



The Nao of Brown

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Twenty-eight-year-old Nao Brown, who's *hafu* (half Japanese, half English), is not well. She's suffering from obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD) and fighting violent urges to harm other people. But that's not who she really wants to be. Nao has dreams. She wants to quiet her unruly mind; she wants to get her design and illustration career off the ground; and she wants to find love, perfect love.

Nao's life continues to seesaw. Her boyfriend dumps her; a toy deal falls through. But she also meets Gregory, an interesting washing-machine repairman, and Ray, an art teacher at the Buddhist Center. She begins to draw and meditate to ease her mind and open her heart—and in doing so comes to a big realization: Life isn't black-and-white after all . . . it's much more like brown.

Praise for *The Nao of Brown*:

"Lushly rendered, passionately digressive" —*The New York Times*

"Dillon turns in a narrative tour de force, featuring a script that works in perfect concert with almost cinematic art reminiscent of Milo Manara, but with far more expressive characters. A triumph of comics for grownups, this is a must-read." —*Publishers Weekly*, starred review

"The art in *The Nao of Brown* is absolutely gorgeous . . . An intense story about a young woman who fights as hard to get out of her own head as some superheroes fight to save the world." —*The Onion's* A.V. Club

"This was the best read I have had in a long time." —Scott Stantis, cartoonist for the *Chicago Tribune*

"Dillon makes his grand return in what can only be described as a visual spectacle." —*The Beat*

"Amazing artwork; a truly novelistic piece of storytelling, full of wisdom and compassion; and a book which is a beautiful artifact, a treat for those of a bibliophilic inclination." —*Comic Book Resources*

"The battles are internal, but no less monumental for all of that. Such inner wars made *Sandman* a classic, and I have no doubt that Dillon's graphic novel will likewise be regarded as a seminal work in comic art." —The Houston Press *Art Attack* blog

"Psychologically complex and surprising." —*Paste Magazine*

“It’s a masterpiece, and I really can’t recommend it enough.” —Comic Book Resources

“Penciled and watercolored by hand, the pages glow with a lush realism, even in their darkest moments. The ever present motif of red can either anchor or engulf the reader, but always provides a vibrant glimpse into Nao’s life.” —*Asian Fortune News*

The Nao of Brown Details

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From Reader Review The Nao of Brown for online ebook

Raina says

K, this is gorgeous, y'all.

I mean, LOOK at that cover. Then, rotate the book - the edges of the pages are colored red. You probably don't even notice that the jacket is double sided (especially if you're looking at a library book where the jacket is taped to the cover). Then, you flip through those red-tipped pages and see these stunning, full-color, totally frameable watercolors. There are sections which are colored fairly realistically, sections which are washed in blue or red, and sections which seem to be set in some fantasy world reminiscent of the work of Miyazaki, drawn in drastically crisper lines.

And then you read it.

It's the story of a girl, an illness, a novelty toy shop, a washing machine repair man, violence, out-of-the-box romance, obsession, race, poetry, and the struggles of daily life.

It is shocking, stunning, heart-breaking, sweet, awkward and gross in turns.

I think I read it in one sitting.

It's one of those where I'm teetering on the edge of buying the thing. I'm incredibly impressed at the achievement and scope. Although I didn't connect with it. I didn't feel a sense of ownership, of it being my story. But maybe that shouldn't matter. I thoroughly appreciate this window into a way of life that is so different from my own. It's out of the box. It's unexpected storytelling. Maybe that's why it hasn't won more acclaim. Innovation has a hard time finding an audience sometimes.

But THIS.

Deserves one.

Seth T. says

I've always had a soft spot for comics, but before I started Good Ok Bad, I was more interested in literary fiction. *The Savage Detectives*, *Wind-Up Bird Chronicle*, *Never Let Me Go*, *Franny and Zooey*, *Cat's Cradle*, *Foucault's Pendulum*, *Lord of the Flies*, *The Great Gatsby*, *A Tree Grows in Brooklyn*. I don't mention these to drop names but to give you a place to hang your hat, a way of knowing what I'm talking about. Maybe you've read all of these. Maybe only one or two. But in either case, you should understand that I'm talking about those literary works of heft (and not necessarily of physical heft) that demand careful reading and even more careful interpretation.

[This doesn't have to do with literature. I just found her expression cute and endearing.]

