

Resistance is Futile

It's no great leap of logic to go from superpowers to genetic engineering -- if such science were given free reign, who's to say we wouldn't all eventually be supermen? Not necessarily a good thought, I agree, but a fascinating one. These titles are right up there with **Ender's Game**

for a printer friendly version of this list, click [here](#)

Shock Rockets: We Have Ignition

By Kurt Busiek

Art by Stuart Immonen

ISBN: 1593071299

Dark Horse, 2003

A refreshingly classic science fiction comic, Shock Rockets fits the bill for a plethora of requests from comics fans requesting more diversity from U.S. comics – a multi-racial cast with an Hispanic hero, strong female characters minus the skimpy outfits, and not a superhero in sight. Happily, though this politically correct set-up does feel a bit too contrived from the outside, the story and the characters combine to make a satisfying and action-driven sci-fi tale unburdened with a specifice “message.” It remind readers of what great fun barrelling around the sky in a technologically brilliant fighter could be. On Earth in 2071, after a massive war with an alien enemy, humans are left with only one defense, the unbeatable Shock Rockets. These agile and lethal fighters are a combination of unknown alien technology and man's greatest engineering and are piloted by an elite team of fighters. Alejandro Cruz, working at a garbage plant alongside his whole family, dreams of becoming a pilot. He tinkers with left over bits of flyers to create a ship for himself, figuring even if there's no chance in hell that he'll ever make it to a Shock Rocket, at least he can create for himself a taste of the experience. Little does he know that his first wobbly (and forbidden) flight lands him smack in the middle of a fight between the Shock Rockets and an alien attack. When one of the Shock Rockets crashes in front of him, the pilot dying, he reacts on instinct and takes the helm. To everyone's surprise, but most especially to his own astonishment, he flies expertly through the attack and wins a spot on the team. His fellow pilots are not exactly pleased to have him on board, especially as his arrival meant the death of one of their best. What none of them suspect, however, is that Cruz is the key to unleashing the Rockets as yet untapped power. Cruz is also discovering that his allies and enemies are not so easily identified and that the politics surrounding his team are far more complex than he has any hope of navigating. Stuart Immonen's cinematic art is the right combination of character focus and the energetic action sequences showing off the design and strategy behind the many dogfights and flights within the story. This comic should appeal to fans of such classic sci-fi as Robert Heinlein's adventures and Orson Scott Card's Ender's Game as well as anyone who's ever quoted, “I feel the need...the need for speed!” and meant it.

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Chobits

Volume 1

ISBN: 1031514925

by CLAMP

Tokyopop 2001

"Whatever happens, you must remember this: no matter how cute she is, no matter how human she seems, don't fall in love with her. She'll just make you cry." When Hideki Motosuwa finds one of the new "Perscoms" (short for "personal computers," of course) abandoned in a back alley, he's sure his luck has changed. Whether the change is for the better or the worse remains to be seen, but with his hectic schedule Hideki thinks he needs all the help he can get. Perscoms, all built to look like beautiful young women, will perform any task from household chores to language lessons, advanced mathematics, and accounting. Unfortunately, instead of a working Perscom Hideki finds himself saddled with a mysterious, artificially intelligent housemate who lacks the software needed to perform any of a normal computer's functions. Inexplicably, she is still able to move and to say her name: "Chi." Awakened into the world with no knowledge or data of her own, Chi must learn everything from Hideki, whose main concerns are still how to pass his college entrance examinations while holding down a full-time job. A 12-year-old computer genius adds to the mystery by suggesting that Chi may be one of the mythical Chobits, "computers of legend" capable of rational thought and independent reasoning. Now it's up to Hideki to teach Chi how to live and behave like a human, though he must never forget that in the end she is not flesh and blood but a powerful machine.

