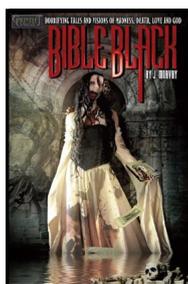


“BIBLE BLACK” (Graphic Novel Review)

Written by Michael Compton
Saturday, 03 April 2010 10:14



Aside from being a serious fanatic for all things horror, I'm also a rather big comic-book enthusiast (as I'm sure you can imagine, the combined interest makes me quite a hit with the ladies). My afternoons are often spent at my local comics shop, sifting out the gory gems from the garbage all too happy to slap Poe or Lovecraft's name on stories that would likely cause the late authors to spin in their graves. It's often hard to distinguish, at first glance, the worthwhile titles from the monotonous, mass-produced muck. J. Morvay's BIBLE BLACK, from Gauntlet Press, lies lovingly with the gems, black indeed as this particular gem may be.



Morvay, whose previous work includes the semiautobiographical LOBSTER GIRL, doesn't pull any punches in this venture. BIBLE BLACK (not to be confused with the subpar anime of the same title) delivers both prose and poetry, vice in vignettes, all dealing in the macabre, in a manner that lies somewhere between Shirley Jackson and Hubert Selby Jr. The work covers themes of love, death and divinity in ways that are altogether insightful, frightening and ultimately morbid.

One fearsome favorite story is “Godless,” in which a dying man recalls an adolescent fling with neighborhood girl Carl Reilly, culminating in an abortion attempt gone horribly wrong. Another notable narrative is “Hollow Cause,” the brutal tale of Nazi officer Hans Lieber, whose adoration of his young Aryan daughter Krista is matched only by his bloodlust toward the Jews.

The book's layout isn't so much run-of-the-mill comic-panel form, but rather a series of short narratives, accompanied by illustrations and paintings contributed by artists including John Masse, Dariusz Skitek and Oliver Cereto, to name a few. Piranha Press' adult-oriented comic series BEAUTIFUL STORIES FOR UGLY CHILDREN followed a very similar format; for those of you more familiar with the mainstream, think of Dennis O'Neil's classic Batman yarn DEATH

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STRIKES AT MIDNIGHT AND THREE. This striking style, with its lack of word balloons and thought bubbles, far better suits the mature subject matter.

BIBLE BLACK is raw, confrontational and true-to-life, despite the at times extraordinary material. The artwork is enticing, the writing is crisp and provocative and the design and layout perfectly showcase how well the two complement each other. Perhaps not the best recommendation for the more prudish proponents of the actual Bible, but certainly a prominent recommendation for all else who don't mind a delightfully savage immersion in the unsettling.

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{jcomments on}