



Karma Police

Chris Lewis

Tony Gregori, Illustrator

Jasen Smith, Contributor

Nic Shaw, Contributor

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Buddhism is the backdrop for metaphysical excitement in *Karma Police*, a graphic novel that casts monks as thoughtful enforcers. Their goal? To ease suffering without violence, if possible—but if needed, to destroy evil spirits that perpetuate negative karma. Here, then, is the preliminary justification for crusading monks, a justification that is both challenged and refined as the story develops.

The premise provides a richly layered story line; reincarnation accounts for the young protagonist's origin, while Buddhist concepts such as dakini spirit dancers are depicted in new, contemporary ways (for example, at a strip club). *Karma Police* delivers plenty of action on multiple planes of existence and poses intriguing moral questions, in or outside the bounds of Buddhism.

Those familiar with Buddhism's three-sided dagger, demons, and the wheel of dharma will be interested to see how Lewis incorporates them into the story, but *Karma Police* is far from a slavish interpretation of Buddhism. Among other non-Buddhist elements, it includes a masked villain who creates and manipulates luchadores. This, and other aspects of the book's freewheeling humor, prevent it from ever becoming a dour meditation; above all else, *Karma Police* entertains.

The book's art is excellent, with Jasen Smith's colors especially noteworthy, and the story, while complex, is well managed. *Karma Police* was published elsewhere digitally before finding a home at Vault Comics; crafted with care and thoroughly engrossing, it's a quality book that deserves a wider audience.

PETER DABBENE (January/February 2019)

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