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Osamu Tezuka , Camellia Nieh (translator)

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A secret U.S. chemical weapon called "MW" accidentally leaks and wipes out the population of a southern Japanese island. Though Michio Yuki survives, he emerges from the ordeal without a trace of conscience. MW is manga-god Osamu Tezuka's controversial testament to the Machiavellian character and features his most direct engagement of themes such as transvestism and homoeroticism.

MW is a chilling picaresque of evil. Steering clear of the supernatural as well as the cuddly designs and slapstick humor that enliven many of Tezuka's better-known works, MW explores a stark modern reality where neither drive nor secular justice seems to prevail. This willfully "anti-Tezuka" achievement from the master's own pen nevertheless pulsates with his unique genius.

MW Details

Date : Published October 30th 2007 by Vertical (first published 1976)

ISBN : 9781932234831

Author : Osamu Tezuka , Camellia Nieh (translator)

Format : Hardcover 582 pages

Genre : Sequential Art, Manga, Comics, Graphic Novels, Horror, Thriller, Fiction

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From Reader Review MW for online ebook

Dusty says

I admire Tezuka's *Buddha* and *Black Jack* series and was eager to pick up this volume of the author's "darker" work. However, this story about two survivors of a devastating chemical weapon detonation left me with conflicted feelings. I was put off by the scenes of intense violence in the beginning but believe the later discussion about civilian deaths in WW2 and Vietnam put them in context. I was intrigued by the lead character's ambiguous sexuality but wonder if the point of the scenes of queer and interspecies love are included only to shock the audience and signal his moral deterioration. Anyway, the book handles heavy political questions with cutesy illustrations and surprising grace. It isn't something I would recommend as heartily as the other titles I mentioned above, but I do recommend it.

David Schaafsma says

Tezuka got famous in Japan and worldwide as the master of youth-oriented manga. He was the master of this, the godfather of manga... but then he decided to branch out, to create fundamentally different manga for adults with realist, often adult themes. There are spiritual/mystical manga such as *Buddha*, there's historical/political manga such as ones on Adolph Hitler, ones on racism.... and there are dark thrillers such as *MW* that are complicated, highly readable. This one has a homicidal maniac, Yuki, who became this way because of his exposure to a U.S.-backed chemical warfare test of a poison gas, *MW*, that killed all the people on one small Japanese island. So there's some stuff that resonates with the Sarin gas planned attack and the meltdown at Fukushima, and Hiroshima/Nagasaki... but at the time, Tezuka was particularly angry about the U.S. use of chemical weapons in Vietnam, our developing these weapons and doing terrible damage with them, on civilians, too (Syria resonance/irony, yep...Think: Napalm, Agent Orange, and our justification of these weapons as "humanitarian"). He thinks the use of chemical weapons is Evil, with permanent consequences, as happens to our Anti-Hero, who is murderously bitter, and the only other survivor, a priest... with whom he has a relationship. Yuki is bisexual, transvestite, a 'psychopathic' killer, and the question is whether he becomes all these things because of *MW*... which also would in part make this a homophobic document, which it could well be. . . So at the very least it is an odd story, certainly the darkest tale I have yet read from Tezuka... the author of decades of *Astroboy*! Unbelievable that it should be the same author! Clearly a master of storytelling in various genres and modes.

Frederick says

This is two parts *THE TALENTED MR. RIPLEY*, three parts *A CLOCKWORK ORANGE*, five parts *AN ENEMY OF THE PEOPLE* and all parts *Manga*. It is a terrifying graphic novel with depth, suspense and precision.

Published in the United States in 2007, *MW* began as a serialized graphic novel in 1976. I finished it last night, having begun it last November. I didn't read the folding flaps until tonight, however, so I have only just now found out that the man whose work this is was the creator of one of the very first TV cartoon characters of whom I was ever aware: *Astro Boy*. I thought *Astro Boy* was real when I was five years old, and now I see why. Osamu Tezuka was an artist whose could make the unbelievable seem real.

Briefly, *MW* opens with a kidnapping occurring in the present day. We are then given the backstory of the kidnapper: He has been devoid of a sense of right and wrong since early childhood when a dual crisis rips him apart. Nerve gas, hidden by the government, kills almost all the occupants of the little island where he

lives, but leaves him chemically altered. At the moment the nerve gas escapes, a thug on the loose sexually attacks the boy. Discovering that the population of the island has been destroyed and that he is the only person alive who can bring the boy to safety, this same man begins to seek his own redemption. He returns to Tokyo with the boy and becomes a priest.

