Where the Red Fern Grows](#)". Recently, however, dogs don't die as often as all that. You could probably concoct some magnificent sociological explanation for this, citing changes in the political and emotional landscape of our great nation leading to the decrease in deceased literary pups, but as I see it, a good dead dog story is as hard to write as an original paper on Moby Dick. What else is there to say? Man's best friend dies and everyone feels bad. In this jaded culture it would take a pretty steady hand to find a way to write a dead dog tale that touches us deeply. Not a dog person myself, I direct your attention today to Nick Abadzis. I don't know how he did it. Laika, the world's most famous real dead dog (a close second: the dead pooch of Pompeii), is now presented to us in a graphic novel format. Though I prefer cats through and through, "Laika" the novel grabs your heart from your chest and proceeds to dance a tarantella on the remains. The best graphic novels are those books whose stories couldn't have been told any other way. "Laika" has that honor.

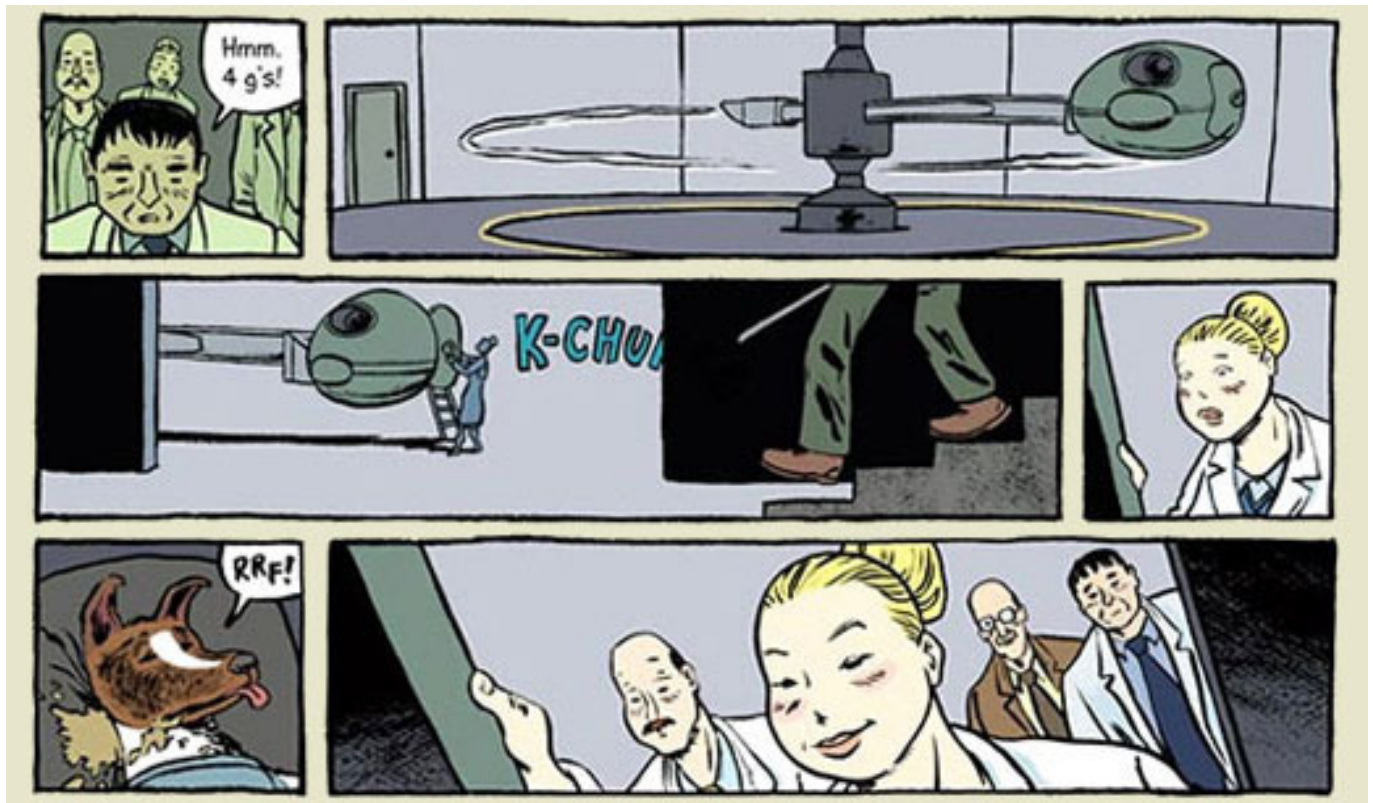
Her story was more than just her own. It encapsulated a vast range of people, many of whom you may have never heard of. As the book begins we see a man named Korolev leaving a Russian gulag in a freezing night. Eighteen years later, he is the Chief Designer of Sputnik and his success is without measure. Buoyed by the success of the successful launch, Khrushchev demands that his space program launch a second orbital vehicle within a single month. Enter Laika. An unwanted pup, abused and abandoned on the street, she's eventually caught and taken to the Institute of Aviation Medicine. There she is one of many dogs, trained for flight travel. Laika bonds immediately with her caretaker Yelena Alexandrovna Dubrovsky and endears herself to the other scientists as well. As it stands, however, no dog is better suited for

