

★ **Kariba****James Clarke****Daniel Snaddon****Daniel Clarke, Illustrator**

Catalyst Press (Aug 1, 2023)

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An eleven-year-old girl with a magical link to a water spirit confronts her destiny in the graphic novel *Kariba*.

Siku, discovered as a baby in a secret area of the Zambezi River, has the power to manipulate water. Her abilities threaten to grow beyond her control. Meanwhile, the native Shonga people face displacement because of the construction of a new dam. Siku's father goes to the dam in search of a solution to his adopted daughter's ongoing transformation, but he disappears.

While searching for her father and navigating the different motivations of tribesmen, pirates, dam builders, and gods, Siku embraces her true identity. A tradition of rebirth is realized through her, and the various factions are shown they must work together with each other, and with the past, to create a future for all.

Finding inspiration in fantasy, history, and mythology, the book combines those elements along with a Japanese animation influence, resulting in an exhilarating adventure. The large supporting cast gives the book an epic feel, as do its expansive African settings. The characters balance competing factors in their decisions, resulting in satisfying complexity as well as a few surprises.

The art is detailed and lush, with beautiful colors throughout. Of particular note are the gorgeous showcases of water, whether in stunning waterfall images or an underwater view of the river with sunlight dappling at the surface.

Kariba is a mystical graphic novel about magic, self-discovery, and the delicate balance between human ambition and the natural world.

PETER DABBENE (July / August 2023)

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