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Hanako And The Terror Of Allegory, Vol. 1



Synopsis

The 'No-mouth Woman', 'The Man Under the Bed', and the 'Human Faced Fish' are supposedly urban legends. But what few people know is that just at the moment when someone believes them to be true, they become reality and appear before them! Enter Daisuke Asou, a folklore detective who deals with such cases. He calls these fantastic creatures 'allegories'. What's a folklore detective to do?

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This series is really awesome! It's a collection of short stories that later fit into a cohesive whole. It's a nice look into Japanese urban legends. The main reason I picked this up was because the author also did Future Diary, which is even more amazing! In the end this story held up the whole way and I really enjoyed it!

Reason for Reading: Folklore and Japanese horror, couldn't pass up giving this one a try!An allegory in this series refers to a story of the people, folklore, whether centuries old or a new urban legend that is popular and well-known but when certain people hear it they actually believe it for whatever reasons; it scares them, it touches their consciousness or their guilt. The the allegory becomes real and they are haunted/stalked by strange creatures. Daisuke Aso is an Allegory Detective, he's not fond of allegories, but since he is cursed by two himself, it makes him perfect for the job. Daisuke's allegories are that if he hiccups 100 times in a row he will die, unfortunately for him whenever he is in the presence of an allegory he starts to hiccup. His second curse is

Hanako-san of the Bathroom, a technological whiz who pushes him to take the allegory cases and generally helps him out but is also a pain in the butt towards him. I can't tell if she is meant to be a little girl, or just significantly younger than the college age of the other characters. She's certainly not chibi. But from the way she talks she's not an innocent little child either. This book covers three cases. "The Man with an Axe Under the Bed" and this story brings in the second main character, Kanae, who eventually stays on with Daisuke and works in his office helping him solve his cases. Then "The Slit Mouthed Woman" is an old Japanese folktale that is plaguing a young man and his new girlfriend and finally "Human-Faced Fish" which is slightly based on a hot news story that made the rounds once, But here it is much more eerie as a bus load of school children plunge into the ocean leaving only one survivor who is being haunted by the allegory of human-faced fish. I really enjoyed this. Each story was like one of those old horror comics with it's own little mini-story but there is also an over arcing theme that keeps the three main characters together. Unfortunately there is quite a lot of s*x talk, and a bit of female nudity. The violence though is not over the top, more scary than bloody, which I think is the point here ... to scare. A fun, creepy read.

After seeing the preview in *Deadman Wonderland* Volume 1, I was really looking forward to "Hanako and the Terror of Allegory." After all, the series was being done by Esuno Sakae, the creator of *Future Diary*, which is a series I absolutely love, and the topic was Japanese folklore, which I love so much I got a Master's Degree in it. But unfortunately this first volume in the series just didn't deliver. The story opens with Hiranuma Kanae, a young girl who is being hunted by "The Man under the Bed with an Axe." She knows that the story is nothing more than an urban legend, but her belief in it is so strong that it has manifested in reality. Through a rumor in an internet chat room, Kanae locates Aso Daisuke, the Allegory Detective. Daisuke specializes in cases like Kanae's in ridding the world of what he calls "Allegories," stories that have taken on a life of their own due to intense belief. Daisuke destroys the allegories by creating a situation where the believer is forced to confront the allegory, acknowledging that the allegory is nothing by a creation of the believer's subconscious, and that active disbelief dispels the threat. Kanae soon joins the staff, and Daisuke, Kanae and his assistant Hanako head off to tackle more allegory cases. There are three stories in this volume, all based on Japanese urban legends. The first one is "The Man under the Bed with an Axe," followed by the ubiquitous "Slit-Mouthed Woman" ("kuchisake onna") and finally the "Human-faced Fish" known as "jinmengyo" in Japanese which is a popular legend that pops up in the news from time to time. All of that seems pretty cool, which is why I was looking forward to the comic so much, but there is just too much here that doesn't work. To start off, "Hanako and the

Terror of Allegory" is saddled with a really sub-par translation. I don't know if the translator, Yamashiita Satsuki, is a native speaker of English or not but the translation is really stilted and lacks fluency. The whole comic reads like the words were looked up individually then assembled with proper English grammar but without any emotion or sense of storytelling in English. Next, the series doesn't quite commit one way or the other to being a supernatural comic or a high-tech comic. The "Hanako" in the title "Hanako and the Terror of Allegories" is an Allegory herself, specifically "Hanako-san in the Toilet," which is an urban myth similar to "Bloody Mary" ie if you repeat the spirit's name a proscribed number of times in the bathroom alone, the spirit will appear. However, aside from the backstory, this Hanako is a computer genius who spends her time making a "de-visualize program" for the allegories that strip them of their allegorical nature and allow the believers to see them for what they truly are. At first I thought the series was going to be something like *Fables*, with the fairy-tale creatures being real, but instead the "de-visualize program" reveals that the allegories have no independent existence, and are nothing more than psychological projections of the believers. This forces the series to collapse under its own internal logic, because if Hanako is herself an allegory, wouldn't the "de-visualize program" destroy her as well? And as all of the rest of the allegories have some specific target, some human being with enough belief to cause them to manifest, who is manifesting Hanako? And while I was familiar with all of these legends, they are very Japan-specific, and the text offers little explanation for new readers. While everyone might recognize or understand "The Man under the Bed" and there have been a few movies released for *The Slit-Mouthed Woman*, I highly doubt many Western readers would be familiar with "Hanako from the Toilet" or "The Human-faced Fish." There is a single page at the end of the book giving a short explanation of some of the myths, but it really isn't enough. A good translator will make endnotes to deal with some of the cultural ambiguities, but that doesn't happen here. Maybe all of this will be fixed in future volumes, and I have learned not to give up on a series after the first volume. There are some nice Lovecraftian notes, especially with the "Human-faced fish" episode, and I always appreciate that. A new translator would definitely be the first order of business. However, as it stands there isn't so much to recommend for "Hanako and the Terror of Allegory."

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