space travel and Laika is slated to make a trip from which she will never return. Abadzis deftly describes the people who care for the little dog and the process by which she was ultimately abandoned and killed by both science and Cold War mechanics.

Laika's entire story, as conceived by Abadzis, is heartbreaking but there are certain moments towards the end that I found particularly easy to identify with. When Comrade Yelena visits Laika for one last time she can hear the dog saying her name with every bark, even when Yelena is too far away to hear them. She dreams that Laika is calling out to her for help. That she's scared and uncomfortable and just wants to get out and play. Anyone who has ever owned a pet will be familiar with this feeling. When the pet is missing or in pain, it's difficult to keep from empathizing with it. How much worse then when the dog in question is imprisoned in a capsule and shot into the sky? Abadzis doesn't just show Laika's plight. He makes you feel it in the core of your being.

The last page of this book contains a quote that offers a 1998 statement from Oleg Georgivitch Gazenko. In it, he laments the way that Laika was misused. "We did not learn enough from the mission to justify the death of the dog." It's a dead dog book. Anyone who knows the story of Laika will be aware of that. But above and beyond the obvious this is an ode to dogs themselves. To the animals that we befriend and love and, ultimately, destroy. It's also about history, humanity, and the price of being extraordinary. No one can walk away from this book and not be touched. Consider Nick Abadzis a name to watch from here on in.

Seth T.: Books with dogs tend to manipulate. That's just the nature of the literary and cinematic landscape. *Old Yeller*. *Where the Red Fern Grows*. *Homeward Bound*. It's like a rule. And rather than subvert this, *LAIKA*'s pretty up front about the fact that it will in no way deviate from the script. It relishes in its formulaic, heart-melting prison of manipulation and contrivance.



Really, unless you're a fan of being manipulated, the book's only saving graces are that it offers an eye into Russia's Cold War space program and that it occasionally remembers that its human characters have lives that don't center on just how adorable puppy-science-fodder can be. Hm. That sounds too negative—because I actually enjoyed the book when I wasn't noticing how intentionally manipulative it was.

So that everyone's on the same page: Laika dies in the end. This is as much of a spoiler as saying "Kennedy dies in the end" about a book narrating Kennedy's presidency. Author Nick Abadzis expects that the reader is aware of the poor dog's fate and so works pretty hard to create gravitas, to fashion a sense of impending dread. He even reveals early on that Laika is doomed and spends considerable time turning the stray pup into a hero whose loss we'll mourn. He even gives Laika a wholly fictional back-story and lets us drop into the dog's dreams of flying happily across the cosmos. Because a dog that gets shoved into a tiny rocket capsule is a sad thing, but a dog who's had a hard life but dreams of the freedom of space only to die out there in blazing hot, claustrophobia-inducing quarters is a damned tragedy.

