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Monstress Volume 1: Awakening



Synopsis

Set in an alternate matriarchal 1900's Asia, in a richly imagined world of art deco-inflected steam punk, **MONSTRESS** tells the story of a teenage girl who is struggling to survive the trauma of war, and who shares a mysterious psychic link with a monster of tremendous power, a connection that will transform them both and make them the target of both human and otherworldly powers.

About the Creators: New York Times bestselling and award-winning writer Marjorie Liu is best known for her fiction and comic books. She teaches comic book writing at MIT, and leads a class on Popular Fiction at the Voices of Our Nation (VONA) workshop. Ms. Liu's extensive work includes the bestselling "Astonishing X-Men" for Marvel Comics, which featured the gay wedding of X-Man Northstar and was subsequently nominated for a GLAAD Media Award for outstanding media images of the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender community. Prior to writing full-time, Liu was a lawyer. She currently resides in Boston.

Sana Takeda is an illustrator and comic book artist who was born in Niigata, and now resides in Tokyo, Japan. At age 20 she started out as a 3D CGI designer for SEGA, a Japanese video game company, and became a freelance artist when she was 25. She is still an artist, and has worked on titles such as "X-23" and "Ms. Marvel" for Marvel Comics, and is an illustrator for trading card games in Japan.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Gr 10 Up
In the aftermath of a terrible war, tension still exists between the humans and the

animal-hybrids, Arcanics. Surviving Arcanics are sold as slaves by the Federation of Man and even experimented on by the Cumaea, powerful human witch-nuns who mine the precious life-giving Liliu produced from the bodies of captured Arcanics. Maika Halfwolf, a 17-year-old Arcanic, survived the war but at a devastating cost. Looking for revenge, she allows herself to be sold as a slave to infiltrate the Cumaeen stronghold in Zamora. Once there, she uses her newly developed, terrible power to escape, free the captured Arcanics, and brutally attack the witch-nuns. She also steals a fragment of an ancient and powerful mask and murders a Cumaeen elder who knows secrets from Maika's past. On the run from the Cumaea, the humans, and her own people, Maika must rely on herself and very few allies if she is to discover the secret of why her mother was murdered and, more important, who she is and what awful power she possesses. Collecting the first five issues of the popular comic, this is a beautifully written and complex book. Intricate and detailed, with a definite manga influence, Takeda's artwork creates a lush and dangerous world for Liu's equally dangerous characters. The work is infused with feminist themes; almost all of the characters are strong-and deadly-women. VERDICT Intended for mature audiences owing to the violence and nudity and filled with rage and barely contained fury, this is a book that will be wildly embraced by all fans of graphic literature. Erik Knapp, Davis Library, Plano, TX

SCHOOL LIBRARY JOURNAL - Gr 9 Up-In the aftermath of a terrible war, tension still exists between the humans and the animal-hybrids, Arcanics. Surviving Arcanics are sold as slaves by the Federation of Man and even experimented on by the Cumaea, powerful human witch-nuns who mine the precious life-giving Liliu produced from the bodies of captured Arcanics. Maika Halfwolf, a 17-year-old Arcanic, survived the war but at a devastating cost. Looking for revenge, she allows herself to be sold as a slave to infiltrate the Cumaeen stronghold in Zamora. Once there, she uses her newly developed, terrible power to escape, free the captured Arcanics, and brutally attack the witch-nuns. She also steals a fragment of an ancient and powerful mask and murders a Cumaeen elder who knows secrets from Maika's past. On the run from the Cumaea, the humans, and her own people, Maika must rely on herself and very few allies if she is to discover the secret of why her mother was murdered and, more important, who she is and what awful power she possesses. Collecting the first five issues of the popular comic, this is a beautifully written and complex book. Intricate and detailed, with a definite manga influence, Takeda's artwork creates a lush and dangerous world for Liu's equally dangerous characters. The work is infused with feminist themes; almost all of the characters are strong-and deadly-women. VERDICT Intended for mature audiences