With Hiroshima occurring thirty-one years before MW began its serialization, the metaphors are fairly obvious. The West is seen as the corrupter, and yet, also as the redeemer. The priest is, clearly, of a Christian denomination. Therefore, he represents the West. His continuing efforts to save himself from his own nature are almost comic. Tezuka, who would have been about fifteen in 1945, must have had strong memories of life in Japan before and after World War Two. He'd have seen Japan go from a fascist state bent on domination of the Pacific to an occupied country capitulating to the habits and beliefs of its occupier. By 1976, of course, Japan was no longer occupied, but its profound economic power had been the result of a Westernization which must have rankled. Quite simply, the theme of MW is that the dropping of the two atomic bombs on Japan was a rape from which Japan has not (as of 1976, at least) recovered, and that a Godzilla-like problem had resulted: Japan had a monster in itself in the form of submission to the West. Saying this, I shall say that I do not think this is an anti-Western book. It's too universal and too humanistic to be a work of bigotry. But, having been the only country so far to have been subject to atomic attack, the art of Japan must reflect the horror of that legacy.

MW, which stands for the stockpile of world-threatening gas the government is hiding (and which the psychopathic central character seeks) sounds a lot like WMD's. Perhaps this is what made the publisher think of putting this book out last year. The book reminds us, if the headlines don't, that the mere fear of global catastrophe can be used to pit nation against nation.

Ang says

[child murder, molestation, murder during rape etc etc (hide spoiler)]

Tosh says

Well first of all while reading this manga by Tezuka I thought of a young Alain Delon playing the lead character in a film version of this realistic horror story. The violence is pretty gruesome, yet I also think it's a classic work by Tezuka (after so many!)

The story is about a young man who comes from a family of Kabuki actors who as a young boy is exposed to a secret nerve gas produced by the 'X' Country that is stored on a Japanese island. Basically he turns into one of the worst serial killers in print. Sort of a combination of Ted Bundy and Tom Ripley. On top of that he has a life-long affair with a Priest (a sub-plot to the story), and the ability to portray females. He sort of cons various Govt. officials either sexually or just his ability to move onward and forward. In that sense he sort of resembles Bateman in American Psycho, but without the love of the brand names.

And it is amazing to think that it all started with the White Lion and Astro Boy! Tezuka without a doubt, was a genius who made comics into a different type of artform.

Miguel says

Tezuka must have been watching Hitchcock when he began writing *MW*. Chronologically, it makes sense. *MW* began serialization in 1976, coinciding with the US release of Hitchcock's final film, *Family Plot*. Most of Hitchcock's major Hollywood films, the ones that *MW* is most akin to, were released in Japan shortly after their US release. For instance, *Strangers on a Train* was released in Japan in 1953, two years after its domestic debut. *Rope*, another major Hitchcock film, finally found an audience in Japan in 1962, after *Strangers on a Train*, despite *Rope* being released in the US in 1948. *Rope* and *Strangers* resonate strongly with *MW*, although other critics have compared *MW* to Hitchcock's *I Confess*, released domestically in 1953 and in Japan a year later.

More than anything *MW* is a synthesis of the near-perfect plotting and larger-than-life ideas of Hitchcock films like *Rope* and *Strangers on a Train* with Hitchcock's late style in *Frenzy*, released in 1972 in both the US and Japan (and earlier that year, still, in Hitchcock's native London). With this excessive framing in mind, readers are equipped with analytical tools for demystifying this wonderful text. Hitchcock's oeuvre and *MW* are largely concerned with many of the same issues, whether formal or philosophical. *MW* inserts the standard post-WWII anxiety that looms heavily over most anime and manga, whether classic or contemporary. The question of nuclear de-escalation and disarmament are what the circulation of the titular *MW* weapon alludes to. *MW* is a weapon of mass destruction that represents a higher level of warfare, something that modernizes the nuclear threat into the context of a world watching the Vietnam War unfold and the so-called "humanitarian weapons," chemical in nature. If WWII is the shadow looming over the manga, the Vietnam War is to *MW* as the Spanish Civil War is to *Guernica*. Readers are treated to a certain representation of the Vietnam War unfolding on the page despite distancing the manifest content of the narrative from a war story. Rather, this is a thriller, where Yuki's amorality stands in for the cruel logic of armed conflict and weapons development.

