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Comics & Graphic Novels

Cryptozoo Crew Volume 2: Call of the Thunderbird!
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Cryptozoologists study creatures whose existence has not been proven. For most, life becomes a cycle of grant writing, research, and excavating or exploring, but Tork Darwyn's exploits as a seeker of lesser-known or "hidden" creatures takes him on some extreme adventures. While other cryptozoologists ceaselessly search for the Loch Ness monster or Bigfoot, Tork inexorably encounters the oddest of creatures.

When the thunderbird of his nightmares begins leaving physical scars, Tork knows something is wrong. Delving back into his memory, he recalls a time when he was indeed captured by a thunderbird and escaped. He had met a shaman upon his return who prophesized a future encounter with the aerial beast. Now, twenty years later, Tork realizes he must return and find the creature as both a personal and professional obligation. His wife, Tara, insists on accompanying him, despite the fact that her school for troubled youth is about to be shut down. Tara, a resilient and intelligent woman, proves too much of a force for Tork to deny. The pair find themselves in the Alaskan countryside seeking out the shaman and eventually the thunderbird. Together, they discover where it comes from, and how to save Tork from its dreaded curse.

While the glossiness of the pages contributes to the brightness of the art, the coloring alone produces a brightness that maintains the jovial mood of this graphic novel. Thick black lines of division make elements in the foreground prominent and distinct, and provide crispness, making the novel enjoyable to look at and easy on the eyes. Thick black ink is also used in the lettering, heightening the readability of the text.

Gross and Carr collaborated on *Cryptozoo Crew Volume 1* Carr illustrates; Gross provides the text and has previously written *Dr. Cyborg* and *Roadsong*). Here, they have created a delightful tale for readers of all ages. Although it is part of a series, readers can easily pick up

this volume and enjoy it alone. Readers can flow from one panel to another without confusion. The action and exposition are well mixed and the humor keeps to a light and respectful tone. The narrative provides some educational tidbits that could make it useful to aspiring readers using graphic novels as a medium to become more literate. The last page includes a brief description and background of the creature referred to as the “thunderbird,” enhancing the book’s educational value.

While the story does have elements of science fiction, one would be hard-pressed to define it as such. This graphic novel is a bemusing tale about a couple whose professional passions sometimes interfere with their own passion, but in the end, they both strive to help each other.

Lance Eaton