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Kirkus Review: When you're writing a review, 'speechless' can be a bit of a hindrance. So, I'm gonna work on that, find my words, and try to tell you about this book. I fully admit, as I have a few times before, that the cover for *Monstress* is what drew me in and convinced me to purchase the book. The art deco background elements are so incredibly detailed and rich, reminding me a bit of my recent trip to Kansas city for WorldCon, where the downtown area is filled with art deco designs and buildings. There are hints in that background image - or maybe they're flavors? - of ancient mythology, perhaps Egyptian with the golden eye staring back at you - or something quite darker? And then there's the figure of Maika Halfwolf looking over her shoulder in a very manga-inspired character style yet covered in those same art deco elements climbing up her white robe or dress. I was doomed. Doomed to be unable to walk away from this book. Clever cover artist.

A couple posts ago, I talked about *White Sands* from Brandon Sanderson; an epic fantasy with a wide-sweeping scale. *Monstress* is no less epic in breadth and wonder, and, if it were published as a novel, would be the kind that doubles as a step-stool or spider-squasher. In a word: huge. In *Monstress*, Majorie Liu has created something truly worthy of the word 'epic'. Following in the wake of a war between humans and Arcanics, we follow the one-armed Maika Halfwolf, a teenager filled with an anger she can't control nor truly fathom. She is on a quest to learn the truth about her past, her mother's life, and the final moments of the war between the races when a weapon of mass destruction went off killing everyone for fifty miles, forcing a ceasefire and a bit of a cold war. She allows herself to be taken captive and sold as a slave to the Cumea, a sort of scientific guild who experiment on Arcanic's like Maika. Not all Arcanics look 'normal' as Maika does, many share traits or forms with animals - fox tails, fur, etc. Maika has a power she doesn't understand and cannot control. It seems to only appear when she's in mortal danger, and she counts on it now to save her before the Cumea can use her the way they have so many other Arcanics. This is a dark world and full of danger, intrigue, and machinations. Maika discovers the past is not exactly as she remembered or understood it to be. Some see her as a monster, others as something to be used, and just about everyone wants to destroy her. There's so much going on in this book, and much of it compressed into the first thirty or so pages as we're introduced to this world and its inhabitants. I admit having to go back and forth a bit to keep up with it all. Liu has developed a complicated and engaging world and filled it with a diverse cast of characters. The Arcanics come in all shapes and sizes and appear to be inspired by the mythologies of the world, including China and Japan. The Cumea - who are also called witches throughout the book - appear to draw their inspiration from archetypal evildoers from not just

mythology, but also pop culture, manga, and anime. They have that over-the-top evil quality I'd expect from those sources. All in all, it meshes well the various cultures and styles - East and West - into a cohesive story that hooked me from the start. The art - a lot of times the cover art doesn't necessarily represent the interior pages. Much to my delight, co-creator and artist Sana Takeda maintains the quality of the art from cover to cover. Page after page reflect the same style, detail, and density as that gorgeous cover. Liu also uses the story to shed a light on racism, war, and gender roles - all in a fantastic way that pushes the reader to question assumptions and the status quo. This is the kind of book you read and reread because there's always some new bit to discover hidden in the art or the dialogue. Highly recommend.--Patrick Hester VOX.COM -- "feels like a battle cry." -- "If you want big, beautiful, terrifying, violent magic, Monstress is your next favorite comic." -- Cosmopolitan -- "Something entirely different" -- Hypable -- "Filled to the brim with awesome." -- Kirkus Reviews

Let me start this by saying I have never written a review on this site I actually cared to write, only out of respect for the vendors themselves. I'm writing this for the sheer beauty of this novel. My mother had lived in Japan and raised me with a lot of eastern principles and background, but in America. I love both western and eastern graphic novels. I've never found something that so fully meshed what I love about both. The plot is lavish and fantastical, but is lacking a lot of the eastern slant towards fetishized sexuality and brash comedy (think manga's common x'd eyes and oversized heads, etc.). What is there is there purposefully. This story is beautiful, developed, intelligent, new, and just honestly unexpected. The book itself is higher quality than anything I've purchased in years. As an avid reader and writer, the book itself is important to me. The joy of feeling the pulp of the page disappeared as publishers stopped paying the money for the good paper. This book is three times the length of the average single volume western graphic novel and the pages are thick and strong, you can't help but give attention to it. It was the first thing I noticed. Where I had lost hope for the fantasy/scifi/steampunk genres in recent years as artists/authors got lazy and drew/wrote what we already knew, this is beautifully original and intricate. And it's 8 dollars. What. I don't even have words for that.