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Clover

by CLAMP

Tokyopop 2001

Clover also crosses the boundaries of girls or boys comics, the two audiences CLAMP commonly writes for, by packing a wrenching examination of love into an action-packed drama full of genetic experimentation and explosive battles. As is common in the best Japanese work, **Clover** explores all of the usual questions around genetic engineering people as weapons or slaves -- there's a reason Blade Runner remains one of the most recognized Western films in Japan. At the same time, **Clover**'s focus on the people involved, and not their genetic make-up, makes the story a uniquely human story at it's core. [read more...](#)

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A Distant Soil

By Colleen Doran

The Gathering: ISBN: 1887279512

The Ascendant: ISBN: 1582400180
The Aria: ISBN: 1582402019
Image Comics 2001

Aliens are about to attack! The only ones who can save us are a motley band of humans! I can hear you all saying, "Yeah, yeah, I've heard it all before." Ha! Colleen Doran's great trick is to take a classic plot from seemingly every sci-fi novel known to man and make it new, exciting, and not just a little bit funny! Yes, there are the usual trappings of sci-fi -- advanced societies gone horribly wrong, reluctant heroes, psionic powers, political intrigue, and battles in space. Embrace the sci-fi space opera (you know you love it) and you'll find yourself sucked in to an epic full of laugh-out-loud humor, love, revenge, and loyalty.

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Orbiter

ISBN: 1401200567

by Warren Ellis

Art by Colleen Doran, Dave Stewart and Clem Robbins

Vertigo/DC Comics 2003

I grew up with two physicists for parents. We often had great dinner conversations about subatomic particles and cosmology. When I was ten, I was allowed to stay up late to watch the first episode of **Star Trek: The Next Generation**. My friends and family can tell you that started a loyalty right then to space exploration and the Trek universe. As I grew up, I was allowed to raid my father's expansive collection of classic science fiction, from 50s era onward. I've always loved the wonder and yearning for exploration that space still holds, and it dismays me to see the lack of wonder many of my fellows feel for the possibilities space holds.

Seeing my history, you can probably guess why **Orbiter** is definitely the book for me. The basic story is classic sci-fi through and through: after a space shuttle, the Orbiter, mysteriously disappears without a whisper of warning, the U.S. manned exploration of space is completely suspended. Ten years later, that missing shuttle returns to an abandoned Kennedy Space Center full of mysteries and carrying an apparently insane captain, the only surviving member of the mission. Old experts, from ex-astronauts, physicists, and a psychiatrist, are brought in to discover Orbiter's secrets. They, of course, discover much more than they can comprehend. Thus follows a tale of broken dreams and rerouted destinies suddenly put back on course, whether the human race is ready or not.

Warren Ellis always writes passionate, critical dynamite, and Colleen Doran, ever since I devoured [A Distant Soil](#), is an intriguing and appropriate choice for a creative collaborator. As it turns out, they're also great friends and space enthusiasts. In the end, Orbiter is a story about not giving up the dream of space. With email, voice recognition, cell phones, and the Internet, we're already living in the science fiction I grew up with. But where's the shuttle to Mars? Where are the cities on the moon? Ellis acknowledges in his introduction (which I admit made me get teary), this title had a frightening prescience within its echo of the recent loss of the Columbia shuttle and the grounding of the U. S. space program. The necessity of books like Orbiter, and their ability to make us dream, can be summed up in his words, "Human spaceflight remains experimental. It is very dangerous. It demands great ingenuity. But we are old enough, now, to do these things. Growing up is hard. But we cannot remain children, standing on the shore or in front of the

TV set."

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Red Star: The Battle of Kar Dathra's Gate

ISBN: 1582401977

by Christian Gossett, Bradley Kayl

Image Comics 2001

This is one of the few graphic novels I've come across that made me sit back and just stare. The artwork, a combination of traditional illustration techniques and the 3D computer imaging used in the finest computer games, is absolutely stunning. Lucky for us, the story is equally brilliant. A reworking of world history, **The Battle of Kar Dathra's Gate** follows one Comrade Sorcerer through her brutal memories of the title battle in a conflict which mirrors Russia's 1979 invasion of Afghanistan. On that day, she lost both her faith in her country and, more personally, her beloved husband. Her story, however, is much more than it seems, and destiny has greater plans for both her and her husband.

