



Finder, Vol. 01: Sin-Eater 1

Carla Speed McNeil

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Finder details the life of Jaeger, aboriginal detective, a scout and tracker of powerful loyalties but few allegiances. Sin-Eater throws him into the vortex of a complex and unravelable plot that he may have set in motion himself.

Finder is a drawn book that reads like a movie storyboard. Extensive notes and commentary by the author are included.

Finder, Vol. 01: Sin-Eater 1 Details

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Randy Lander says

Finder is an immensely ambitious, occasionally frustrating but mostly thoroughly entertaining read. Carla Speed McNeil has crafted a pretty immense world here, and it's clear from reading the comic pages and the annotations that there's so much more than she's able to get into the book.

That's good in that the world feels fully realized, and bad in that, as others have noted, the story sometimes feels maddeningly vague or incomplete. Without the annotations at the back, some of the story cues in the comic (like when it's a flashback or a dream, or even what a particular character is doing) are unclear or even downright impossible to figure out.

However, even without knowing fully what's going on, there are a lot of neat sci-fi ideas and some amazingly fleshed-out characters. McNeil does fall into the "tell, not show" problem with the characters from time to time, but even without her notes, you can pick up on a lot of inner conflict and flaws in the various characters. These characters feel more real than most fiction can manage, and that goes a long way in terms of making this a favorite.

In addition, McNeil's artwork is beautiful, reminiscent of Terry Moore in its adoration (but not objectification) of the human form, male or female and her mastery of expression, whether it's subtle facial expression or more broad physical movement. And while her panel structure is generally straightforward, she's not afraid to break the pattern in order to show off a chaotic moment, an expansive backdrop or a character experiencing something spiritual.

Doyle says

I got the impression after reading this that the author has a very rich, detailed world envisioned in which this story takes place. This world is full of years and years of history and social quirks which, unfortunately for the read, you are dumped into the middle of and given very little explanation or introduction to. I felt like I was on the outside of a very funny inside joke the entire time I spent reading this story. Perhaps future volumes of this series will bring the reader up to speed, but it should have been done in this first volume.

Ed Erwin says

I just went back and read this (and volume 2) for the third time. After having read all rest of the books in the series, this was much easier and more rewarding to read.

The story takes place in an extremely complex world and centers on some emotionally fractured characters with rich backstories. The reader is thrown in with little preparation, so lots of things are hard to understand at first. The story, or intersecting stories, are told via flash-backs, flash-forwards, dream sequences, etc., and it is easy to get lost. Some people will not care for that. But it is worth continuing. After a while, it all does make sense. I promise.

Anyone new to the series should probably start with *Finder*, Vol. 09: *Voice*, *Finder*, Vol. 04: *Talisman* or *Finder*: *Third World*. After you learn to understand the way the world works, the issues that the characters are facing in these first books, especially the effects on the characters of being in a mixed-clan family. It is clear that the world was fully built before this first story was drawn.

Read the footnotes. They are almost as important to the story as the notes in *Pale Fire*!

The black-and-white drawings are gorgeous and richly detailed. And these volumes also contain copious amounts of text. (The most recent story has much reduced the use of text.) Look for them in the full-size versions as the smaller size of the later collected version would be hard on old eyes.

Disclosure: I've known Carla since High School.

Eric Young says

The world of Anvard and the *Finder* is an amazing place I return to over and over again. This tale in particular, speaking of a family with cracks and one man, a part of but apart from, seeking to make things right and second guessing his every move. Lovely and I look forward to more from Carla.

Nadia says

It's definitely dated in parts and definitely feels like an indie comic (not a bad thing) but it was really charming and a lot more immersive than I was expecting it to be.

Matt says

This is probably the weakest of the *Finder* collections. Notice how many stars I give it, regardless?

The only problem with this story is that the first issue is visually and metaphorically overflowing with images, narratives, and ideas. It was overwhelming and confusing the first time I read it; it's a bit overwhelming now. After that first issue, though, Carla hits her stride. She has never lost a step since. *Finder* is perhaps the most perfect virtuoso performance of a writer-artist in the comics medium. Some might consider her unambitious, since she's "only" telling these strange sci-fi stories. I think she's one of the most ambitious and successful creators alive. The label of "anthropological science fiction" does apply, a genre that McNeil may well have created from whole cloth, but these stories do not stop there. Whether her characters are lion women, genetic constructs, or superhumans, they are some of the most human and intricate creations in all of fiction.

