

Eerie Queerie

The Complete Series

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Introduction

First things first: this series is both unashamedly silly and unashamedly all about the pretty boys. Despite my general appetite for *manga*, and awareness of the penchant for wacky hijinks, this series surprised me numerous times as just how insane it could get. I found myself laughing aloud one moment and then staring at a page thinking, "Did they really do that? Goodness!" It made me on the one hand feel like an old fuddy duddy, and on the other hand admiring at just how much the Japanese let their imaginations go when they choose to.

First, the silliness -- it's infectious and on practically every page. Most incidents are played for laughs, even those that normally might be very dramatic. This levity is fine, but it does lead to a few incidents (a lecherous attack or two) being brushed off as amusing rather than threatening, which did give me pause.

Second, the pretty boys -- this is definitely a *shonen-ai* title, and quite a bit less coy about it than other titles like **Demon Diary** or **Pet Shop of Horrors**. All these boys are there to be pretty, to be leered at in various states of dress, and to be romantically pursuing each other. As I read, I finally realized that what I was seeing was the equivalent of what many comics are for teenage boys -- an excuse to ogle pretty girls on convenient display. The difference is **Eerie Queerie's** for teenage girls -- so we ladies get to ogle pretty boys on convenient display. The pin-up included in volume 2 makes this abundantly clear.

On the one hand, at least it's equal opportunity, but on the other, it's still objectifying people, and if I'm going to be annoyed by it when it happens to women, I'll be equally annoyed when it happens to men. I try to ignore the evil voice in my head that says male readers now get to see what it's like to read an otherwise ordinary crime/superhero/comedy story and get smacked in the face with a T and A shot. All of this ogling, though, is not nearly as bad as it might be, and does not negate the outright fun of the title, just as Elektra's skimpy outfit doesn't negate her titles' kick-butt drama.

Art

The art in **Eerie Queerie** is more unique -- the jumpy lines and layout of this comic make everyone seem especially energetic, though this style also sometimes leads to some confusion as to what's happening on the page. Everyone is, of course, beautiful, and the long, thin lines accentuate everyone's gangly elegance. The proportions in faces are bit more skewed than other *manga*, so ski-jump noses and slashing eyebrows are everywhere. Character appearance also shifts often between the usual pretty-boy image and the outrageous emotional distortions common in slapstick *manga*. As per usual, the hairstyles are your cues for who is who.

The plot, you say? Well, yes, we're getting to that.

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Eerie Queerie: Volume 1

ISBN: 1591827191

By Shuri Shiozu

Tokyopop, 2004

Eerie Queerie follows the adventures of one Mitsuo, a loner high school student who has the misfortune of also being a medium. Due to his gentle nature, he's prone to being taken over by any strong-willed ghost in the vicinity. Possessed, he ends up apparently afflicted with multiple personalities, professing his undying love to a classmate one minute and then running away shamefaced the next. His classmates all think he's got a screw loose, but Mitsuo is determined to figure out how to control these spirits once and for all. It doesn't help that he always attracts female spirits who can't move on until they've proclaimed their feelings to one dashing boy or another. Situations only get more complicated when one of the dreamboats Mitsuo asks out "under the influence," Hasunuma, doesn't think dating is such a bad idea. Dealing with homophobic taunting from his classmates, ghosts determined to express their feelings, and conflicted yearnings for his new friend, Mitsuo is on the verge of totally losing it.

The humor is constant in **Eerie Queerie**, from the chatter of fellow students to the embarrassing slapstick moments that are bound to arise when a boy is possessed by the spirits of girls. Hasunuma is a teenage boy, ready to take any opportunity to manhandle that Mitsuo unwittingly allows. In the end, though, Hasunuma's sweet devotion to Mitsuo and his easy dismissal of cynics and teasers grounds all of the wackiness in a basic sense of affection. All of the stories focus on what causes spirits to want to linger -- the unexpressed feelings that can never be admitted after a death are finally brought out into the open, healing everyone involved. Mitsuo and Hasunuma are trying not only to banish ghosts but also to comfort a few of the living along the way.

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Eerie Queerie: Volume 2

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By Shuri Shiozu

Tokyopop, 2004

The second volume contains both my favorite moments thus far and some of the more bizarre (and vaguely unsettling) plot twists that have lead to my marveling at the boundaries Japanese comics push.

On a school field trip, Mitsuo, Hasunuma, and new friend (and, of course, potential beau) Ichi are all staying at a creepy old inn with a few too many ghost stories for Mitsuo's comfort. At first the spirits seem harmless -- stacking pillows in pyramids -- but then an urban legend of death after 100 hiccups starts circulating. Mitsuo, struck with sudden insomnia, starts getting nightly bouts of the hiccups accompanied by a ghost casually counting off each one as the hours pass. Panicked, Mitsuo tries anything and everything to stop his hiccups -- but what if he hits 100? What will stop his hiccups in time? In the second tale, Hasunuma keeps trying to get across his true feelings for Mitsuo, taking any excuse to elicit attention and preferably embraces from Mitsuo. Mitsuo is not quite so oblivious, but definitely confused, as is Ichi, the third point of this little triangle, who has felt drawn to Mitsuo ever since he helped him with his own ghostly problems. When they all become the targets of the vengeful ghost of a suicide, and a wild attack separates Hasunuma's spirit from his body, Mitsuo and Ichi must entreat a local priest for help.

