ForeWord Reviews

COMICS & GRAPHIC NOVELS

Decoy: Menagerie Part 2
Courtney Huddleston
Penny Farthing Press
978-0-9719012-7-8
(Jul 30, 2006)

Decoy is not quite the typical alien. While he is short, green, and completely incomprehensible by humans, he has no desire to attack Earth. Instead, he forms a symbiotic bond with Dolphin City's rookie officer, Bobby Luck, and they become an unstoppable, albeit amusing, pair of crime fighters. This collection, appropriately named "Menagerie" includes ten different tales of Decoy and Luck's exploits. The stories range from a seemingly mundane walk in the park reflecting on Decoy's acclimation to Earth, to an over-the-top adventure to get to the ice cream truck in time, to a sincere introspective look at Decoy's early life on his home planet.

Twenty artists, including veterans and rookies, converge to deliver this unique concoction of humor, sincerity, and excitement. One might expect this mixing to create a semi-chaotic book that may scare away just as much as it entices readers, but under the control of Decoy creator Huddleston, who also serves as talent coordinator for Penny Farthing Press, the stories manage to build off each other and guide the reader. This also emphasizes the importance of story placement within an anthology.

Diversity with a universal ideal creates the dynamic and engaging artistic flow found within these pages. Artists use a variety of styles to depict Luck and Decoy's adventures and yet, readers can still easily identify the iconic protagonists. Robb Mommaerts, a children's book illustrator, heavily employs caricatures in his story ("Good Intentions") of disadvantaged youth and corrupt slumlords while Travis Kotzebue, a lesser-known artist, uses an interesting pastel tint to his story ("Decoy Versus The Invisible Man") that adds a melancholy mood to the tale of a disgruntled employee.

The only story that does not fit is “Fyeld Studyes, or Before There Was ‘I’ There Was ‘Y.’” This pre-Luck story follows Decoy when he firsts visits Earth in the fourteenth century and helps a woman enter and win a knight’s tournament. Though entertaining in its own right, the other stories in this collection build off the relationship between Decoy and Luck, which adds a certain momentum to the book as a whole. This momentum proves to be the driving force in a collection of stories with no main plot or narrative connecting them.

Readers who have not read the first book may hesitatingly feel left out in the first few pages of this graphic novel but quickly pick up the essence of Luck and Decoy several stories into the book. By using the same characters throughout all ten stories, this collection reaps the benefits of appealing to both readers who like short works and ones who enjoy becoming lost in a longer narrative. This book leaves readers asking only one question, “When will Part 3 come out?”

Lance Eaton