There was just something in the challenge presented by those books that called out to me in a way that enriched my life. And since beginning Good Ok Bad, I've had to shelve my interest in literary fiction almost entirely. I spend all my spare time (after work and family and side work) reading comics for review and

then reviewing a handful of those. I read a lot every week and preparing a review takes up at least an evening. And so I've missed my first love: meaty books. Sadly, comics haven't ever risen to the task of filling that void. At least not generally.

Even the best comics are works of genre fiction, fantasies or sci-fi or sci-fi fantasies. Maybe an adventure or a graphic crime novella. There's nothing particularly wrong with that. I adore *Nausicaä of the Valley of Wind* and think it's one of the best comics I've ever read. But it's no *2666*. Not that it has to be, either. There's plenty of room for fiction that is fun and fiction that is hard. It's just, comics has been largely missing the hard stuff for a long time now.

The last few years though have been particularly encouraging to me. There have been more serious works produced in English-language comics² in the last half-decade than in possibly the entire rest of English-language comics' history.³

I mean, look. We've gotten Moon and Ba's *Daytripper*. Chris Ware's *Building Stories* (and before that, *Jimmy Corrigan*). What else? *Habibi*, *Asterios Polyp*, *Big Questions*, *Sailor Twain*, *Mother Come Home*, *The Arrival*, and the work of Nate Powell (*Swallow Me Whole* and *Any Empire*). Each of these are huge steps toward comics producing something of literary magnificence. We can see them straining for and even sometimes touching a goal that I hold (even if no one else does) for the medium: that comics would at least in some of its product transcend⁴ its medium and give the world Literature. With a capital L.

With these works, I could see comics on the cusp. I could see creators growing at an almost unnatural pace toward something amazing. When *Duncan the Wonder Dog* came out I wondered if we hadn't arrived. The work was complex, filled with allusions, and spoke to something deep within the human experience. I was stunned to hold something in my hands that was exactly what I had been missing from the medium. But a single work is not an arrival. There had to be more. There had to be more creators doing things that were not just good and not just great, but incredible. Two years after Adam Hines' *Duncan*, Chris Ware's *Building Stories* was collected and proved my faith in the medium. It really is an astounding work, something that proves the essentiality of comics for certain stories and gives readers a work of complexity and importance. But Chris Ware is a known entity (and not exactly representative of comics as a whole). This is exactly what everyone expected of him. I felt I needed more. Hines was unknown (and sadly remains so, despite crafting such a sublime work) and Ware's star will not cease to shine brightly among the outside-comics literati. What would be the third work and how long would it take to arrive?

As it turned out (at least according to a quick look at Amazon), *The Nao of Brown* hit American shores the day before *Building Stories*. It's sad to think that such a beautiful, careful work could be so entirely subsumed in the wave of press for another work (even one that is great and careful itself), but fortunately *some* people were aware of *The Nao of Brown*. If it weren't for reading other people who gave the book a shot and thought highly of it, I wouldn't have known it existed in order to give it one myself. And now, like I did with *Duncan the Wonder Dog*, I'm going to be telling everyone I know that if they want to read a *worthy* graphic novel, Glyn Dillon's book is what they want to be reading.⁵

[Introducing: *Nao Brown*, killer. Sort of.]

The Nao of Brown is a wonderful collection of visual and literary themes, marked by a compassionate visual sense and a deeply dialogical atmosphere. It's one of those books in which word and image conspire together

in a harmony unusual for comics.⁶

Dillon is not only an impressive illustrator and designer. His art always on every page aids his story, lending voice and colour to his characters' dialogue—and to Nao's narration. In a work in which the majority is filled with mundane conversation, Dillon invests his characters with expression, carriage, and posture such that their story would be incomplete if only left with their words. These are real people and they are rendered realistically save for the fact that Dillon captures them in the best possible moment—all in order of course that the reality their story should be validated by their presence.

The art is gorgeous, pencil and watercolour (though these days it can be hard to tell just how much is post-processed in Photoshop—as if it mattered in the end). Dillon couches his work in a rich tapestry of visual metaphor. Rich enough at least that there's plenty of fodder for those willing to put the work in to interpret him. Visual motifs abound. From the recurring use of the circle to foreign and foreign-esque cartoon characters, everything evokes. The pages bleed with purpose. Even Dillon's use of colour seems to bear on his meaning. Nao wears red. All the time. Every time. Until the times she doesn't. *The Nao of Brown* is such a delight to the eyes that I find myself wishing every book looked like this—despite loving much the more simple work of Chris Ware and Jason. Dillon's art breathes, it has life. And life is exactly what his story demands.