This is where Hitchcock becomes the crucial intertext. Yuki is a foreboding, terrifying, seductive, engaging character in the tradition of Bruno from *Strangers on a Train*, Leonard from *North by Northwest* or Brandon from *Rope*. Yuki seduces the reader as much as all those around him, particularly Father Garai. Garai is hardly a morally laudable protagonist. His turn to religion comes from his background as a hoodlum, and perhaps the one who set Yuki down his path of serial murder. Garai's sexual assault of Yuki as a child is one of the major plot revelations and casts serious doubt on the narrative's constant insistence that Yuki is suffering from mental deterioration because of exposure to *MW*.

Yuki has something else in common with these Hitchcockian villains — queerness. Yuki's sexuality and gender are both fluid, as he carries on a sexual relation with Garai (who is, if not a closeted gay man, is perhaps bisexual) and numerous other men and women throughout the story. The alignment of moral depravity and queer sexuality is nothing new, Tezuka clearly taking a leaf from Hitchcock's book to deliver something deeply unsettling to his audience whilst denaturalizing the trope. Yuki is clearly *not* a murderer *because* of his sexuality. Still, Garai is a queer character who committed a rape in his youth and the only other named queer man is Minch. Minch represents, like Yuki, a manifestation of the amorality of war. His difference from Yuki is only that he is legitimized under the law. It is no accident that the only queer character who is morally laudable through and through is the briefly-appearing Yanase, a lesbian woman and the city news editor of a Japanese newspaper. She delivers a didactic monolog clearly stating the text's (and likely Tezuka's) position on queer love — a position of endorsement. Still, taking Garai, Yuki, Minch, and Yanase into full account means that the manga may not live up to the stated position of Yanase, who serves as a mouthpiece for authorial intent.

What Tezuka learned from Hitchcock is a master-class on suspense, plotting, and symbolic resonance. *MW* is enjoyable on every level, and is a perfect love-letter to the thriller genre. A professor could likely spend an entire semester lecturing on *MW*, its historical context, and its intertexts. This is essential reading for anyone

interested in graphic novels.

Xian Xian says

Honestly, who hasn't talked about this? Any avid comic reader, especially the ones that pay attention to the older stuff or the rare stuff, know who Osamu Tezuka is. Need a refresher? Just look up Astro Boy, which is possibly his most internationally known manga, more known for the anime. It's pretty darn old, my mom saw the show as a kid in it's original black and white television form. So here's a listicle review instead:

All of the Hearts:

- The beautiful artwork. Lots of lines and detail, every little line in the buildings and the clouds and the skies. The good old looks.
- "Fate is a strange thing."
- "Embrace me, Father. For I have sinned."
- An anti-hero character.
- Isn't a horror manga, but it's pretty thrilling and hard to put down.
- A little comedic to me because the anti-hero is so careless in whoever he hurts and he's just pretty wild.
- For it's time, it's pretty deviant, not deviant anymore because time has changed a bit.
- There's a devil and a flawed angel duo. (the two main characters.)
- Science fiction, warfare stuff. A commentary on war and nuclear power. The main character is kind of like that "revenge for the past," type of message.
- But despite that Tezuka has had political manga in the past. I often wonder if he made this for a message or a social commentary or just entertainment. Because the ending kind of blurred everything.

All of the No:

- The ending was disappointing slightly. "THE EVIL WILL ALWAYS PREVAIL!"
- It made me sad that the priest went "poof."
- I wish Tezuka showed us more of the brother's side of the story. The good twin.
- The women in this story are weird. They are very easily controlled. Is that really how potent the pure evil of the main character is?
- His portrayal of gay men is typical. Maybe it's the time period of when it was published.
- The evil main character is very hypersexualized. He has sex with everyone. Which makes me question if he was also a victim of bisexual erasure because people call him gay, but he seems to like women too? (Am I

mistaken here?)