Throughout the book Abadzis reminds us with a nod and a wink that we oughtn't get attached to the curly-tailed terrier—even as he pushes us to grow acquainted with a dog of Character and Resolve, a dog whose trust in the caretaker who will ultimately betray her is absolute. Don't get attached. Watch as Laika is so tenderly loved by the girl who can't keep her. Don't get attached, but watch as her new owner abuses her and then throws her in the river. Watch as she finds a canine friend and learns to survive on the streets of Moscow. Watch as she witnesses the brutal murder of her friend at the hands of an overzealous dogcatcher. Don't get attached. But here, watch as she is entered into rocket dog training in preparation for Sputnik II. Don't get attached as you watch nearly every human character involved become attached to

her. Don't get attached, but watch how her handlers risk the Gulag by allowing their passions to govern their words on her behalf. Watch them cry and get drunk as she prepares to unwittingly die in space. Watch her get sealed into her flying coffin. Watch as the cabin temperature rises and she overheats. Watch as Laika dreams one final dream of spaceflight, born of her final fevered delirium. But don't get attached.

Nudge nudge. Wink wink.



And to seal the deal, Abadzis portrays those humans who do grow attached to Laika in human terms, having feelings and lives worth our attention; those who don't take to Laika, on the other hand, are monsters—cardboard sources of antagonism with faces caught in perpetual scowls. It's never wise to judge the motivations of authors, but it's easy to read Abadzis (rightly or wrongly) as a dog-lover who cannot comprehend the person who might not love dogs quite so much. In this book, sacrificing dogs near the height of the Cold War for the protection of a nation might sound like an alright idea, but that's just because you haven't met the dog. I can sympathize, right? but did I really need to have the idea batter me over the head and shoulders until I promised to yield to its persuasive technique? Probably not so much.

So with that out of the way, why is *LAIKA* worth your time despite its manipulations?

It turns out that the human story Abadzis weaves is actually pretty fascinating. We follow, essentially, three individuals. Sergei Korolev is released from his imprisonment in the Siberian Gulag and in his stupor-state, believes himself blessed by the moon. Decades later, we find him driven and ambitious, the lead architect of Russia's rocket program. Under his guidance, Sputnik has orbited the globe, striking fear into the American populace and making him a hero to the Russian government. Khrushchev demands a second Sputnik for a month later and this one will be manned. Korolev talks the premier down to using a dog instead and Laika's fate is sealed because Korolev will do anything to remain at liberty.



Yelena Dubrovsky is the least interesting lead from a dramatic perspective. She exists as the book's Laika-loving heart. Dubrovsky is hired on the same day as Laika's own arrival at the space facility and begins her work as the dog's caretaker immediately. She works diligently to prepare Laika for whatever missions might come, helping her to recover from training in the centrifuge or on parabolic flights. She harbours an affection for Korolev but imagines that he cares for Laika as deeply as she does.

Oleg Gazenko is Dubrovsky's superior and finds his own affection growing for both the woman and her canine charge. Abadzis excels somewhat at portraying the man's frustration with his unreciprocated feelings. Gazenko and Korolev are easily the most interesting characters throughout and watching to see how their complexities will play out was, for me, the most rewarding aspect of *LAIKA*.

Beyond some interesting character motives and interaction, the peek into Cold War culture may be especially rewarding for those too young to have lived through the era themselves. All told, *LAIKA* is a good book marred only by an unfortunate reliance upon contrivance and emotional manipulation.



[review courtesy of [Good Ok Bad](#)]

Melki: Augh! What the heck was I thinking...reading a book where I KNOW the dog dies at the

end?!?

I've spent my entire life avoiding [Old Yeller](#) for just that reason.

But, Laika's story intrigued me, so I gritted my teeth, and mostly enjoyed the ride.

In 1957, buoyed by the success of Sputnik, Khrushchev ordered up another spectacular stunt...a second satellite launch, just in time for the 40th anniversary of the October Revolution. The second satellite would carry a passenger - a dog named Laika. With less than a month to prepare, scientists were not able to engineer a way for the Sputnik II to return to Earth. It probably wouldn't have mattered anyway. Overcome by the heat, Laika succumbed about 5 hours into the trip. The stunt backfired, with worldwide outcry over the little dog being sent to her death.

