



Finder, Vol. 09: Voice

Carla Speed McNeil

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Designed as a jumping-on point for new readers, Voice follows Rachel Grosvenor as she navigates the high-pressure social gauntlet that is her clan's "conformation" process, competing for knighthood in an attempt to win security for her mother and sister. (Lynne, however, can take care of himself.) But when the heirloom that's key to her eligibility is stolen, Rachel faces the impossible task of recovering it from the sprawling layer-cake maze of Anvard -- and fast. She's certain wandering family friend Jaeger Ayers would know where to start... but where do you turn when you need to find a "finder"? And what if you dig up one of the stray cat's payback-minded enemies first?

Finder, Vol. 09: Voice Details

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Fungus Gnat says

Rachel Grosvenor is a young lady faced with a set of challenges: To get anywhere in her world, she has to win a beauty contest for which she is ill suited, and the night before the finals she is mugged, thereby losing the ring she must have to stay in contention. Her attempt to cajole a judge into giving her a replacement ring by doing him (or her) a favor comes to naught, and the one person who might be able to find the ring, an ex-boyfriend of her mother's, is elusive, if not evanescent.

I should say first off that (1) I do not typically read graphic novels – this is only my second -- and (2) I have here jumped into the middle of a series. So, discount what I have to say accordingly.

To me, the most enjoyable things about this book are the author's imagination and her apparent enthusiasm for the work, both of which come through in the design of the world she has imagined and in her, uh, storyboarding (or whatever the term is to describe the geometry of action on the page). The world is rather like Earth displaced perhaps 50 years' worth of IT into the future, but with a culture knocked sideways to allow for a society so obsessed with the female form that even men acquire imitation boobs and no one is quite sure of other people's true gender. The intricate social context, with its competing and specialized clans and their sponsored gangs, is espaliered on a vertically oriented city whose nether quarters are always dark.

As I say, McNeil's imagination also shows in her artistry—the deployment of content across her panels, the play of light and dark, the care taken with architectural background and context, the insouciant halving of a character when something else in the frame deserves more space, the wildly exaggerated shouting emphases on words that sometimes can't even fit in their bubbles. The book repays attention to detail.

These pluses helped make up for a story line that seemed to me somewhat lacking in dramatic focus and drive. As I've already indicated, quite a bit is hung out there in the early going—whether Rachel will win her contest, which is dependent on whether she'll find the ring, which is dependent on her finding someone who'll help her find it. So there's a good deal of potential for suspense, but little materializes, because so much of the book is spent on her seeking the finder, and it doesn't seem like she's getting that much closer.

On a deeper level, apparently, this is supposed to be something of a coming-of-age story, in which Rachel finds her “voice,” as it were. But our hero is such a cipher in the early going that it's a little hard to understand where she's coming from, which obscures her growth into someone different (different from what?).

So, if I couldn't track the change in Rachel, how did I know this was a coming-of-age story? Because McNeil told me so! The book concludes with a set of notes, which I found helpful in some respects: They provided some useful background on the society, its technology, and some of the characters, and clarified the occasionally obscure plot point. But enough would have been enough. These notes address nearly every page of the book proper. It took me almost as long to read them as it did the comic. I'm not a fan of authors' jabbering on about their work, not in detail, at least. If they yield to the temptation anyway, then the less said, the better. No reticence here! McNeil, apparently not confident enough to let her story do the talking, favored me with interpretation (“There are five chapters in this book, and I hope to suggest Rachel's progress with them”), handy cues for reactions I suppose I should be uttering (“Boing.” “Zing!”), and at least one disarmingly apt insight (“There are fewer notes for this book than for previous books because I did a better job of getting the good stuff into the story”).

So, you say, I could've skipped the notes? What? No way! A book isn't finished till it's finished!

Kevin Fanning says

The amount of world-building Carla Speed McNeil has done around her stories is way beyond stunning. I don't know who else to compare her to besides Tolkien. Which isn't fair! Because I like her WAY BETTER than Tolkien. There's a really progressive, transgressive, feminist thing happening in McNeil's work but it's also extremely fun & funny & engaging. It would be one thing if she has just created this world with all these insane ideas in it. But then on top of that she tells thrilling, hilarious, and deeply touching stories. Every little detail in her stories totally matters to the world in which it exists. If there's a tiny sign in the background of one of the panels, it means something. It may not be important to this story, and it may never even be revealed, but somewhere in the huge history of this world she's imagined, that sign is there for a reason. It's absolutely mind-blowing. Thank God she includes footnotes for just about every page, otherwise you'd have no idea that there are three other stories happening beneath the story on the page in front of you. She is the absolute best. It is fucking criminal that she doesn't have the recognition and respect that her male graphic novelist counterparts get. She fucking demolishes them with every line she draws.