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Red Star: Nokgorka

ISBN: 097147141X

by Christian Gossett and Bradley Kayl

Art by Christian Gossett, Snakebite, Paul Schrier, and Richard Starkings

Archangel Studios 2002

The audacity of reworking Russian history and filling it with technology-driven sorcery and mythological destinies still wows me when I consider Red Star – the authority and brilliance with which Team Red Star does leaves me gasping. We return to the world of the United Republics of the Red Star to find the once great now corrupt government falling apart internally while fighting a fruitless war against the rebellious and feverishly insular people of NOKgorka. As Sorceress-Commander Maya Antares and her remaining allies struggle to find reasons to obey their orders from above, a fourteen year-old member of the Al'Istanni resistance, the fearless Makita, stalks the remaining soldiers through the ruins of her city. The loss of her closest friend drives Maya into the smoking remains of the city, with Makita soon picking up her trail – what neither of them knows is that the greater spirits behind the battleground have far different plans than either one expects. Once again, the combination of traditional illustration techniques and computer-generated environments blends into a vivid iconic style that remains to be matched. The detail and the blend of history into the writing is just as remarkable.

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From Far Away

ISBN: 1-59116-599-7

by Kyoko Hikawa

Viz, 2004

Have you ever imagined what it would be like to live on an alien world? Have you ever dreamed you were somewhere else, in a place where all the plants, people, and animals looked different? What if one day you found yourself trapped there? Noriko's dad is a science fiction writer so her friends, who are all too familiar with her overactive imagination, hardly give a second thought to the odd dreams she keeps mentioning. Noriko herself is certainly not prepared to wake up in an isolated wood filled with flesh-eating slugs. The appearance of a beautiful swordsman who doesn't speak a word of English (or Japanese for that matter) is hardly reassuring! Meanwhile, Izark Kia Tarj is scouring the forest of his homeland to capture the "Awakening," a being that has been foretold to unleash a terrible evil into his world. When the Awakening turns out to be a frightened middle-school girl from another dimension, Izark finds himself saddled with the task of protecting Noriko from warring factions who want to use the Awakening for political gain. As Noriko struggles to get her bearings and learn an unfamiliar language, a chase begins through woods and caverns that tests Izark's fighting skills to the limit. Fans of Hayao Miyazaki's [Nausicaä](#) cycle will find another tale of war, politics, and strange creatures from a different universe, while those who prefer real-life drama will enjoy watching Noriko's attempts to make sense of her new life away from friends, family, and all that is familiar.

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Please Save My Earth

Volume 1

ISBN: 1591160596

By Saki Hiwatari

Viz Communications, 2003

Alice's family has just moved to Tokyo, taking Alice away from the countryside she loves. It's not just that she misses the trees and flowers; Alice has an unusual relationship with nature. Plants respond to her, almost as if she could really talk to them. Stuck in the big city, Alice escapes the trials of dealing with a new school and the obnoxious little boy next door in her dreams about the moon. Each night, she dreams about looking down on the earth from space. Alice thinks she's the only one until the day she overhears two boys talking behind a tree (amusingly, Alice mistakes them for *shonen-ai* style lovers until they discover her and clear up the misunderstanding). It turns out that Jinpachi and Issei have dreams like Alice's, only in their dreams they actually become other people: their dream selves (a man and a woman) are part of a group of five beings who guard earth from space. Alice is fascinated by their stories of love and intrigue among the dream characters, and soon she begins to dream about them too. Meanwhile, Alice is forced to babysit her bratty seven-year-old neighbor Rin. When Alice's patience with him finally snaps, she accidentally causes Rin to fall from a high balcony. In desperation, Alice calls on the trees below to save him. They do, but when Rin awakes from his coma he's mysteriously changed.