great art. I have the feeling the 2nd volume will be much better in terms of storylines. This set of stories tried to explain the world to you bit by bit, but without all the information about the world upfront, it was hard to follow. I.e. throwing new species at us without really explaining who they are and who they're against. Might be one of those things that you have to read a few times to

understand. I'll def read it again before I read volume 2.

I loved this comic so much that, when I was just over halfway finished with it, I actually AVOIDED reading any more for quite a while because I didn't want it to end. That's how great it is, in my opinion. But boy, am I glad that I did finish it. This is the type of fiction that you'll have to experience multiple times in order to catch all the nuance and detail that's baked into it. Seriously, I went back and re-read the whole thing over again after finishing it for the first time and I appreciated it so much more than I thought I would. The world of Monstress is brutal and very, VERY violent but one of the many things I love about it is how lived-in and real it all feels, as if the denizens of this world existed long before I ever picked up this book and will continue to do so long after I put it down. The world-building, the characters, the art... they're all of absolutely top-notch quality. This series just has a look and feel that's all its own, like nothing else out there. If you have a hankering for a deeply immersive world filled with complex, rich characters, stunning artwork and excellent world-building, Monstress will not disappoint you. A must-read.

Very satisfying read from one of the best writers in comics, Marjorie Liu. Fascinating bit of world building on a scale similar to something like Sandman fronted with a heroine not too dissimilar from X-23, who Liu was the best writer for aside from Craig Kyle and Chris Yost. This is a VERY dense story that feels really only to begin in earnest at the end of this volume. So be prepared for a lot of familiarizing with the Monstress reality. I can't wait for volume 2 (I'd normally buy the single issues but this is both economical for space in my house, ha, as well as monetarily). I want a girlfriend with a functional robotic hand made out of wood!

Written by Marvel's award-winning female team of writer, Marjorie Liu, and Japanese Illustrator, Sana Takeda, for Image Comics, this is a stunning book containing the first 6 issues of the fantasy comic series, Monstress. The series has an engaging story line, nuanced characters, exquisite artwork, and it is already a smash hit. There is graphic violence and some nudity, so this series should probably be at least PG 13.

Got it for my daughter as a late Christmas present. It came super fast and in pristine condition. She only waited a day before reading and finishing it in under 2 hours. She told me she couldn't put it down, and that she loved how the artist and writer focus on world building while not overlooking the

main plot. She's already looking for chapter 7 and anticipating volume 2.

Monstress is a truly gorgeous piece of art, both from a literary and graphic perspective. Marjorie Liu has created one of the most interesting and original new fantasy worlds in years, and Sana Takeda's lovely, complex, and occasionally disturbing artwork combine to produce a compelling piece of storytelling that is nearly impossible to put down. I began reading this book because I was intrigued by contrast of the picture of a beautiful young woman, who I came to learn was the heroine Mana Halfwolf, standing under the word "Monstress." I was extremely pleased to find that this contrast is developed as one of the primary themes of the story that blossoms into what may be one of the best blend of epic graphic storytelling and horror I've read since Neil Gaiman's Sandman. I strongly recommend this series to any fan of mature graphic novels who is eager to become immersed in a new universe of mystery, wonder, danger, and glory.

Monstress is everything I could possibly ask for in a comic series. It is rife with female characters, all of various complexities and backgrounds, and it is equal parts steampunk and equal parts epic fantasy. A beautiful merging of the two. Speaking of beautiful, Sana Takeda's artwork is a wonderful companion to Marjorie Liu's excellent writing. I have been recommending this to my friends as a series they should pick up. They may not love it as much as me, yet I hope they enjoy it as much as I do (and I hope others who are looking to purchase the TPB, will enjoy it as well).

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