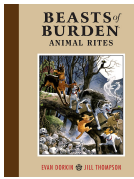


Beasts of Burden



Making yourself read outside your comfort zone can end up with some total misses

and some excellent surprises. In all likelihood I would have missed *Beasts of Burden: Animal Rites*, a graphic novel about a talking pack of animals that solve supernatural mysteries in their seemingly sweet suburban neighborhood of Burden Hill. That description wouldn't peak my interest, but also doesn't do the graphic novel justice either.

The storytelling is episodic, in that there are chapters that are a complete story into itself which makes for a fast read. There is a pack of animal friends, all dogs and one orphan cat who start uncovering supernatural cases in their neighborhood. They eventually become apprentices in the Wise Dog Society to further their training in fighting these evil forces. The supernatural stories cover a wide range from an evil coven of cats, a rain of mutant frogs, werewolves, magical earthen golems, ghosts, and more.

Supernatural storyline aside, this worked for me because it also involved some very real themes of friendship, bravery, loss and loyalty. The tone also finds the right balance of serious and funny. The pack of dogs isn't interchangeable either, they each have their own personalities including a wise cracking pug and a scaredy-cat of a Doberman Pinscher.

Lastly, the artwork is beautiful. The watercolors of the animals and the evil creatures are lush and effectively capture the right story tone. With that said, there is violence and gore shown pretty regularly which might put off some readers.

This graphic novel reminded me a little of Sam and Dean's adventures in the tv show *Supernatural* where the two brothers work to solve mysterious cases involving demons, witches, vampires and more. This series is also serious, but involves a great deal of humor as well.

Posted by sbowman on March 15, 2013

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