Mikael Kuoppala says

The ninth volume of "Finder" puts Rachel Grosvenor, previously a rather minor supporting character, into the spotlight. It's time for her to make it big. As a member of a powerful clan from one side, she has the chance to rise high on the social ladder, securing financial stability for her and her sister. She only has to win what rather strikingly resembles a beauty pageant.

Spending her evenings showing herself in fancy dresses to the clan elders, she has invested it all. But there are other things that are starting to demand her attention. Is she safe? And where is Jaeger, the Finder who might hold the answers to the mysteries she is discovering?

"Voice" is in many ways Carla Speed McNeil's broadest story yet. Its focus is completely on Rachel and her personal journey, but we get a view into the future world of domed cities run by wealthy clans in ways previously unseen. The insanity of a class system is shown through the eyes of someone who is relatively high in the pecking order and who has never known any other kind of life. But failure might be just around the corner, a reality as a misfit distinctly possible.

"Voice" is a bit more subdued than the best volumes of this series, but it does much better than any of the several Jaeger centric tales ever did by building its slightly goofy tale on great characterization and spicing everything up by fascinating sci-fi concepts.

Phillip says

This was absolutely wonderful and, still flush from having just finished it, I'd say that it was even better than *Talisman*, which seemed to end roughly where *Voice* picks up. Anyone planning on reading this needs to read at least the first three volumes in the *Finder* series beforehand. Many of the background characters that

show up here were introduced in those volumes. The Finder series is nominally about the adventures of Jaeger, but my favorite volumes have always been the ones that focus on the lives of the Grosvenor kids: Lynne, Rachel, and Marcy. Where Talisman told the story of Marcy growing up, Voice is Rachel's story. They both have in common the theme that Jaeger has had an immense influence on their lives, in many ways like a fairy god mother (monster?), but at the same time is mostly absent. He shows up when they need help and don't realize it, but whenever any of them actively try to find Jaeger, he remains out of reach. Rachel spends most of Voice looking for Jaeger, and discovers that even when he's not there, his presence is still around. What's great as always is the layered and nuanced storytelling. Carla Speed McNeil never panders or condescends to her readers. We're given what's absolutely necessary to understand what's going on and the rest is beautiful, lovely gaps. This book had better win an Eisner award. Now I'm looking forward to a volume devoted to Lynne.

Matt says

I get an emotional rush unlike any other from reading a book in the Finder series. This latest installation is no exception.

Rachel Grosvenor feels like someone I've watched grow up, raised by two differently-crazy parents and her mother's terrifying vagabond mutt boyfriend (series protagonist Jaeger Ayers), she and her siblings were bound to turn out remarkable and odd. Rachel's story does not disappoint.

The burden placed on Rachel's shoulders has always been that she has to be accepted by her mother's Clan, the Llaveracs. In the sci-fi city that she lives in, it's incredibly important for her family's future that she fit perfectly into this society of skinny, pretty ladies and lady-men. That means participating in a combination of Genealogical exam and beauty contest, and she'd better be in the top twenty if she doesn't want to end up outside the clan system. The city of Anvard is good to its insiders, and hell and murder on everyone else.

All of this is jeopardized when Rachel loses the ring that proves her lineage-- has it stolen, actually. Fans of the series will know that Rachel's old friend/replacement father/loyal guard dog/ crush/ unreliable bastard Jaeger can find nearly anything or anyone, and not be seen while he's doing it. Rachel, struggling for the opportunity to never need self-sufficiency again, is forced to be truly self-sufficient for the first time. She goes off on a quest to find a Finder. Along the way she discovers Jaeger's people-- his friends and his enemies, and Jaeger's still-living enemies are bad people to meet. Rachel's always wondered if she could stand on her own feet. Now she has to fly.

For more on comics, horror, humanity, morality and the world check out The Stupid Philosopher, aka a place where I put my words.

Molly says

this was the first volume of the "finder" comics that i've read and i think i would have enjoyed it more had i known a bit more about the series before picking it up.

Amanda says

There is more that I didn't understand than I did understand, but I liked the characters.