Rating: 4.5/5

Originally posted here: <http://wordsnotesandfiction.blogspot....>

Jackie says

I came back from Winter Break to find my roommate Ivy sitting in our common room squealing. She had just finished MW for a class, and started raving to me about how much I would love it. "It has a man in it," she exclaimed, "who dresses as women! And he has no moral compass!"

She knows me all too well.

I was initially surprised by how bothered I was at the idea of a Catholic priest having sex with an amoral killing machine. That is to say I was almost bothered enough--not by who he was having sex with (although that was a dumb choice on his part) but that he was having sex at all--to stop reading. I'm glad I didn't. If I had, I would have missed out on the rest of this epic manga full of characters with Stockholm Syndrome, pretty great anti-American stuff thrown in for good measure, and of course my new favorite cross-dressing bisexual (although maybe not, since I don't think he really loves or is attracted to anything but his own schemes) hero/villain.

This is guilty pleasure reading at its finest.

Plus the last two panels are made of awesome.

Postscript:

Now my other roommate, Janie, is reading it. She is drooling over the fact that there is going to be a movie as well, starring one of her favorite Japanese drama actors. We'll see if she's still as enthused about this casting when she gets to the bath scene with the dog. Hmmm.

Will says

Epoch tale. Really good psuedo-manga. The story was so exciting I felt guilty for speeding through the pages because the pictures were amazing with detail. Oh, and there's gayness too which is so refreshing to see in manga or any graphic novel for that matter.

Jesselyn says

An excellent place to start with Tezuka, since it lacks most of his usual self-references. Manages to be campy, pulpy, yet serious and compassionate all at the same time. Great for everyone from fans of true crime to beginning graphic novel enthusiasts.

Paul says

Maybe I expected more from Osamu Tezuka, but maybe this is why this is one of his lesser-known works. The story was over-the-top and the characters lacked any subtlety (the villain, I can see with his having been

robbed of any empathy or compassion by his brush with this chemical weapon, but the protagonist, Father Garai (yes, a priest) was really hard to read and didn't make a lot of sense). Its portrayal of homosexuals seemed - while once progressive, I'm sure - really dated and almost patronizing. Not to mention an odd, slight misogynistic undertone. Add to this a resolution that even the characters in the book identify as cartoonish and you're left with a thoroughly unimpressive graphic novel.

Theresia says

This is the book that made me stop putting Tezuka as Disney's equal.

Because he's beyond that. Definitely.

Forget the cutesy of *Atom* or the wisdom of *Buddha*. Read *MW* and find Tezuka-esque gore, homoeroticism, homicide-for-fun, and mental rape. It's reading the map of a killing machine, who's still human somehow despite his fucked up, cold-blooded inhumanity.

See, I don't make a point. If you think *A Clockwork Orange* or *Portnoy's Complaint* makes you shiver, think again. When I read this book, I don't see a page after page. I see a noir movie reveals a scene after a scene, and I'm captivated. And I shivered worse.

Through *MW*, Tezuka doesn't need to do anything to prove that he's a god, the god of manga. He just is. The only thing that prevent me from giving this book a 5-star is my weak stomach. Oh femme!

Maxwell Bauman says

I didn't expect to read a story like this by Osamu Tezuka, the author who wrote *Astro Boy* and a series on the life of the Buddha (among others). This is the story of Father Garai, a young criminal turned priest, and Yuki, the twin brother of a famous actor who goes on a demented crime spree. There are kidnappings, rapes, torture scenes, murders, suicides, blackmail, bombings and a highjacking (and more) all for the sake of obtaining MW, a poisonous gas that was intended to be used as a weapon in Vietnam. Garai and Yuki were young boys the only survivors on an island where the gas leaked and killed everyone.

Garai and Yuki have a love affair. Garai struggles with his choices and faith, morality and duty to his friend. Meanwhile, Yuki is a complete sociopath and isn't afraid to use people to achieve his goals. Yuki's brain and heart were damaged by the gas and he plans on taking down the world with him when he dies.

I have to give it four stars because of some printing issues with this edition. The pages were reproduced as mirrored copies to allow the Japanese version to be read easier by English readers, however, there are some panels that are diagonal, and the tilt made the dialogue a little confusing, but that only happened five times or so. There were also some grammar issues, but those were small problems over all.