This volume is where Jaeger Ayers' story begins. A man of remarkable personal complexity, the Jaeger Monster fascinates from the beginning. Hairy, strong, sexy, smart, stubborn, flexible, angry, kind, blind, self-justifying-- Jaeger's personal morality is always consistent, and yet so alien and difficult to grasp that I never tire of looking at it. Whatever else is true, remaining true to himself is a true challenge, one that makes Jaeger's life very difficult once he inserts other human beings into the mix. He doesn't make the same decisions you or I would, but it's definitely because of integrity rather than for convenience.

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

Adam Boisvert says

As I was reading this for the first time, I thought there was a lot of interesting things going on, but I mostly found the story very confusing: many of the characters look alike, it jumps around in time a bit, there's lots of side stories that may-or-may-not relate to the main plot, some pages had dozens of references to odd things (most of which I still don't get), and many of the characters display unconventional morality. Then I found the author's notes at the end (annotated by page by page), figured out what the author was actually going for, and absolutely fell in love.

Now, on one hand, I consider it somewhat amateurish to make these sorts of notes necessary. On the other hand, it's a result of Ms. McNeil trying to tell an incredibly ambitious story and I can't fault her for refusing to 'settle' on a story that can be complete in-and-of-itself.

So what is it about?

Well, the titular character is Jaeger, an enigmatic mixed-breed who wanders from the wilderness into the city at the start of the plot. He was raised by 'Asicians' which are basically native-Americans in a world where "America" hasn't existed for quite some time. In their culture he is/was a "sin-eater", which means he occupies the lowest rung in their (short) social hierarchy, and it was his responsibility to take other people's sin as his own. He's also a "finder", which means he part of a secret society of ranger/detectives and would occupy the highest rung of their society, expect it's a **secret** society so nobody's supposed to know.

One of both of these duties gets him involved with the Grosvenor-Lockhart's, a broken family where the Emma (wife) claims the Brigham (husband) was abusive; Brigham claims Emma was crazy; Brigham wants to reconcile but Emma is terrified (or would be if she knew he was out of jail) and there's three kids caught in the middle. Jaeger (who's sleeping with Emma and best buds with Brigham) decides to investigate what went on, who's at fault and (most importantly) what's best for the future of the family.

Did I mention this takes place in the post-post-apocalyptic domed city of Anvard, a city ruled by genetically uniform clans (the Grosvenor-Lockhart marriage was cross clan and contentious from the beginning), with lots of weird tech and non-human species running around?

Fox says

Wow was the first word I could think to say upon finishing this. Finder isn't so much of a graphic novel as it is an experience. Finder immerses you within Speed's world, and it is not only a world: it is a world with a history, and fully developed cultures that all must interact with one another. It's a world that you get no introduction to, you're simply thrust within it and expected to keep up. I think I suffered culture shock while reading it, it's really THAT complex.

I for one cannot wait to get my hands on the remainder of this series. If an anthropologist ever quit their job and decided to put all of their experience and expertise into a graphic novel, Finder would be the result.

Carl Walker says

I actually expected this to be a lot rougher than it ended up being. Don't get me wrong... it still is a bit rough, but in many ways it's a promising beginning, and the world-building is definitely impressive. I am very glad that I was able to get a library copy of this volume, rather than the hardcovers which were unfortunately shrunk down to "digest-size." There's already more detail than you can easily absorb even at full-size! Reading a reduced version would have driven me nuts. Wish they would just keep reprinting comics with the intended dimensions instead.

Mikael Kuoppala says

Carla Speed McNeil's webcomic takes us to a future world of domed cities where a hierarchical clan system supports society. Our protagonist is Jeager, an aboriginal living outside the metropolises, drifting from place to place. Among his people Jaeger is a sin-eater, a man who takes the blemishes of others to bear, contaminated but respected.

