

His Dream of the Skyland

Anne Opotowsky

Aya Morton

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His Dream of the Skyland marks the ambitious, often sublime beginning of Anne Opotowsky's graphic novel series The Walled City Trilogy. Set in 1925 Hong Kong, the story begins with Song Lu, a young man whose curiosity, and his job sorting "dead letters," leads him to attempt to deliver some of them. His travels take him to the mysterious "Walled City" of Kowloon, an ex-military outpost that has become a forgotten place full of criminals, peasants, and the occasional would-be artist, all scrambling to survive its mean streets. When children start disappearing, a conflict arises, marked by a strong sense of community on one side versus elements concerned only with personal gain on the other.

Song Lu might be the book's central character, but there are others following their own personal quests. Though they're all linked in some way, the story soon takes on the enjoyable sprawl of a fully imagined (and researched) literary world. Aspects of Hong Kong's culture permeate the book, and a glossary features fascinating information relating to the story and its setting, including the origin of the book's title, a poem by sixth-century Chinese poet Li Po.

His Dream of the Skyland is rendered in a limited, pastel palette that gives a dreamlike quality to the proceedings, while Morton's clean layouts, detailed backgrounds, and varied facial expressions are an equal partner to Opotowsky's plot. *His Dream of the Skyland* delivers much while promising even more in future volumes.

PETER DABBENE (September/October 2018)

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