[Check out this awesome page in which the bartender and Nao are juxtaposed, perhaps insinuating against Nao's apparent relationship to Steve.]

The Nao of *The Nao of Brown* is half-Asian, half-Caucasian and suffers from a violent interior life. She has a few friends but seems distant and distancing. She is afraid of herself and Dillon's exploration of her thought life gives merit to her fears. Generally, it would be about at this point in the book's description that I would slowly begin shutting down, losing interest. I realize that comics are a uniquely powerful medium for communicating the experience of the fracture of the inner self. *Epileptic* did it well. *Swallow Me Whole* did it well. *It's a Bird...* did it well. Even *Fun Home* and *Are You My Mother?* did it well in their own ways. The problem is that books about broken people tend to be mopey affairs. Really, *Epileptic* should carry a government label on its spine warning against combining with the consumption of alcohol—for such a terrible meeting would surely end in toasters and bathtubs and things too terrible to contemplate.

Happily, *The Nao of Brown* forges its own path. It's not *The Pleasure of My Company*, but it's probably not far off.⁷ For all of her fear and violence and actual, visceral anguish, Nao is a charming and beautiful young woman. I would want her as a friend. You probably might too. And from the outside, it's easy to see why few people realize that she's troubled any more than the next person on this sad, strange globe. In fact, she comes off at a glance better than a great number of us regular citizens. All of this means that Nao's story, while dark and terrible and innately concerned with the depravity of the human spirit, is told with a buoyant gait and trudges along with the delightful pluck of a three-year-old in slightly too large rain boots, kicking leaves and stomping puddles. The book is a delicate admixture of sobriety and humour, and it's imbibing this concoction that carries the reader through, granting the pleasure and honour of coming to the place at which interpretation may begin.

As with all books pregnant with complexity, *The Nao of Brown* requires dutiful attention and a steady hand—even when trying to piece together the overt story elements. (And that's before we even dream of answering the question of Dillon's purpose and goal.) After reading, desperate for someone to converse with

on the book (since my wife wouldn't finish reading it for another three days), I glanced around at reviews and found critics incorrectly reading all sorts of things into the book. One suggests that Nao was the author of the Pictor stories. Another suggests that Nao is oblivious of Steve's affection for her while Nao herself pretty much plainly states otherwise. And then, I haven't found a single critic who correctly identifies who Dillon most likely pairs with Nao by story's close.⁸ And if these details escape us, then legitimate understanding of the work's intent is almost necessarily elusive. And this is not to criticize those inattentive critics but simply to remark upon *The Nao of Brown's* glorious complexity.⁹ Many readers, even, are split on the book's conclusion, debating whether Dillon's finale was a cop-out or not. I would suggest that whatever one's gut reaction to the climax and denouement, it should probably not be trusted. Dillon's weaving of his story is subtle and multifarious, not the kind of thing to be judged quickly.

[Role reversal.]

I am so very deeply grateful for this book. I am grateful to Self Made Hero for going to the trouble to make this artifact available a world away in nearly-sunny California. I am grateful to Glyn Dillon for putting so evident an effort into making his story come to life with such colour and in such a beautiful production. I am grateful for *The Nao of Brown* for assuring me that literary fiction holds a life beyond the confines of prose and can even sometimes make visitation to the shores of the comics medium. And I am thankful to Nao Brown for springing into pregnant life from the pages of her book—because I think the questions that fuel Nao's dreams and fears are the questions that haunt and help whole populations of this earth. And we need a cipher, someone to ask the question that we might scrabble for the answers.

Footnotes:

1) I did squeeze in *IQ84* when it came out, but it was such a juggling match that I haven't attempted anything of the sort since.

2) And let's be clear here that I'm talking about American, Canadian, and British comics (and maybe Australian?). My lack of familiarity with non-English-language productions makes it impossible for me to judge there. Though I have been encouraged to know that there's definitely some, I guess, off-the-beaten path serious literature like Jiro Taniguchi's *The Walking Man*.

