

Stars, Hide Your Fire

Kel McDonald

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Iron Circus Comics (Oct 5, 2021)

Softcover \$15.00 (168pp)

978-1-945820-89-2

A girl falls under the spell of a fairy who offers her a Faustian bargain in the graphic novel *Stars, Hide Your Fire*.

Moved by ennui and restlessness, Andrea dreams of escaping her small, ordinary Massachusetts town. While exploring an abandoned factory, she discovers Carmen, a member of the “fair folke” who’s been imprisoned within the iron barriers. Andrea frees her, and Carmen reveals that, to avoid returning to a bad place where “everything is dull and the same day after day,” she needs to strike a new deal with a mortal.

Andrea and her best friend, Darra, meet Liam, who struck a deal with Carmen 100 years before; it preserved his youth and kept him from growing up. But Liam claims that Carmen steals time from others to give to him—an element of the bargain he never agreed to. Carmen tells a different tale, and it’s only when Andrea witnesses Carmen “stealing time” from Darra that her eyes open. Liam and the girls turn the tables on Carmen to free the town from her supernatural interference.

The book draws striking parallels between Carmen’s dread of her unchanging home, and Andrea’s eagerness to leave her own home. Witnessing Carmen’s love for the human world, Andrea is reminded that she has much to appreciate; and Liam’s story becomes a cautionary tale about considering the costs of reaching for what’s merely new. The out-of-sync conversations that result from Carmen’s time thievery show the price of lost moments; their affecting, out-of-context clarity brings home the book’s message well. Excellent visual details convey the trappings of small town life—sometimes on their own; sometimes in partnership with the text.

Stars, Hide Your Fire is a resonant graphic novel about the price of growing up—or avoiding it.

PETER DABBENE (September / October 2021)

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