

“KILL SHAKESPEARE” (Graphic Novel Review)

Written by Jorge Solis

Saturday, 13 November 2010 11:07



KILL SHAKESPEARE, the comics series just collected in graphic-novel form by IDW Publishing, features an eclectic array of literary icons rolled into an epic supernatural adventure. The Bard's greatest heroes take on his most menacing villains in this original tale woven from his classic works.

Driven by his father's haunting ghost, Hamlet unintentionally murders an innocent man. To avoid persecution, the young prince is banished from his homeland and escorted to the ship *The Antonio*

. The further away he travels, the more Hamlet sadly realizes he will never reclaim his rightful throne and avenge his father's death. During an unexpected attack by pirates, Hamlet manages to escape when the ship is swiftly overtaken.



King Richard III comes to the rescue of the young prince, saving his life because the Three Witches have foretold the arrival of the Shadow King. In the battle against good and evil, the Shadow King will face a godlike wizard—William Shakespeare. Hamlet is shocked when he's told that he is the prophesized Shadow King, the savior of mankind. Hesitant at first, he goes along on the journey because he wants to save his father's soul, which rots in hell. He crosses into an enchanted forest that leads him to encounter faeries and other mythical creatures.

Yet as he marches forward, Hamlet doesn't realize he has been deceived. The traitorous Iago follows beside Hamlet, waiting for his chance to kill him. King Richard III and Lady Macbeth want the powerful quill that lies in Shakespeare's hand, and if Hamlet accomplishes his mystical quest, the supreme power will belong to them. Iago, however, has other plans for the quill, and Hamlet is suddenly alone in the world, with no one to trust. Surrounded by enemies and allies, he has no choice but to pick up a sword, and choose which side he's on.

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This reviewer was worried he might need his high school and college notes before reading KILL SHAKESPEARE. And a bit of research was required when it came to certain characters, such as Tamora, Queen of the Goths—once I had her backstory, it made sense that she’s presented here as a merciless archer. Thankfully, creators/writers Conor McCreery and Anthony Del Col have taken liberties of their own. The writers avoid the debate of whether or not Hamlet is pretending to be crazy, and present their own interpretations; Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Hamlet’s loyal friends, instead of bumbling comic relief. Andy Belanger’s artwork is vibrantly exaggerated, and unflinching in the violence department; Belanger does not hold back when Richard III savagely gouges a soldier’s eyes out. You’ll be covering your face after you see Juliet hurl a spear through a man’s nose.

KILL SHAKESPEARE is a highly enjoyable adventure. McCreery and Del Col, skillfully juggle a Who’s Who assortment of characters, and Belanger places them in stylishly imagined backdrops on every page. Pick up this freshly original graphic novel.



{comments on}