3) And let's remember here that I'm talking about fiction. Serious-minded, even outright dour autobiography has been a staple in English-language comics since at least, what, the Seventies?

4) And I don't mean transcend in the sense that they should stop being comics. More just in the sense that comics' evolution was retarded for so long that it still struggles against infantilizing its potential. Comics is, in a sense, a ghetto—and wild critical success in comics is often really just an example of big fish/small pond. I want to see comics able to present great cultural artifacts that can stand up with the Beethoven's Fifth Piano Concertos, the *Citizen Kanes*, the *Crime and Punishments*. That's what I mean by transcendence.

5) My recommendation of *Duncan* actually went over largely as a lead balloon. Very few of those who gave it a shot actually appreciated it. Some were confused by its complexity, some were too staunchly opposed to message, some thought it was fine but couldn't empathize with my adulation. Here's hoping things go better with *The Nao of Brown*.

6) Generally a great comics work is far stronger in one of the two elements (visual and textual) and

diminished in the other. Works like Gaiman's *Sandman* display verve and grace in their writing while the art suffers and is many times at odds with the written words. On the other hand we have something like *Building Stories*, whose design sense is beatific while its dialogue (while not bad) stutters by the comparison.

7) At least in terms of tone. It's nowhere in the neighbourhood of plot or purpose.

8) The author drops a tremendous tip in the first panel of page 202 if the rest of the story doesn't help spell it out.

9) I have struggled and wrestled with what Dillon has accomplished, and though I now think I get a lot of it, there are still questions and I cannot be certain that in the final evaluation I have gotten it right. This is a book that demands discussion. Maybe even heated discussion.

[Review courtesy of Good Ok Bad.]

Bine says

Wow. Ich bleibe beeindruckt zurück nach der Lektüre dieser Graphic Novel. Dieser Zeichenstil, die Farben, das Talent, das dahintersteht. Wahnsinn! Was für eine Kunst. Die Ideen sind teilweise echt skurril und ergeben doch so viel Sinn. Ich habe so viele Denkanstöße bekommen und habe mit der Protagonistin so sehr mitgerätselt über ihren eigenen Verstand. Ich bin ihr richtiggehend dankbar dafür, dass sie mir einen Einblick in ihre Welt gewährt hat. Eine tolle Persönlichkeit, genauso wie die Figur, die später Naos Leben bereichert. Es ist so erfrischend weg von irgendwelchen Klischees zu gehen, sondern individuelle Charaktere mit den tollsten Einfällen zu begleiten. Eine außergewöhnliche Geschichte, die mich einfach nur beeindruckt zurücklässt. Ich möchte mehr solche Graphic Novels lesen!

Roberto says

Mamma mi vuole bene, mamma mi vuole bene, mamma mi vuole bene

Nao, ragazza molto remissiva, è affetta da un “disordine ossessivo–compulsivo”. In certi momenti si immagina, colta da rabbia improvvisa, di picchiare o uccidere qualcuno che le sta vicino, di travolgere bambini in bicicletta o di rompere una sedia in testa a qualcuno. In queste vere e proprie crisi si immagina addirittura di dare dei punteggi all'intensità dello squilibrio (8 su 10, 6 su 10...), cercando di calmarsi con frasi ripetute ossessivamente (mamma mi vuole bene, sono buona, mamma sa che sono buona). Nonostante questo disturbo, che a volte le risulta insopportabile, cerca di vivere serenamente anche se, oppressa dal lavoro e dalle relazioni sentimentali, fatica molto a trovare un equilibrio.

L'equilibrio sembra arrivarle improvvisamente con l'arrivo di uno stranissimo riparatore di lavatrici, Gregory, un gigante buono che quando è ubriaco cita Shakespeare e i filosofi antichi. E' lui ad aiutare Nao a capire che nella vita e in ognuno di noi niente è in assoluto bianco o nero, ma spesso e volentieri il colore che più ci assomiglia è il marrone. Curioso il collegamento col titolo: Nao in inglese si legge come Now, ora. E Brown è marrone...

"Siamo bravi a insegnare il linguaggio, il calcolo, i giudizi e le paure, tutti concetti di cui abbiamo bisogno, non per sopravvivere ma per comunicare, raccontare e ascoltare storie. Le persone parlano spesso di uccidere il proprio Io, senza capire che la cosa più importante è comprenderlo per quello che è davvero, dal momento che non riusciremo mai a farne a meno. L'Io è il prezzo da pagare per la poesia."