At least I think that's what happened. By that point, I was blubbering so hard, I could hardly see the pages.

This graphic novel does a good job of mixing fact and fiction. Laika's early life as a stray struggling to survive on the streets was well-imagined. Particularly affecting were scenes depicting Laika's trainer, Comrade Yelena Dubrovsky's attempts not to get emotionally attached to the dogs in her care. The drawings feature nice attention to detail without being too "busy". I liked that all nighttime exterior panels included a drawing of the ever enticing moon.

Garret: within the e-book Laika by way of Nick Abadzis, there are 2 stories, 1 a few mans redemption, and one a few puppy given fake hope. the fellow begins within the tale being transported in a truck with somebody who used to be prepared to provide him a trip with little payment. He ultimately reveals wish within the stars and reveals his method to locate warm, clean bread and a hot position to stick for some time (with the surroundings being a harsh winter). The puppy at the different hand, used to be given birth, however the mom on allowed to maintain 1 puppy, the remaining needed to be given out to others. Laika, was once the kid's favourite puppy, was once given out to an unappreciated little boy, who introduced all of his rage from his family, into the little dog. the remainder is as much as you to learn and discover to your self. I loved the e-book much or even determined to learn it two times to discover the entire little elements of the ebook I missed. i like to recommend this publication to a person who likes a very good image novel, filled with details of real-time events. However, the finishing has a really hard-to-the-heart ending, so be ready for what comes on the end.

Ronald Koltnow: we know that the Russians introduced Sputnik II in November of 1957 and that Laika, a Russian mutt, was once the 1st residing creature to be embarked on space. Nick Abadzis has used this truth for a relocating photo heritage of the events, that is whilst and admonition of using animals in clinical testing, a screed opposed to cruelty to animals, and a reminder of the accountability we need to our bushy friends. I watched the idea OF every little thing and THE IMITATION video game with nary a lump in my throat. This ebook introduced genuine tears to my eyes. the day past i ended MORT(E), within which animals insurgent opposed to people. After examining LAIKA, i believe that they're absolutely justified. Abadzis's

art is sort of a storyboard to a movie, a film i'll be seeing in my head for years to come. a few of the panels have the standard of significant art. completely researched, and darkly comedian in spots, this is often the most effective examples of a story instructed graphically that's as significant as a ebook with in simple terms text. PS. My Grandmother's nickname used to be Laika

Jennifer: i've got slightly an obsession with the tale of Laika, the puppy the Russians despatched into orbit on Sputnik 2 in 1957. that allows you to capitalize at the good fortune of Sputnik 1 a month earlier, the workforce used to be despatched reeling into motion to ship a dwelling being into house in time for the fortieth 12 months social gathering of the Soviet Revolution. As a result, there has been no time to improve a plan to get Sputnik 2 again to earth...it, and Laika ("bark" in Russian) have been doomed to die in space. on the time, the realm was once informed that the stray puppy had survived for four days, yet lately declassified papers of the Soviet period display that she in simple terms lived approximately four hours prior to succumbing to overheating and stress, and that the information won from the venture had negligible influence on extra area programs. Abadzis's touching photograph novel provides this tale in a fashion that forces readers to ascertain the fragility of trust-both among animals and people in addition to among humans. Laika (whose actual identify was once Kudryavka) is gifted as an animal who'd had a coarse time at the streets and easily desires to please her human handlers within the area program. Then there's Korolev, the real-life mastermind in the back of Sputnik-- as soon as a political prisoner, he's now pushed to get rid of doubts approximately his genius and loyalty, and Mistress Yelena, the lab technician chargeable for Laika's training. regardless of being warned to not develop hooked up to the dogs, she feels she has betrayed Kudryavka. The panels from the dogs' standpoint are particularly poignant--they are proven to have a capability to feel their doom and the dishonesty with which the people care for this "top secret" endeavor, but they proceed to belief and practice well...as do the humans, who're additionally betrayed in spite of everything in the course of the internet of lies and deceit the govt dishes. A great book, yet get your hankies ready!!!!

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