At one point there is a reference to 007, and it is an apt comparison to the kind of international threat that Yuki poses to the world. It is an intense read for anyone prepared to disturbing look at how people react when they feel they have everything (or nothing) to lose.

Moriah Strong says

This is substantially darker than the other Tezuka books I have read--the Buddha series. Its a thriller about a

bisexual cross-dressing sociopathic serial killer, so basically right up my alley. And the illustrations are nothing short of astonishingly good. There are a couple panels that are breathtaking--a couple that come to mind are one of a waterfall and one of a starry night sky. The details are expertly drawn, and its probably the prettiest graphic novels I've ever read.

I found Father Garai to be the most unredeemable character in the book--even more so than Yuki, since he seemingly serves as the book's moral compass (from his point of view). He is so self-righteous because he became a priest, but he is nothing more than a child molesting, murdering thug. He keeps making all sorts of excuses for himself, blaming all his problems on Yuki, but he willingly lets himself be completely manipulated by him and then has the gall to condemn Yuki's actions. He's deplorable. Yuki commits atrocious crimes, but at least you can respect his intelligence and frankness.

Andrew says

This was just my second book by Osamu Tezuka. And like the first it's an absolutely excellent adult thriller.

Ben says

[a] There is nothing wrong with homosexuality... not any more than heterosexuality is. It is explicitly voiced twice -- by Yuki: *Relationships like ours are perfectly normal in developed countries. Japan's the onl*

Alberto Parrilla Moruno says

Mi primera aproximacion a la obra de Tezuka... increible como con un dibujo "infantil" una historia tan brutal en todos los aspectos no se resiente, es mas se agradece. Narrador excepcional. Mira que yo de Manga poco mas alla de Lone Wolf..., pero tengo que buscar algo mas del dios del manga.
100% recomendable

Nelson says

MW by Osamu Tezuka
Long-Winded Review #5 [Immoral Edition]

Series Overview:

Tezuka's 1976 manga MW follows the story of Yuki, a sadistic criminal mastermind, and Father Garai, a Japanese Catholic priest. They are the sole survivors of a poison gas leak that killed off an entire island's population. They also share a complicated relationship. They are lovers of sorts. Essentially, while hiding away during the MW gas leak incident, a 20-something Garai (not yet a priest) took advantage of a young Yuki thinking he looked quite gentle and feminine. After the incident, Yuki suffered some brain damage due to slight exposure to the MW gas that caused him to lose all sense of morality and started committing atrocious crimes. Garai, feeling guilt over the MW incident and what he had done, became a priest to repent for his sins and attempt to cleanse Yuki and redeem him. As adults, despite Father Garai's resistance, Yuki constantly seduces him and uses him, taking advantage of his good nature and guilt. Over the course of the

story, Yuki commits a chain of seemingly unrelated crimes towards a specific goal, while Garai tries to keep him in check or stop him. This forms a very interesting dynamic, as they go back and forth between lovers, adversaries, and collaborators, usually all at once, all the while getting to the bottom of the MW conspiracy.

Writing:

Tezuka's writing here is more accessible than in *Ayako*, which is his only other work that I've read. In *Ayako*, the story developed on many fronts and spanned decades. In contrast, *MW* has a much more linear story focused on the two main characters. Much like *Ayako*, Tezuka touches on some important historical issues of the time, in this case the American military bases stationed in Japan at the time and the fear of weapons of mass destruction.

It also casually features many homosexual and bisexual characters, with Yuki himself constantly cross-dressing to commit crimes or seduce important people of both genders, and Father Garai liking both men and women despite his priesthood. I found this to be very progressive for the time, even by today's standards. Not much commentary is made about it, instead it's just casually there. Same goes for its depictions of sex, both hetero and homosexual. From what I understand, at the time, especially in Japan, sex in general was a point of controversy, in sequential comics or otherwise. In contrast, much like in *Ayako*, female characters are mostly there to be victims to be killed or used (not that the males in the story have it much better, but it's worth noting). Compared to Western Comics and other media in the '70s, I still feel Tezuka was way ahead of his time in both social issues and writing conventions.

The main appeal of the story is watching the dynamic between Yuki and Garai, and seeing Yuki's plans play out in clever and interesting ways, while Garai struggles with his faith and values. Sometimes there are cliches and contrivances, but for the most part it was satisfying to see the plot develop. It's also worth noting that Tezuka does this in only 26 chapters, all while not being reliant on heavy text like some other works of the time, manga or western.

