

★ **The Reaper and the Waiting**

January Sun

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About the abiding love of two young men across lifetimes, January Sun's fantastical graphic novel *The Reaper and the Waiting* is steeped in Chinese culture, mythology, and history.

Dwelling in the liminal space between life and death, this is a story of two souls who loved one another in another lifetime. When Reaper first meets Waiting, he is cold and callous. But he warms to Waiting, whose patient, unwavering devotion centers their love. Indeed, their bond proves powerful enough to outlast death itself. But in subsequent lifetimes, Waiting, who remembers their past life together as imperial princes, is not allowed to reveal his true identity to Reaper, nor hint of their past together. If he does so, he could be erased from existence.

The ethereal illustrations are attentive to light, color, and form, blending crisp architectural edges with experimental, playful techniques wherein reality blends into fantasy in much the same way life crosses paths with death. The sweeping landscapes have emotional and tonal depth, and Reaper and the Waiting are drawn with wistfulness that complements the book's thematic elements.

The story balances tension and tenderness well, with loving moments between the characters interspersed with moments of action and heroic acts. Waiting almost sacrifices himself to save the Reaper in a pivotal moment. Flashback scenes are used to provide vital context and foreshadow future events.

Although Waiting is burdened by his secret and the memories of their previous deaths, his bond with the Reaper deepens as they travel together, collecting souls destined for reincarnation. And the book's conclusion is spectacular, weaving the threads of the story together in a way that is tender and cathartic—befitting a romance spanning centuries.

In this spellbinding graphic novel, two souls are bound across time by their enduring mutual love for one another.

CAITLIN CACCIATORE (May / June 2026)

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