The first volume of **Please Save My Earth** introduces a host of characters (from both the dream and waking worlds) and a plot with intriguing, if mind-boggling, complications. I don't quite know what to make of a story where the villain seems to be a seven-year-old boy (even one with supernatural powers). Some readers may feel they need a scorecard to keep track of all the dream characters, who are embroiled in a tortured love triangle. That said, I look forward to finding out where this story is going. What do the

dreams mean? Are there others who share them? And what does Rin have to do with it all? Viz has published the first three volumes as of this review, and if the English versions are like the original Japanese editions the series will be twenty volumes in all. I hope this won't discourage librarians from trying it out. **Please Save My Earth** should be appropriate for any teen collection.

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Sigil: Mark of Power

ISBN: 1931484015

by Barbara Kesel

Art by Scott Eaton, Andrew Hennessy, and Wil Quitana

CrossGen 2002

Samandahl Rey doesn't ask much of life. All he wants is to enjoy a night out of gaming, the companionship of his best friend and partner, the sassy Roiya Sintor, and the command of his own ship in the intergalactic star field he calls home. What he gets, however, is a strange and powerful mark, his best friend killed in an ambush, and the power to detonate a mysterious large-scale weapon in an outpouring of grief. Due to his hasty retreat from the scene of the crime, strangers are forced to flee into his crew, his beloved ship is left hanging on by a thread, and he's retreating from every friend and foe in the galaxy, all of whom want to know what that weapon was. Sam is an ex-military, no-nonsense sort of guy. Enemies, comrades, battle, strategy, loyalty – all these things he understands. Magical powers, the mysterious reappearance of Roiya, and blinking into other worlds, he's not so comfortable with. An excellent straight sci-fi title from the consistently polished CrossGen universe, **Sigil** contains all the humor and action of classics of the genre, and the artwork lives up to CrossGen's high standards.

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Sentinel: Salvage

Sean McKeever, et al

Marvel, 2004

ISBN: 0-7851-1380-0

Nothing in life has come easy for Juston Seyfert, and in fact if you asked him he might tell you that nothing much has ever come his way, period. Life is hard on the world's junior-high geeks and dorks, budding engineers and clever introverts, and for Juston the addition of a posse of bullies with a special interest in his welfare feels like the last straw. Just getting through the day in one piece can be a challenge for our anti-hero, pursued by high school goons during the day and hazarding life and limb at night on a variety of mechanical salvage projects supplied by his dad's scrap business. Years of obscurity and practice with discarded technology pay off in a heartbeat the night Juston discovers a giant robot clumsily reassembling itself in the family junkyard's empty barn. Nothing much changes on the surface after Juston makes his most incredible find, except that every interaction and decision is now tinged with a starry glow of “Wow, have I found the coolest new friend EVER.” Juston isn't as invisible as he thinks he is, however, and after a few days his friends and family are starting to wonder what's made him so jumpy and distracted. Struggling to hide his discovery from over-curious friends, Juston soon finds himself up to the neck in difficult

questions: is strength the only thing that separates a nice guy from a bully? Does great power come with great responsibility? How does a giant robot help you get over your first big crush? And perhaps most importantly, what the heck is a fully-loaded battle robot doing crashing around in the rural woods of Juston's hometown, and who is going to come looking for him? McKeever's shadowy color palette and hip young-superhero drawing style will appeal to fans of Sidekicks (for the hair and clothes) and Brad Bird's The Iron Giant (for everything else) – even if you're not a big fan of robot-fiction, Sentinel is a great read for its sweetly accurate portrayal of the hazards of high school and mechanical expertise.

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Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind

box set, 4 volumes: ISBN: 1569313482

by Hayao Miyazaki

Viz Communications 1995

Often mentioned in favorable comparison to the anime film **Princess Mononoke** and authored by one of the most loved manga authors in Japan, **Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind** combines heart-thumping battle action with struggling for honor and a strong ecological message. Nausicaä is a passionate defender of the natural world on a ravaged Earth where plant spores and massive insects roam wild and few humans survive in pockets of safety. Intrigue between the ruling family's brother and sister drag Nausicaä into the politics which may mean the end of humanity unless she can find a way to take control. [read more...](#)

If you like, you can skip to individual volumes in the series:

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Mai The Psychic Girl

Volume 1

ISBN: 156931070X

Volume 2

ISBN: 1569310661

Volume 3

ISBN: 1569310599

by Kazuya Kudo

Art by Ryoichi Ikegami

Viz Communications 1995

Like many storybook heroines, Mai Kuju is just your average happy-go-lucky 14 year old. Her wishes are

simple: she'd like to grow up faster; she'd like a boyfriend; she'd like her dad to be home more. Of course, Mai's not exactly average. For one thing, she can move stuff with her mind. And there are these mysterious men following her...