Wandering Librarians says

Anvard is a society split in to clans, and Rachel Grosvenor is the daughter of a Medawar father and a Llaverac mother. Rachel has worked long and hard to be part of the contest to be admitted to the Llaverac clan. Being accepted in to the clan will secure her family's future. Only days before the final competition, her mother's Llaverac heirloom ring is stolen, and Rachel can't compete without it. Now she has to find a Finder to help her get it back, and in doing so she uncovers more of Anvard than she ever wanted to.

Voice is actually the 9th volume of the Finder series, but it was especially written to be a jumping on place for people who hadn't read the whole series. Now that I've read this though, I absolutely want to go back and read it from the beginning. The world is fascinating, as are all the clans. The Llaverac clan values beauty and drama, and everyone, males included, have female sex characteristics. The Medawar focus in medicine and criminal justice. There are many other clans, all with a particular focus and specific values.

The Llaverac have this whole competition, which mostly focuses on physical beauty, which is ridiculous because all Llaverac look almost identical. There's some interesting commentary on the importance of appearances and keeping up appearances. Rachel has to have her mother's ring, even though everyone knows that her mother is a full clan member. It doesn't matter, Rachel has to actually have the ring on her.

In her search for a Finder to track down her ring, Rachel ventures outside her usually safe places in Anvard and begins to see other sides to her city. She begins to really understand how important it is to be part of a clan. If you're not, you're nothing, and it can be dangerous.

I'm not sure if I really understood everything that was happening. I was certainly able to enjoy it, but I wished I understood the world better. Which is why I'm going to go back to the beginning and read the whole series.

Rachel is an interesting character. She's tough and determined, but she doesn't really know what she's doing. She's grown up not really part of any world (intermarriage between clans is not looked on favorably), but it seems like she was sheltered. Now she's trying to gain entry to her mother's clan, mostly so that she can provide for her family, in particular her little sister and her father, who seems to be out of his mind. Not totally sure what's going on with him.

Looking forward to following this series.

Fox says

The skill with which Carla Speed McNeil weaves the world of Finder never ceases to amaze me. Every installment in this series brings out new information, new cultural information, and elaborates upon old characters that we may only have met for a second three volumes before. McNeil's imagination is vast, and I feel truly blessed to be given the chance to delve into it through these volumes.

Unlike previous volumes, *Voice* focuses more heavily upon the Llaverac clan and the way in which one becomes a full member of it. Rachel is the focus, much as Marcie was the focus of *Talisman* and the Llaverac beauty pageant is something that would put *Toddlers in Tiaras* to shame. The questions of beauty, of authenticity, and of personal identity are all delved into.. as are certain questions of societal mores. The footnotes that I love so in these comics also have grown more confident, and elaborate.

Also: how can't you love a comic book that questions why society is increasingly finding it all right to wear underclothes as normal day to day clothing (i.e. t-shirts.)? I love that she thinks of these things.

Mpho3 says

Any volume of *Finder* is easier to read then it is to describe. Shaenon Garrity characterized the series in *The Comics Journal*, as being 'simultaneously straightforward and labyrinthine, genre-based and uncategorizable. It's solid sci-fi of the kind they were making in the 1970s, Ursula Le Guin/Vonda McIntyre type stuff that's all about anthropology and world-building and a little bit of the old feminism. McNeil calls it 'aboriginal science fiction'.' Truthfully, reading *Finder* is more fun than reading about it. Nonetheless, there are some things that should said about it.

For starters, "seek and ye shall find" is the fitting epitaph McNeil chose for this volume, which contextually fits in with the others or can stand alone. It harkens back a little bit to *Finder: Sin-Eater*, where Jaeger's relationship to the Grosvenor family is most clearly depicted. *Voice* revolves around Rachel Grosvenor's quest to formally join her mother's tribal clan, the Llaveracs. To do so, she must participate in the clan's Conformation pageant to be judged for beauty and conformity to the purity of the clan's standards for androgynous presentation. At the start of the book, the pageant is already underway, but Rachel and her sister Marcie get mugged on the way home from the first night of the competition, and Rachel loses the heirloom ring she inherited from her mother. Unfortunately the ring serves as her passport into the competition. She can't participate without it, and so begins her quest to find the ring and baring that, to find the Finder (Jaeger) who could likely find the ring. However, it quickly becomes obvious that this particular Finder might not want to be found, and Rachel may just have to fare for herself.