Art:

The artwork in *MW* is quite good, and a slight but noticeable improvement from *Ayako*, which was released about 4 years prior. Tezuka's style is fairly simple, with clear line work and only a slight use of shading when necessary. Sometimes it can be a little cartoony, even cheesy, but that's a product of the time and it generally doesn't impair the serious tone of the story. His drawing prowess really comes out when he draws detailed cityscapes and natural landscapes. I was especially impressed by his various depictions of Yuki, who seamlessly transforms from a suave business guy at work to a convincing woman in disguise, or from a burly macho man in the streets to an effeminate sensual man in the sheets. He is a very well designed character whose appearance works for nearly any disguise without altering his body type or facial features, and it takes a real master to come up with and draw a character like that.

As for Tezuka's paneling style, it is very dense, usually having from 6 to 8 panels in a page. This allows him to meticulously pace the story, while showing more moment to moment actions and reactions than a modern manga might. Despite having so many panels per page, for the most part he goes light on the text, instead opting to depict characters' expressions, body language, actions, and reactions to get the point across. Very good use of "show, don't tell", which is refreshing especially when compared to Western Comics of the time. I find Tezuka to be a masterful sequential artist for these reasons, and along with his easy to parse style, it makes this a very smooth read.

As a word of warning: if violence, sex, emotional and sexual abuse, torture, manipulation, and various other despicable acts offend you, steer away from this book. This is a story about a man that embodies true evil, after all.

Conclusion:

All in all, this was a very enjoyable manga. It's not perfect, suffering from some cliches and contrivances and

a few predictable twists. But regardless of that, the plot was interesting enough, the pacing was great, the art impressive, and the main characters absolutely incredible. I would highly recommend this if you're at all interested in '70s manga.

Final score: 9/10

Kevin says

Whenever a former child star attempts to revise their public image into something more "adult", the results are often mixed, and sometimes disastrous. I still haven't determined if the transformation of Miley Cyrus from Hannah Montana into inflatable cock riding Molly queen is a witting parody of this pop maturation process or its victim. Fortunately she has vocal talent to spare, so she should pull through just fine.

I thought of this while reading Tezuka's brilliantly flawed attempt at mature material after making his name with the essential Astro Boy. I am not thoroughly familiar with Tezuka's oeuvre, so take my criticism with many bags of salt. Yet his handling of mature themes -- sexuality, rape, child molestation, murder, kidnapping, government conspiracy, US militarism, Japanese national pride, political corruption -- in MW is both compelling and off putting, brilliant and ham handed. As other reviewers have pointed out, the problem is the ending. There is so much buildup, so many balls juggled in the air, that it's disappointing that Tezuka chooses so many cheap ways to resolve (or avoid resolving) his conflicts.

Hence the three star rating. It is definitely a fun ride, if full of trigger-warning material, and his art work and mastery of the comics form is worth it.

Morgan says

This is a hard manga to rate. I was debating if I should give it three stars or four stars the whole time (nothing lower or higher though). Gave this four stars as a final because one I'm a sucker for Tezuka's work and two it had a suspenseful plot with a decent ending. Third stars though for the length and at points it seemed choppy compared to his other stuff.

If you read this though you might think that it had a strangely similar plot to V for Vendetta and this was published in 1976 too. Not sue if it was intentional or not, but kind of made me loose respect for that comic book as being anything "original" or "thought-provoking." Sorry folks, Tezuka did it before Alan Moore.

This also showed me that Tezuka can pull off different kinds of writing. I first read Buddha which was in the middle, then Asto Boy which is light, and then this which was very dark. The main character (who is the antagonist also) in this is very evil to the point it's genius. You might hate him so much, you might actually like the fact he is a sociopath maniac.

Even though this book has some homosexual element to it, the villain uses that the entire time as advantages to get revenge on the people who released the MW and made him mad. Hence why I think this is similar to V because he comes back to take revenge on the people responsible for the explosion. To be hnest too, this was easier to read and understand what was going on.

This is not something I'd recommend to others unless you've read Tezuka before or know that he doesn't always right the same "Disney" type of stories. This book is also very graphic and not kid friendly at all, so

keep that in mind too.