Lo squilibrio creato dalla malattia è compensato dall'artificio narrativo del "fumetto nel fumetto", di cui Nao è appassionata. I richiami, i collegamenti, le citazioni, la storia nella storia, la cura del dettaglio potrebbero davvero creare un libro meraviglioso. Forse il finale troppo affrettato, o la complessità eccessiva porta a fare, terminato il libro, la terribile domanda: e allora?

Un capitolo a parte invece è la parte grafica. Sembra che le tavole con la vita di Nao siano state realizzate a matita per poi essere importate sul computer, ritoccate con Photoshop, quindi stampate su carta per acquerello e così colorate. Le tavole del "fumetto nel fumetto" invece sono colorate digitalmente, per differenziare le due parti.

Il risultato è graficamente strepitoso. I disegni sono reali, bellissimi e con colori meravigliosi. Uno dei fumetti esteticamente più belli letti.

Una bellezza che va a coprire anche parzialmente le carenze narrative. Tre stelle molto molto abbondanti.

Charles Hatfield says

Ping-ponging between photorealistic naturalism and frankly Miyazaki- (and Moebius) inspired fantasy interludes, *The Nao of Brown* is a smart, layered novel about the relationship between reality and fantasy—in this case the fantasies, both violent and romantic, of Nao Brown, a young British woman of partly Japanese descent, who struggles with OCD and her own murderous daydreams. Nao is a good person, and desperately needs to keep reminding herself of that fact, but she cannot trust herself; she so often imagines hurting or killing the people she is with. To keep these terrifying fantasies at bay, Nao resorts to compulsive mental routines that are meant to distract and redirect her thoughts (memories of Justin Green's *Binky Brown* cannot help but come to mind, and indeed Dillon pays homage to Green several times). She has other fantasies too, such as her crush on a washing machine repairman with a complex and poetic soul, a man she likes at least partly because he resembles a favorite character of hers from anime. As she pursues her fantasy of being with this man, she ignores obvious signals from another: the owner of the toy and collectibles shop where she works.

While these romantic possibilities, or entanglements, drive the plot, Nao's involvement with a Buddhist community center and her often frustrated practice of Buddhist meditation inspire fascinating digressions, detours rather, in the narrative. At the same time, the fantasy interludes (which tell an animistic fairy tale about a sort of tree spirit that recalls Miyazaki's eco-fantasies and the Brothers Grimm equally) take the story and art in still other directions. The important thing here, though, is Nao's relationship with her own mind, and her search for calm and self-mastery in spite of her disability. The Buddhist reflections play a large role in putting that struggle into perspective.

Visually, atmospherically, *Nao* is often brilliant, usually gorgeous, and a bravura performance overall. Dillon conjures London, and scenic interiors, with seeming effortless expertise, and the characters are distinctive and expressive. He handles layout ingeniously, using formal conceits (e.g. a split panel) cleverly but unobtrusively. His photorealistic drawing is nicely set off by a lightness of touch; the linework has an open, delicate quality, enhanced throughout by the lovely watercolors, which let the whiteness of the page shine

through and never cloy or distract. The fantasy sequences are different in style: rendered more lavishly, with something approaching the clear-line aesthetic of Moebius or Cosey and full, saturated, traditional BD-style color, they pop out immediately from their surroundings. Presumably Dillon's drawing has been extensively photoreferenced—facial expressions are so acutely, precisely *right* that they suggest long study—but only in the climactic struggle between Nao and her object of desire, the repairman, does this quality become distracting, almost grotesque, perhaps because it's supposed to be (this is where the relationship between the two characters tips into outright confrontation, and buried secrets come screaming to the surface). It's there, in the home stretch, that Dillon sacrifices charm in a bid for realism, depth, and climax.