The combination of comedy and tragedy in this volume make it some of the series' best plots, but at the same time, the introduction of the priest Mikuni raised some issues for this reader. Hasunuma's overzealous affection is more forgivable as one, Hasunuma never pushes too far, and second, his cuddling comes from

an honest desire to be close to Mitsuo. Mikuni is a different kind of man. At times, Mikuni is an accomplished, friendly, and expert exorcist as well as a knowing observer of his younger comrades. At other times, he's a lech and heartless manipulator, using his powers to take sexual advantage of attractive teens. Most puzzling are the other characters' reactions to him -- while Hasunuma, as the victim of Mikuni's forceful seduction, never trusts Mikuni, everyone else lets his behavior slide and treats him as friend.

I found this the most difficult part of the story to let go, even though the rest of the series is more engaging than any paranormal soap opera has a right to be. Once again, I'd run smack into the cultural divide between how the authors view sexual power and humor versus how I view such situations. This trend continues to be treated as humor as the stories continue. Once reading within this universe, all of the skewed dynamics become a part of the set up and thus easier to swallow, but once you return to the real world, the dismissal of domination and force is troubling. As with [Gravitation](#), it's difficult to figure out just what readers may unconsciously take away from these stories.

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Eerie Queerie: Volume 3

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By Shuri Shiozu

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In the third volume, matters get even more bizarre. Mitsuo and friends, including the enslaved ghost Kanau from volume 2, are all helping Mikuni prepare for the temple's new year festivals and rituals. When another medium, the darkly handsome Itsuki, collapses outside Mikuni's door, everyone agrees he needs help. Mitsuo is glad for the company of another medium while Mikuni hatches a plan to enhance his temple's business for the new year using Itsuki's talents. Cue the arrival of another stranger, an almost mute youth who has agreed to be this year's shrine "maiden," all seemingly for the love of the uninterested Itsuki. Will true love melt Itsuki's cold heart? Mitsuo meanwhile hatches a plan to make money by using his skills as a psychic detective. His first case lands him in the company of the Sanjaya brothers, a duck-collecting airhead, a man obsessed with dolls and Mikuni, and the youngest brother continually embarrassed by his siblings. Add to this crowd the spirit of a goat creature mourning the loss of his beloved and looking for a conveniently pretty replacement -- you can guess who he singles out for a test-run.

In this volume Mikuni gets some welcome comeuppance for his shenanigans. The wackiness is still mighty wacky, though once again there's an attempted seduction scene that's suitably creepy. Hasunuma remains the one character who's humanity really keeps the stories in the realm of the believable -- he's an example of that rare thing in *shonen-ai*, an actual, Western-definition-of-gay boy. He's not ashamed, nor in denial, nor effete -- he's just quietly pining for Mitsuo, as shown tenderly in the Valentine's Day story. We can only hope that by the final volume Mitsuo finally gets Hasunuma's intentions through his thick skull.

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Eerie Queerie: Volume 4

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By Shuri Shiozu

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I must admit, by the end of this series I am less enamored of its wackiness and more overwhelmed by its

creepiness. I still root for the lovers to finally admit their feelings, and the series inane hilarity has its moments, but the final volume's scattered storylines and slapdash finish left me less than satisfied. Mitsuo's family decides to move away from the city, and so, determined to stay with Hasunuma, Mikuni, and Echi, Mitsuo starts working at the only job he can find: a (female) maid. Of course, he ends up working for the bewildering Sanjaya brothers from volume three. Once Ichiro, Sanjaya brother number two the bumbling Mikuni stalker, lets loose a Mikuni look-alike doll animated with Mitsuo's desires, everyone's feelings are expressed whether they want them to be or not. As a result, Mitsuo finally catches the clue bus about his own feelings for Hasunuma, but can he admit it? Of course not. In the most nonsensical plot point yet, Mitsuo decides he shouldn't be in love with Hasunuma since everyone else is, and he believes Hasunuma will only be embarrassed and troubled by his confession. What to do? In a moment of panic, he blurts out that he actually loves Mikuni, and thus blows open the door for Mikuni's lechery – not the smartest move, but Mitsuo's never been all that sharp. Mikuni, who may be the smartest guy in this story, starts messing about with all of them, in his vaguely slimy way, and (finally!) Mitsuo starts to realize Mikuni has a scary side. In the end, Mikuni's machinations force our destined lovers to confront each other, but not before Mikuni gets some serious groping accomplished.

In final evaluation, despite the silly promise of the first two volumes, this series devolves into too much groping and "hijinks" to keep my interest except for wondering how it will end, and even the end is annoyingly coy. Hasunuma remains the most normal character, but his earnestness and intelligence cannot blot out Mikuni's nature or Mitsuo's blankness – it makes you wonder why Hasunuma bothers in the end. For fans of shonen-ai, the series holds its appeal, but in the end the scattershot story and barrage of predatory sexual behavior keep it from being a recommended series.

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