Being of mixed clan heritage, Rachel feels pressured to succeed because doing so can make all the difference for her and her siblings who've had a hard time fitting into either of their parent's tribes (though frankly neither Lynne nor Marcie share their older sister's aspirations). Therefore, it's ironic that her quest to join high society takes Rachel to the depths of Anvard, the city-state where the story is set. Anvard is a rich mix of clans (all as different as apples and oranges), gangs, traditions, and technology. Part of the city remains in complete darkness all the time, literally as well as figuratively. Through her wanderings we're immersed in a rich culture and a wide variety of settings within it, from desolate bus stops, seedy bars and illicit businesses to the glamor of fashionable nightclubs and the pageant itself. We're treated to wide array of characters too, including a vampire cowboy (see McNeil's endnotes), made men (think *Sopranos*), and pair of androgynous realtor queens (think *Queer as Folk*).

As always, McNeil's artwork is gorgeous, reminding me more of Jaime Hernandez's work than his brother Gilberto's; but all three have an amazing eye for detail (little things on the page that end up lending a whole lot of meaning) and such skill in depicting gestures and facial expressions that are unhampered by the consistency in the way they draw their characters. Rachel's transformation from pawn to victim to sidekick to femme fatale seems to lift right off the pages.

Finder: Voice is comprised of some memorable scenes. One of my favorites is a confrontation with her "sister" Lynne early on and another is her accidental involvement in a sacred ceremony of the nomadic, outsider Ascians. There is a lot of stuff packed into not so many pages, and it takes genuine talent to pull that off.

Steve says

Carla Speed McNeil's *Finder* series is the best science-fiction comic currently published, and the most recent installment continues the high level of quality McNeil has established in earlier volumes. The *Finder* books take place in a rich foreign landscape, but like the best writers of sci-fi (and unlike the worst) she knows that it's more important that SHE has it all worked out and only gives us the audience peeks at that world. Her books are also populated with fantastically rounded out characters facing real-life problems. The only problem I have with this book is that it might be a bit inaccessible to new readers (due to those established character interactions, not the world building stuff; that she catches us up on rather smoothly). But then why would you want to jump into this series nine books in anyway? Go back and start at the beginning to learn the background of the relationships hinted at in this book. You won't be disappointed.

Mairéad (is roaming the Undying Lands) says

[March 19th, 2016] ...UNSURE WHAT TO SAY FOR THIS ONE

1.5 stars.

Perhaps it's the lack of context and background I have for this series but it was alright. The story feels more like a mix of falling down a rabbit hole and waking up in some random place you almost have no idea about. Very nice art style but I felt lost as I navigated the story and only had a general vague idea what it was trying to present to us, however one message is clear is that blood is important and can decide on your future, class and more. It follows the story of Rachel, a half blood, as she strives to find something important that could decide her very future, but where does one look for something or someone that doesn't want to be found?

Miriam says

[Edit: I am finally reading the first volume and enjoying it a lot, although I still find the fake-Indian stuff kind of iffy. Also noted that at the beginning they were actually called "Indian" and then she switched to naming them Ascians.]

I don't know how or when I ordered this (drunk?) nor did I know reading that it was volume 9 (not indicated anywhere in the text itself) but it is fascinating and bizarre and despite not being my usual sort of thing it was very well-executed in general and would have gotten another star had it not been for the "Ascian" minority being an offensively cliched portrayal of North American Indians with some Caribbean thrown in.

Adam Boisvert says

It's good. I've been less-than-pleased with the past couple of Finder collections, but with this one I feel McNeil is back at the top of her game.

The story focuses on Rachel, who may be the least interesting of the Grosvenor-Lockhart children, but this story hints that she'll have a pretty interesting adulthood. Lynne gets some good scenes, but most of his story remains untold. Chief Coward also makes an appearance, in which he is his usual awesome self, though he spends most of the story unconscious.

Jaeger (view spoiler):

Leif says

Looking for more diversity in my graphic novel reading habits, I found this at the library – no indication of it being a ninth volume in an ongoing series / world, just a seemingly stand alone, strange little book. But when I got to the end of the novel, mostly confused but a little comprehending, the notes revealed that whatever the reader will get out of her work is as nothing compared to the intensity of the author's communion with these characters, this setting, this world. It's not an experience that makes much sense to the outside, but it's decent enough – without the tired colonial clichés about North American indigenous peoples, however, which haven't aged a day since they were set to paper, even if they were meant well. But I can't say this is something I'd return to, although I did decide to read the other book by McNeil that I'd gotten out at the same time. It went... worse.