Mai The Psychic Girl is a true manga classic. Ikegami's art is richer and less cartoony than your typical manga (not that there's anything wrong with cartoony, but Ikegami's detailed realism is pretty unique in comics), and his visuals unfold like movie shots. It's an action-packed story, complete with nefarious secret organizations, ancient martial arts secrets, a hunky, wisecracking guy, and the dramatic unfolding of Mai's psychic powers. After watching her father perish (or so she thinks!) saving her from the clutches of the Wisdom Alliance, Mai is alone and on the run. She finds an unlikely ally in Intetsu, a daredevil college student on a motorcycle, and his motley crew of dorm buddies. They too will risk their lives to protect this unusual girl from those who would control her powers. Not all the danger comes from outside, however; Mai soon discovers that her powers can kill and destroy as well as heal. Will she be able to control her emotions and protect her friends? What will happen when Mai meets her deadliest enemy yet, a young girl with powers just like hers?

Mai the Psychic Girl should grab the imagination of teen readers (despite the hilarious seventies hair some of the characters are sporting...). Volumes 1 and 2 contain brief nudity; in a wonderfully believable (and not at all prurient) scene, we see Mai in the tub wishing her breasts would grow faster. At one point, Intetsu's girlfriend answers the door in a see-through robe. Librarians shouldn't let these few panels stop them from adding Mai to young adult collections, though. This series deserves a place among the best graphic novels for teens. The fact that it's complete in three volumes is just icing on the cake for cash-strapped buyers!

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Zendra 1.0: Collection

ISBN: 0-9673683-9-1

by Martin Montiel, Jose Carlos Buelna, Stuart Moore, et al
Penny-Farthing Press, 2002

The Katellan year is 12544: the year the human race was destroyed by an intergalactic warlord and Earth's time ceased to have any meaning. Abathor thought he had eradicated every trace of life from Earth, but Dr. Forcilla of the race of Makers knows differently. The Makers, scientists and scholars from a distant planet, draw hope from an ancient prophecy: one day humans will reappear to take revenge on Abathor and rid the universe of his reign of terror. Working from scraps of human genetic material rescued from Earth, patching missing DNA with the Makers' own genes, Forcilla at last sees his dream come true in Halle, who he hopes will be the cornerstone of a new race of humans. 20 years later, Halle is ready to strike out on her own. Breaking away from the Makers, she sets out in a stolen ship (with an interesting passenger) to find the mythical planet Zendra, rumored to be the last remaining human outpost in the galaxy. Both more and less than human, Halle struggles to learn the range of her powers and to understand who and what she really is, always conscious of Abathor's growing influence, threatening everything she has learned to hold dear. Montiel's drawings are, in my opinion, more focused on exploding equipment and female anatomy than is necessary for a story that is as much about identity and growing up as it is about battles and intergalactic dominion, but this probably won't bother most readers. The story as a whole would benefit from less stilted dialogue and drawings with more accurate reference to the facts of human anatomy (admittedly almost a myth in Halle's age) but its interesting concept will keep readers engaged until the end.

