



## ***Flight #3***

by ***Kat Avila***

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

### **Publisher**

**Ballantine Books**

<http://www.ballantinebooks.com>

### **Credits**

ISBN: 0-345-49039-8

Creators: Kazu Kibuishi, editor/art director

### **Grade: 8**

***Flight***, volume 3, is an all-ages, middle-of-the-road color comics anthology with few surprises. This year the anthology is being released by a big league publisher, namely Ballantine Books, an imprint of Random House. Previous volumes had been praised so highly by the likes of **Library Journal** and **Publishers Weekly** that I naively expected a collection similar to Range Murata's provocative (image- and technique-wise) ***Robot*** series. Side by side, ***Robot*** makes ***Flight*** look like it was produced by a high school art club; that's how startling and disconcerting the contrast is.

That said, I'll admit there is a wider audience — the ***Snoopy/Bone***/Hayao Miyazaki domestic crowd — for ***Flight*** than there is for ***Robot***, whose appeal lies primarily with edgier, hardcore international comic readers and artists. Much of the work by ***Flight's*** 28 artists seems to come from a comfortable "comics are just for kids" perspective. But this could be due to a deliberate editorial choice for the content and the way comics can be accepted by the general public within the U.S.

Half the comics in ***Flight*** feature anthropomorphic animals and beasts either as protagonists or sidekicks, which further gives the collection a cute kiddie quality. This is a quiet collection libraries can safely stock and laugh off any parent complaints. (In California, in a neighboring county where I live, Paul Gravett's ***Manga: Sixty Years of Japanese Comics*** was pulled from all public libraries because of a single complaint, even though the reference work was shelved in the adult section.)

Surprisingly, only 4 of the 28 ***Flight*** artists are women, which made me wonder about the selection process and criteria for inclusion. At the back of the book can be found artist photographs and biographies (alphabetized by given name) in no particularly useful order; it's a game of mix-and-match.

However, editor Kazu Kibuishi is to be commended for pulling into the public eye many artists who could not garner the size of the audience for ***Flight*** on their own. Artist collectives should be encouraged by the anthology's success.

The excellent cover illustration by ***Flight's*** editor Kazu Kibuishi is evocative of Hayao Miyazaki's ***Laputa: Castle in the Sky*** and childhood fantasy in general, though its visual style is out of sync with the more cartoon-like comics inside. Personal favorites in volume 3 include Rad Sechrist's elbow-in-the-ribs "Beneath the Leaves: Lemming City," Matthew Forsythe's plain weird whale tale "Voodoo," Reagan Lodge's beautifully stylistic and smart "Tea," and Matthew S. Armstrong's humorous "Snow Cap" with its unshakable sharp-toothed beasts. Alex Fuentes' "One Little Miracle for a Hungry Swarm" belongs in another collection that would put you in the right mood to appreciate it.

As there was last year, there will be a ***Flight*** panel at the 37th ***Comic-Con International*** in San Diego, July 20-23, 2006.

Written: June 25, 2006

Published: July 1, 2006

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