

★ **The Forbidden Harbor****Teresa Radice****Stefano Turconi, Illustrator**

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Teresa Radice and Stefano Turconi's *The Forbidden Harbor* is an epic labor of love—and a classic story of love—told in graphic novel format.

The Forbidden Harbor is a book anchored in history. Although it is fiction, details of terminology, protocol, and appearance make its early nineteenth century nautical settings (including the port town of Plymouth, England, and the ships that dock there) utterly convincing. One of those ships, the HMS *Explorer*, rescues a boy, Abel, from a beach in Siam. He wakes with no memory of his past, the apparent survivor of a shipwreck. The mystery of his identity propels the plot in a number of unexpected ways.

Abel is just one of many characters with an important role in this engrossing story. It combines the action of *Treasure Island* or Patrick O' Brian's *Master and Commander* books with a Dickensian flair for the unexpected. Romance and the supernatural, plus a plethora of well-considered literary references alongside jaunty sea shanties, make *The Forbidden Harbor* a grand and satisfying tale on every level.

Turconi's penciled art is an essential, organic part of the story, and the married authors demonstrate their seamless writer-artist partnership on every page with fully realized characters, even among bit players who only appear in a few scenes. *The Forbidden Harbor* is the result of thousands of work hours by two consummate professionals. More importantly, it's that rare gift of a graphic novel that embeds itself in a reader's memory, worthy of occupying permanent space in the mind and on the bookshelf.

PETER DABBENE (September / October 2019)

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