

## Love Everlasting: Volume 1

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A young woman is trapped in a recurring loop of loves gained and lost in different places and eras in the surreal graphic novel *Love Everlasting*.

Joan, a pretty young woman living sometime in the 1950s, works as the secretary to her best friend's boyfriend, George, while hiding her secret love for him. Joan's friend falls in love with another man, opening the door for George to confess his feelings for Joan and ask her to marry him. Just as that happens, however, Joan "jumps" to a different life in the 1960s, as the daughter of a wealthy family who falls for a poor musician. As the shifts continue, Joan looks more or less the same, but her location, time period, and man (or men) of interest always changes. She retains some memories of her previous "lives," and as they accumulate, they threaten to rob her of not just love, but her own sanity.

While much of the story is told in a dead-on, entertaining style that pays homage to the romance comics of the 1950s, the elements of mystery and horror that emerge make the book much more than a nostalgic indulgence. The writing is clever and builds tension throughout, while the art is impeccable in its blend of colors, linework, and style, covering settings from World War I era France to the Old West in America well. Rich themes and deep questions underpin Joan's adventures, as about the true nature of love, the need for it, and the desire for independence and self-realization.

Collecting the first five issues of the Image Comics series, *Love Everlasting Volume 1* is a fascinating romantic horror story about a woman who shifts between lives.

PETER DABBENE (March / April 2023)

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