

★ Entropy

Aaron Costain

Secret Acres (Jun 27, 2018)

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Strange, surreal, and symbolic, Aaron Costain's graphic novel, *Entropy*, probes some of the deepest questions about creation with a funny, absurd sensibility that makes it all go down smoothly.

The book opens with a mysterious character in a parka, sunglasses, and ski mask, who notes what could be *Entropy*'s theme: "My father always told me to 'mind the four M's' ... you mustn't mix and match mythologies." The character, later revealed to be a golem, is soon visited by an angel who makes another golem, and the two golems proceed on a bizarre journey to discover the truth about creation. It involves a talking cat, a talking penguin, a talking grasshopper, the grasshopper's ghost (who also talks), and a raven seemingly intent on destruction.

As *Entropy* unfolds, an increasingly complex creation myth emerges. Though it involves elements of several existing cultures, the cross-pollinated mix is distinctively Costain's own.

Costain's black-and-white art is a wonder to behold, distinguished by precise, detailed lines. But he also has an exquisite feel for design, composition, and good old-fashioned cartooning, knowing when to keep it simple and when to provide weight by adding texture and depth.

There's weight in the subject matter as well, with its exploration of basic existential questions. But while that subject might seem suited only to serious book-club discussion groups, Costain is able to strike a palatable balance through humor—as when a dog, held up as an example of the limited helpfulness of talking animals, recounts absently: "I barfed up some meat I ate yesterday. Then I ate that."

The book's ending offers food for thought, and is open to interpretation as the conclusion of the search described in its pages, or as the renewal of yet another cycle. *Entropy* is entertaining and bizarre, but also deeply contemplative. It's a unique offering that compels multiple readings.

PETER DABBENE (Religion 2018)

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