

“THE VESSEL OF TERROR” (Graphic Novel Review)

Written by Michael DeShane
Monday, 03 October 2011 15:42



Considering they cost as much as a DVD and entertain for half as long, the question I always ask myself before buying a graphic novel is, “Would I reread it?” A sophisticated storyline, art that makes the eyes linger on the panels, and realistic dialogue with wit, humor and intelligence—those are the things that keep one coming back for more. Writer Magnus Aspli and artist Dave Acosta’s *THE VESSEL OF TERROR* (Markosia Enterprises) delivers on all these fronts, leaving the reader with an evil grin like that comic-perusing kid in the *CREEPSHOW* poster.



THE VESSEL OF TERROR begins aboard the research vessel *Alesia*, where all does not go well after the crew pulls a new species of leviathan-sized Magnapinna squid from the cold depths of the North Atlantic Ocean. This scientific curiosity, with its 10 tentacles, has a glint in its pitch-black eye that seems to say, “I know things.” Unsettled by events aboard ship, the captain decides to return to the crew’s home port of Bergen, Norway. Interwoven with the narrative of the voyage are sepia-toned flashbacks to 14th-century Bergen, where a physician treating the Black Death begins to suspect that there is something more afflicting the town, somehow related to a sinister force lurking in the North Atlantic waters. After setting up its believable characters and dark premise, *VESSEL* explodes into a page-turning frenzy of sex, violence, suicide and reality-bending mayhem that ends in satisfying, if downbeat, fashion.

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Aspli’s story is subtle and smart, asking readers to engage their brains, guessing at the relationship between the medieval doctor and the crew of the modern research vessel. Acosta’s art is clean and clear, and every couple of pages has a panel that makes you think, “Cool, I’ve never seen that before.”

Previously only available as a four-part download, THE VESSEL OF TERROR finally unleashes its fury as a 128-page full-color trade paperback this month, just in time for Halloween. This review is off the digital version, but I’ll be buying a hard copy when it comes out. And I’ll be reading it again.

