The first installment of NANNY & HANK, from Bluewater Comics, is a refreshing and charming start to a four-issue miniseries about death, marriage and immortality. It’s all about what happens when an elderly couple, your everyday grandpa and grandma, crosses paths with a disgruntled vampire.

The humorous tale begins with an irritable drunk ranting about his lifestyle. The loudmouth complains nonstop about the people he works with, blatantly name-calling them behind their backs. The bartender becomes increasingly annoyed by the intoxicated man’s rude behavior. What the tired bartender really wants to do is to throw this drunken fool outside onto the street.

But this isn’t actually your typical hangout, and it’s not a bar that provides drinks, but instead serves humans to vampires. The angry customer, O’Neil, has had too much blood, continually ordering another. He sloppily guzzles from his victim’s neck, spilling crimson all over the messy table. This is just one of the jaw-dropping surprises in the first issue.

Elsewhere, Nanny and Hank are eagerly preparing to go on a road trip from Florida to Ohio to visit their grandkids. Even in their 70s and feeling their ages, the retired couple are quite active in their daily routine. Still the free spirit, Nanny enjoys standing by the window to gaze at the bright sunset, encouraging Hank to watch beside her.

Written by Mark L. Miller, editor of the comics section of Ain’t It Cool News, NANNY & HANK strikes a well-constructed balance between drama and humor. A particularly emotional moment

occurs when Nanny visits her dying friend Gretta in the hospital. As they reminisce about their youths, the somber moment transitions to Hank staring vacantly at a previous photo of himself, remembering his old war wounds. Meanwhile, O’Neil is perfectly characterized as a punk rocker who’s still stuck in the ’80s.

The cartoony artwork by Steve Babb is exaggeratedly vibrant and playful, with the vampire bar wonderfully realized in the opening pages. Pay particular attention to the detailed drawings in these colorful pages. Babb’s illustrations add considerable depth and layers to the bar culture, eliciting an atmospheric sense of dread and stink.

This series has a lot of potential due to its unique perspective. Just who is the Council that O’Neil keeps mentioning, and what is his relationship with this group that has left him so bitter and spiteful? Readers do not even meet the entire cast in the first issue, in which the grandkids are mentioned in one panel as the top three on Ritalin’s 10 Most Wanted list. Though fans will have to wait to find out more, this introduction is a promising addition to the storyline.

NANNY & HANK has plenty of heart to go with its mix of blood and death. There are many touching instances between Nanny and Hank on the way to the shocking climax, which will no doubt leave many readers feeling heartbroken.

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