

Hex Americana

Bree Wolf

Iron Circus Comics (Aug 29, 2023)

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A young man joins a ghost in a high-stakes car race in the graphic novel *Hex Americana*.

Ken lives in a world inhabited by gnomes, ghosts, a cyclops, and a two-headed race announcer. He identifies as Yokai American, derived from the mythical Japanese entities. After substituting for another driver in a smaller competition, Ken finds himself driving in the Grand Prix, the biggest race in town. Dante, the spirit of a racer who died in the Grand Prix twenty years before, serves as Ken's co-pilot and advisor.

Dante believes that his unfinished business with the race is preventing him from "passing on." But Ken and Dante develop feelings for each other too. Combined with revelations about other people's actions twenty years before, this creates a complicated situation.

Blending natural and supernatural elements, the book includes a talking wolf and "echoes" that pop up to reveal actions and conversations from long ago; fish-people, a moth-man, and figures from folklore all interact. Meanwhile, down-to-earth Ken manages his relationship with his mother and deals with the wolf's homophobic sentiments. He also has a second mouth on the back of his head, making him as unusual as anyone else in the story.

The expressive cartoon art devotes proper attention to the featured cars and the kinetic action of the racing sequences, though its moments of comedy and tenderness also stand out.

Hex Americana is an entertaining graphic novel in which a teenager discovers secrets, romance, and a sense of his own racing abilities.

PETER DABBENE (September / October 2023)

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