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Cowboy Bebop

ISBN 1931514917

By Yutaka Nanten and Hajime Yatate

Tokyopop 2000

Ba baaa ba badabap. Waa waaaaa. Ba baaaa ba badabap. (insert melodic crooning here)

That, my friends, is the only thing I missed in this first volume of Cowboy Bebop – the groovy jazz score that enlivens the anime show is a sad but inevitable loss. Nonetheless, my favorite interstellar bounty hunters from Mars fills these pages with all the teasing banter; the tireless, if often hopeless, pursuit of piles of woolongs (i.e. cold hard cash); and the occasional shows of mercy that make the TV show kinetic fun. There's no need to have seen the show to appreciate the tale: on the Bebop, a junky but reliable spaceship, three professional bounty hunters haunt the planets, living like a dysfunctional family, and pursue any elusive prize that will allow them to retire drowning in wealth. The spiky haired, loose-limbed Spike charms with his low-key wit while the sexy cardshark Faye Valentine pursues money with a single-mindedness that excludes everything – including the soft spot she may have for Spike. Jet Black, a solid ex-cop, grounds the crew in reality. Wacky hijinks definitely ensue, from pursuing an ex-con who turns out to favor drag over violence to falling for a reality-TV ploy, though moments of seriousness are well-plotted and lend weight and mystery to the characters' backstories. So, get your hands on the Cowboy Bebop soundtrack and read.

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Neon Genesis Evangelion

1: ISBN: 1569313253

by Yoshiyuki Sadamoto

Viz Communications 2002

Shinji has always wished to know his long absent father, and when he's suddenly summoned to his father's side, he's both ecstatic and nervous -- what will his father want? The world is under attack by massive alien machines, nicknames angels. Shinji's father is responsible for creating humanity's defense. Little does Shinji know, but his father has far more in mind than a family reunion.

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Geisha

ISBN: 0966712722

by Andi Watson
Oni Press 1999

Jomi wants to be taken seriously as a painter. Her heroes are the Flemish masters, Vermeer at the top of the list, and like those illustrious artists, Jomi strives to show the amazing beauty in everyday life. Jomi, however, is cursed with one problem: she's an android raised as a human. No one is willing to believe that she has either any talent or insight into human emotion. So, in order to pay the bills, she enters into the family business: being a bodyguard. Her father and three rambunctious brothers are skeptical, to say the least, and insist on tailing her everywhere she goes. A supposedly easy assignment watching a supermodel's back turns into a much more complicated case, and all of a sudden, Jomi is asked to forge one of Vermeer's lost works. Will she take that back-handed compliment and mimic her mentor? Can she save her client from a dangerously inept stalker? Will her father and brothers ever let her do her job alone? Filled with excellent, light artwork and humor, Geisha examines personal vocations and family loyalties with a true eye and breezy humor.

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Fray

ISBN: 1569717516

By Joss Whedon

Art by Karl Moline, Andy Owens, Dave Stewart, Michelle Madsen

Dark Horse Comics 2003

When Joss Whedon was younger he always wanted to read the comic book about the strong ordinary girl as superhero. When he grew up he wrote **Buffy: The Vampire Slayer** partly in response to the horror movie trope in which the little blond girl always dies. In his world the little blond chick kicks demon ass and saves the world, a lot. In **Fray** Joss Whedon has written the comic book that he always wanted to read - the strong girl, with a regular looking body, and sufficient amounts of clothing, who carries the story and saves the world. I'm not sure if I'm ecstatic that he wrote this story, or profoundly depressed that in order to read this story he had to write it himself.

Fray is set somewhere in a post-Buffy future. Sometime in the past the vampires were vanquished and banished from the earth. As a consequence the line of Slayers died out and the Watchers became a fringe group of zealous lunatics. Which, as anyone who has ever read a book can tell you, is exactly when you should start getting worried.

Melaka Fray is a bit of a loner. She doesn't get along with her older sister. She gets into the occasional bar fight. And, she's one of the city's best thieves. She is understandably confused and irritated when a large thing with horns shows up and insists that she's the Slayer and the last hope of the world against a bunch of fairytale monsters used to scare children at night. But, a few run-ins with the undead, a startling revelation from her past, and one conspiracy later and Melaka is more than a little convinced, even if she is in way over her head.

The dialogue is sharp, and Whedon's post-Buffy world is both alien and familiar. He has created a new context without letting go of the familiar mythology of our own world. Karl Moline's art brings Whedon's vision alive on the page with rich colors. His Fray is not a buxom bombshell, she is lean and lithe and alive. You can see her growing up and becoming an adult over the course of the novel. Moline has not only made

Fray lifelike, he's made her real.