Nao enthralled me on several levels; it kept me up late one night when I was supposed to be sleeping. I have to say, however, that the book's attempted climax and resolution didn't quite come off. Sudden lurches in the plot, as **[SPOILER ALERT]** Dillon leaps years into the future to show us Nao's self-transformation, do not explain enough. That Nao's perspective on life is transformed when she is struck by a car—a sort of *satori* or Paul-on-the-road-to-Damascus moment, and at precisely the point of greatest stress in the story—strikes me as too convenient a leap. The repairman's own deep backstory, hinted at earlier, is simply spilled in several pages of prose, abruptly inserted (mind you, I'm not against the use of such devices in comics in general; there is no reason prose and comics cannot work together powerfully, as in, e.g., books by Phoebe Gloeckner or Posy Simmonds). There are several delightful and humane surprises in the book's conclusion, and they make me want to like that conclusion more, but Dillon's plot-rigging is too patent there, too rushed. Long and rich as the novel is, it needed to be even longer to earn the kind of warm emotive payoff it asks for.

It remains a rich character study, a beautifully made book, and a delightful confirmation of how comics can redefine the relationship between reality and fantasy.

Cheese says

A beautiful book. Beautiful art, beautiful characters and interactions and soft enlightenment of beauty and reality.

Diane says

The drawings are beautiful but the story is a mess.

Solange te parle says

Alors... Je n'ai rien compris. (Et je précise que je peux parfois aimer ne pas comprendre, mais là je suis restée complètement extérieure.)

J'avais un certain nombre d'attentes étant donné le sujet du livre. Je pensais qu'on allait entrer dans la tête d'un personnage atteint d'une maladie mentale, comme le suggère le synopsis. Eh bien non. Ses "crises" sont très artificielles, et répétitives, et plaquées dans le "récit" qui se résume à enchaîner des scènes de discute dans un magasin de jouets japonais et d'autres dans un bar. Il y a un vendeur de machines à laver et un temple bouddhiste. En parallèle, une fable raconte comment un bonhomme à tête d'arbre doit trouver une épouse pour réintégrer sa famille (et son visage humain). Bref, un salmigondis ennuyeux où les personnages

sont inexistants et l'histoire au mieux confuse, au pire sans intérêt.

David Schaafsma says

Amazing book. Pencil, watercolor, wonderful art to match the great storytelling, certainly one of the best graphic novels I have yet read. The story of Nao, a girl working in toys and illustration and looking for love and peace, who has OCD with violent obsessions. Ray, her Buddhist teacher, Steve, her co-worker and long time friend, her roommate, her friend Gregory, all these folks figure in to help her get from black and white to... Brown, from Past to Now. Nao is hafu, half English, half Japanese. Much richness, depth, compassion, and to balance some of the Buddhist reflections, some surprising moves in the plot. Others review this in greater depth and better, so I would check them out, chiefly Seth Hahne, but I agree with him that this book is part of the growing body of graphic literature that demonstrates the greatness, the possibilities of the craft.

Miriam says

[Especially the baby. Eyeroll. I am soooo sick of the trite baby = happy ending equation, especially when it is implied, as it often is, that people only don't want a baby because of fear or other emotional problems, as if it was not possible for a psychologically healthy person to not want a kid.

Valarie says

Dillon's "The Nao of Brown" is a vividly illustrated story centred around a neurotic, emotionally disturbed Nao, of a unique half Japanese, half English descent. Beyond the resulting condescension she receives of her "exoticism", Nao continues to seek for that "perfect love" in London, and come to terms with her mental state -- her life is constantly disrupted by the violent nature of her intrusive thoughts and her obsession with them. This book offers a convoluted and disturbing but refreshingly new point of view on the nature of struggling to live a perfect (or at least normal) life amidst the complexity of the human mind that is capable of tormenting us, even in the most everyday setting. This unexpected nature of Nao's thoughts among her ostensibly mundane daily routine becomes reflected in the jarringly beautiful surrealist reliefs in illustration that occasionally surface and take the readers' breath away.

I read this last year on a school trip to the beautiful and romantic city of London, and on the night that I bought it on impulse under the "Best Graphic Novels" section of Waterstone's. It made me stay up a little later than I should, but it contributed so much to making the trip memorable. Only downside was the resolution that seemed a little too rushed and happy and ambiguous for anything to sink inside my head before the book ended -- but I appreciate the ambiguity of such emotionally convoluted stories that leave things mostly to the reader's interpretation, and for their satisfaction to personally resolve. It will leave you thinking for a while after you're done reading.

Nicole says

Loved it! Exquisite art and a fleshed out main character. Just had issues with the tidy ending...

Meghan says

I picked this from the library shelves the other day because it looked like it was about a character named Nao, and I loved the character named Nao in Ruth Ozeki's *A Tale for the Time Being*. This illustrates the point that people pick up books for all sorts of weird and happenstance reasons.