McNeil's storytelling is messy and poorly paced, but she does have some interesting ideas about culture and the form different class systems can take and how they can effect the society as a whole as well as the individuals within it.

The biggest failing here is the protagonist. Jaeger is a fatefully clichéd character taken straight out of a really poor romance novel. Incredibly handsome, resourceful and sexually successful, yet lonely, secretly sensitive and gloomy. The heroism of a wild outsider feels way too familiar. Can this romanticized, Mary Sueish rebel character ever become something fleshy and real? Time will tell, but here his presence undermines much of what the story around him is trying to ambitiously accomplish.

K T says

Random library grab, along with volumes 4 and 5 (why don't they number the covers?). Kept my interest, though I did skim a lot of sections that were too much 'clever' text or philosophizing. Felt like a lot of set-up (although very vague and unclear set-up), maybe something actually happened in volume 2? Also had that plotless feel of a webcomic, which I guess it started out as.

As far as world-building, you get the impression that the author did a lot of thinking about it, but what we actually see on the page is very unclear and unfocused and I still don't know what's going on with the setting.

The art is unsophisticated but acceptable. Lively. I'm not a fan of heavy crosshatching though. Improves over the course of the volume.

Peter Tupper says

(This review refers to both volumes of the story.)

The bare bones of the story: Jaeger, a scout/detective with regenerating powers, comes to the domed city of Anvard. He's sworn to help an old army friend, Brig, find his wife, Emma, and daughters. Problem is, Emma and her daughters walked two hundred miles to get away from Brig.

McNeil talks about a lot in this story: class, gender, race, religion, coming of age, stranger in a strange land, cities, mental illness, family dynamics, artistic expression, colonialism, domestic violence, and more, and they all intersect in interesting, unexpected ways. It's ambitious, and if there are rough edges here and there, they're forgiveable because of the parts that work. McNeil includes copious notes in the back that are necessary reading.

There are certain elements that some might find offputting (furries, mixing science fiction with fantasy) but they're mainly in the background.

McNeil's art is remarkably expressive. I don't think anybody in comics today has her command of expressions.

Elizabeth says

I LOVE the Finder series. Carla Speed McNeil has a complete world in her volumes. It's thought out and interconnected, along with footnotes in the back of the volume for extra info. I really like that aspect as it's not important to the story to know every piece of info, but if you're curious about one thing or another it adds an extra dimension. I am always voraciously curious about such things so I love it.

The characters vary; this one is set with the main character of most of the volumes, whether he is physically in the story or not.

Luke Bailey says

i gave this 3 stars but I reckon I will give the sequel 4, as it takes a while to get a grip on the characters' world. plus the artwork is not jaw-dropping (and b/w), and you have to get used to the ubiquitous presence of furries, which i admit is aggravating.

but all that aside, the attention to detail in the artwork and storytelling is amazing. the intricacies of the setting itself are much deeper than one might give credit for at face value-- if you read it, you really have to go through the endnotes afterwards to get the whole feel. as this was the first part, and had to do a lot of stage-setting, i don't mind that it wasn't particularly plot-driven. i still whipped through it, can't wait to see the land outside the city in the next one.

Tina says

3.5. I think I came to this book with too-high expectations? It's a really, really interesting world (made even more so by reading the notes at the end of the book), but plot-wise (and character-wise, really), SO MUCH is left unexplained, or half-explained, and I don't do well with that. Basically, you're just thrown into this world full of interesting people and ideas, and you never quite get your footing. Threads are presented that are never picked up again. Nothing is resolved. It's just like this mish-mash of futuristic pop culture mixed with mythology. And again, while the world that's created is innovative and a lot of the scenes are interesting, I'm not good at just going along for the ride and enjoying the lack of plot. I need something to ground me -- I guess I'm old-fashioned that way.

This book's gotten pretty excellent reviews, though, so Comic Folk might want to check it out anyway. Although I'm reading an increasing amount of comics/graphic novels, I still always have the feeling like my lack of background in them leaves me missing things, or unable to appreciate certain things fully. Don't get me wrong, there have been some comics that have blown me away, but lots of other supposedly great ones do feel like they're going over my head.