I can't begin to recommend this book enough. You don't have to know anything about Buffy the show to get involved with these characters, they stand on their own and will demand your attention and your involvement in their story. However, if you were a Buffy fan and wanted to know what happened later, albeit much much later, this is satisfying on yet another level. Plus, Fray's weapon of choice is the seriously cool ax seen in Season 7.

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Decoy

ISBN: 0967368324

by Eli Williams

Art by Courtney Hudleston and Bob Almond

Penny Farthing Press 2000

Little green men. It's an image we all carry around with us, like the Coke symbol and Armstrong landing on the Moon. The inescapable expectation that aliens will somehow appear as little green men rather than, say, rocks of black glass, just sticks with us. Well, in Decoy, you've got little green men, and little red men, and a whole rainbow of little men. Aliens they are, yes, but not at all what we, or cop Bobby Luck, ever expected. Luck, pardon the pun, does not live up to his name. He's a sweet, but rather dim, beat cop who's constantly behind on his job and never quite seems to pull of the career-making derring-do that his partner, Tessa Moreno, accomplishes with zeal. Luck decides to change everyone's falling opinion of him by taking a tip meant for Moreno and bagging the bad guys all by himself -- that is, until he gets gunned down by said bad guys. Cue the little green man. Luck wakes up the next morning to discover that though he didn't die, he is now permanently inhabited by a shape shifting little green guy named Decoy who, though causing all sorts of confusion, also manages to save Luck's caboose in more than once scuffle. However, Decoy has enemies of his own. Can these two survive the ire of Moreno, a mad scientist, and galactic villains out to collect a renegade?

The vivid colors and fun dialog make this title perfect for anyone who enjoys action and the occasional slapstick joke. At the same time, I was inordinately distracted by one visual: Moreno's breasts. Not because they are disproportionately buxom (though they almost are) but because they just never once look naturally placed -- that's some crazy push-up bra she's got on there. Now, I can usually get over anatomical weirdness in comics, but the supposedly foxy Moreno just kept ending up in positions that just made no sense in terms of gravity or anatomy. Fair warning to those that twitch like I do at such things. Despite the distraction, however, the comic is a fun ride, with Luck, Moreno, and Decoy all likable, fallible heroes.

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Gundam Wing: Endless Waltz

ISBN: 1931514720

Art by Koichi Tokita

Created by Hajime Yodate and Yoshiyuki Tomino
Tokyopop 2002

OK, let me see if I've got this straight. Gundam Wing: Endless Waltz is the manga version of a movie based on a show. Taking place after the show's timeline (and after other Gundam Wing manga titles), Endless Waltz reunites characters from the show for a final battle. And there are characters aplenty; besides the five warriors who make up the Gundam Wing, a team of manned battle machines, there are politicians and soldiers from various sides of the conflict to keep straight. Readers who aren't familiar with the show (and that includes me) may have a hard time.

Despite all this, Endless Waltz presents some pretty complex ideas about war, peace, and government. Ever since humans formed colonies in space, there's been conflict between these new societies and the Earth government from which they fled. The UESA-- United Earth Sphere Alliance-- is formed to govern both Earth and its colonies, but the colonies' needs are neglected by the Earth-based government. War seems an ever-present threat, until a faction on Earth establishes order in the colonies by force. In retaliation, militant colonists develop a terrorist plot to win their freedom by dropping an entire colony on the Earth Sphere. Before Endless Waltz opens, the Gundam fighters have prevented this tragedy and brought an uneasy peace to the UESA. Now, that peace will be tested again. Relena, a trusted foreign minister, is kidnapped by an unknown power on Colony X-18999. This new regime plans to seize control of Earth. Their leader? A little girl who may be the daughter of a famous Earth general. Will the Gundams be forced to come out of retirement to stop her? And who will fight on which side? The tale that follows has some interesting twists and turns. Endless Waltz is probably of most interest to those who are already Gundam fans, but it does raise some intriguing questions about waging war to achieve peace.

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