



Trespasser

Justin M. Ryan

Kristian Rossi, Illustrator

D. C. Hopkins, Illustrator

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In *Trespasser*, Justin M. Ryan presents the suspenseful tale of a man and his daughter who are living in a postapocalyptic wilderness, and meet an alien and deal with the consequences of that encounter.

Except for one brief exception, *Trespasser* is set in and around a single house in the woods, distanced from human contact because of some unnamed past cataclysm and the stubbornness of its owner, Hector Ramos, who lives alone with his daughter, Maria, and their dog, Belle. Nuclear war—or some other event leaving behind the scars of radioactivity—has left traces of dystopia everywhere, from their dog, who bears a vestigial third set of paws, to the Geiger counter that indicates whether the mutated animals in the area are safe for consumption.

Hector and Maria's lives are irrevocably altered when an alien is caught in one of Hector's animal traps and brought back to the house to recover. Unable to communicate with the alien, Hector quickly grows distrustful and embarks on a course that puts him, and his daughter, in grave danger.

Taut and claustrophobic, *Trespasser* wields the dark energy of noir, mixed with the lively imagination of science fiction. Ryan's writing is outstanding, giving insight into Hector's motivations, but also knowing when to pull back and leave something unexplained. This is the strength of the story—is the alien a threat, or not? Is Hector behaving rationally, or has he become paranoid in his isolation? The story demands a one-sitting read, but perhaps more impressive is the way the carefully posed, but unresolved, questions linger in the brain once the cover is closed.

Rossi and Hopkins's art is impeccable, with beautiful line work balanced by moody inks and spot-on color choices that enhance the tense tone throughout the book. Composition stands out, as well—the panels flow organically, and show an understanding of when to fill a background with telling details and when to let the page “breathe” with open space.

Trespasser is a shining example of a seemingly simple, stand-alone story that provides not just compelling entertainment but also substantial food for thought.

PETER DABBENE (July/August 2017)

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