This has the most beautiful artwork and character renderings. A story about OCD, obsessive thoughts, washing machines and Buddhism, taking place in an upscale Japanese novelty vinyl toy shop and an urban Buddhist center.

Negativni says

Posudio sam ovaj strip ?im sam na pole?ini pro?itao da glavni lik pati od opsesivno kompulzivnog poreme?aja, ali ne od pretjerane urednosti, kako to ve?ina nas zamišlja, nego morbidnih opsesija nasiljem.

Dakle, Nao Brown ima opsesivno kompulzivni poreme?aj. To joj je karakterni osobina. To i da je malo ?udna. Njezina cimerica ne zna da miševi prenose razne zaraze i da su ozbiljan problem u stanu, iako je medicinska sestra. Vlasnik trgovine "dizajnerskih" igra?aka (hipsterke kopije manga/anima stila), za kojeg Nao povremeno radi, pati za njom još od zajedni?kih fakultetskih dana, ali to vidimo samo iz par gesti i pogleda.

A pri?a u biti po?inje kada Nao vidi debelog bradatog vodoinstalatera za kojeg se odmah zainteresira jer izgleda kao Ništa (lik iz fiktivne kvazi-mange koju ona obožava) pa pokida perilicu rublja svoje cimerice da bi ga upoznala. Susret je ?udan i neugodan, ali oni ipak krenu izlaziti. Me?utim on je uvijek pijan prije nego što ona do?e na sastanak, ali kao nema veze *to je, jebiga, ljubav*. I oni se sve bolje upoznaju iako se sve svodi na par pomaknutih situacija i dijaloga.

I sad, da ne bi sve završilo kao obi?na ljubavna pri?a: on doživi moždani udar, a nju udari automobil!

I to nije sve. Nakon toga vodoinstalater napiše autobiografsku knjigu o tome kako ga je na satima budizma seksualno zlostavljao jedan od u?itelja, a ona pobjedi svoj opsesivno kompulzivni poreme?aj, ?ak i rodi dijete što joj dotad nije bilo zamislivo. Jedino nisam siguran ?ije je dijete. Možda od onog prijatelja s faksa? On je prikazan na par zadnjih sli?ica, pa pretpostavljam...

Da, nasumi?no je uba?ena i nekakva alegori?na pri?a u kvazi-manga stilu o dje?aku drvetu koji ?uva ovce, kasnije oženi k?i kapetana, a na kraju mu spale lice i on postane lijep.. ili tako nešto.

Nedavno sam gledao jedan odli?an dokumentarac *OCD: A Monster in my Mind* gdje je kroz par primjera prikazano kako je teško živjeti s tim poreme?ajem, cijeli se život svodi na ponavljanje rutina. No, autor ovog stripa je OCD iskoristio samo da pokaže kako je njegova glavna junakinja ?udna - ?isti hipsterizam. Likovi su emotivno hladni i nemaju karakternih osobina - svatko je samo "?udan" na svoj na?in. Sama pri?a je konfuzna, a u trenutku kada bi kona?no moglo do?i do zanimljive drame ili možda ?ak i neobi?ne ljubavne pri?e autor oba glavna lika baca u komu - i to doslovno! A nakon toga pri?a ska?e nekoliko godina unaprijed gdje je sve kao razriješeno. Hm, iz toga bi se svašta moglo is?itati i o samom autoru...

Uglavnom jedino pozitivno je crtež. Brze, povremeno i nesigurne linije odli?no se uklapaju u temu, a svi?a mi se i paleta boja kojom je strip obojan. Prolazna ocjena je isklju?ivo zbog crteža.

Ferdy says

2.5 stars - Spoilers

-Not great, it was nowhere near as good as I thought it would be — the plot and main character (Nao) just weren't interesting.

-I loved the illustrations, they were the best thing about the novel.

-The story was kind of blah... It revolved around a half Japanese/half English girl who had OCD and other issues. Yea, I didn't really connect with Nao's character, I found her issues and love life largely boring.

-I enjoyed the story within the story way more than the main story. It was quite a fascinating tale.

-Everything was wrapped up way too neatly at the end, it was all rather cheesy.

All in all, not impressed. If it wasn't for the illustrations I wouldn't have liked it all.
