

## THE REPORT CARD

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*Reviews may contain information that could be considered 'spoilers'. Readers should proceed at their own risk.*

**Publisher****Blu**<http://www.BLUMANGA.com>**Credits**

Writer: Yun Kouga

Artist: Yun Kouga

Distributor: Blu

Translator:

ISBN: 1-59816-006-0

**Grade: 9**

**Blu's** translated publication of Yun Kouga's classic yaoi ***Earthian Volume 1***, is an exquisitely designed collector's edition. Nearly 400 romantic pages in length, the volume is twice as thick as your average 200-page manga, but not twice the price at a bargain US \$14.99, CAN \$20.99.

***Earthian's*** luminous eggshell-colored, veined paper cover features the golden couple Kagetsuya and Chihaya, two male angels from the home planet Eden who are living and working in different countries on Earth as checkers. Teams comprised of a negative checker and a positive checker are responsible for evaluating humanity's actions as minuses or pluses. If the minuses exceed 10,000, then humanity will be exterminated like troublesome cockroaches; if the pluses

exceed 10,000, humanity will be spared.

The teenaged Chihaya idealistically loves Earth and the "Earthian" (how the angels refer to humans). He is a checker who passionately counts pluses, while his seriously skeptical partner Kagetsuya counts minuses. Chihaya may be the only angel who can save humanity, particularly when many angels are contemptuous of the Earthian and their weaknesses.

Perhaps Chihaya identifies with the underdog since many of his fellow angels have shunned and bullied him for his singular crow-black hair and wings that are interpreted as a sign of bad luck. (Angels have light-colored hair and white wings.) Fortunately, Chihaya is highly connected. His adoptive father is the all-powerful archangel Michael who is assisted by the archangel Raphael, and Chihaya's partner Kagetsuya is of the nobility.

But Chihaya thinks Kagetsuya hates him, though this doesn't stop puppy dog-friendly Chihaya from blurting out that he likes Kagetsuya. Kagetsuya brusquely shows his affection for Chihaya by cooking for him and awkwardly justifies nonfamilial intimacies as part of his job. Extreme caution is required since physical love between two male angels is punishable by death.

Volume 1 of *Earthian* is packed with seven stories and an illustrated postscript by Yun Kouga who reminds us the first installment was drawn way back in 1987. Titled simply "Earthian," the first story takes place at NASA's Kennedy Space Center facilities at Vandenberg Air Force Base in California; the joyful astronaut Janice's dreams are contrasted against a backdrop of secret military initiatives. The passable multi-part story "Hong Kong Chinese" tries to wring sympathy for an overly pampered Dragon God priestess of an underworld organization who experiences a tragic loss.

In "Christmas Summer" on page 127, the winged Kagetsuya protectively and tenderly holds the wide-eyed, innocent Chihaya as they land amongst other checkers on the Hawaiian island of Lanai for a periodic review session of the checkers' progress. The drawing is very symbolic of the nature of their relationship.

"Valhalla" is the name of the angels' earthly lunar station, as well as the name of the story. Regarding related pages 152-153, too bad the reproduction of the double-page panel came out dark and flat; the panel captures the magical "love-at-first-sight" moment when Kagetsuya meets Chihaya at the angels' military academy.

The humanoid Taki rescues an unfortunate child from the unethical lab experiments of Professor Ashiya in the two-part "Eternal Romance." The sixth story "Phantom of the Opera" is about a manager's unselfish love for his opera singer client; the punchline is startling in a nice thematic way.

Archangel Seraphim's hair and wings have ominously turned black from disease in the final story of volume 1, "Armed Angels Attack." For this story, the opening double-page color splash of Chihaya in angel form employs an unusual palette. Chihaya's hair is mist green and pale chartreuse; his skin tone and militaristic uniform are filled in and outlined with light to dark shades of magenta; and Chihaya's usually luscious wings have transformed to a barebones lilac-purple metal frame of sparse blade-like feathers, making me recall the astounding wing variations found throughout **CLAMP's** lyrical sci-fi horror series ***Clower***.

Yun Kouga draws rapture-filling angel men. You could develop a fetish for guys with angel wings while reading ***Earthian*** (or guys with cat ears if you read her manga ***Loveless***). When I saw the anime (OAV, 1989) long before I read the manga, I initially thought Chihaya was female because of Kouga-sensei's girl doll character design.

The introductory color page in volume 1 reinforces this impression. Partially overlaid by a *sakura* (cherry blossom) pink pattern, the artful illustration is of Kagetsuya and Chihaya looking very much like a fairytale heterosexual couple on their wedding day. Adorning Chihaya's aqua blue-tinted hair is a band of pale ivory roses, and he has a feminine frilly neckline.

Is the time of the Earthian finally up? Can the goodness of the Earthian outweigh the evil they are capable of? Browse Yun Kouga's fantasy/romance series ***Earthian*** to find out.

Written: May 12, 2006  
Published: June 1, 2006

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