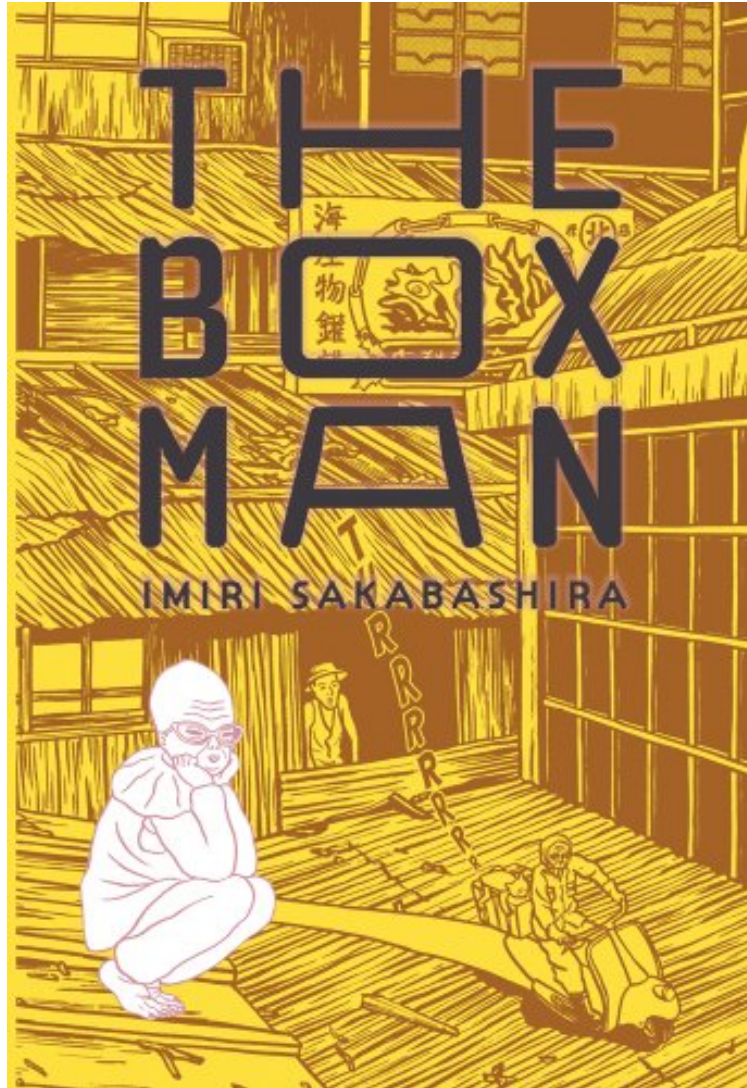


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The Box Man

Imiri Sakabashira

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#2476289 in Books Drawn and Quarterly 2010-01-19 2010-01-19 Original language: English PDF # 1 8.77 x 16.13 x 6.57l, .80 #File Name: 1897299915128 pages | File size: 27.Mb

Imiri Sakabashira : The Box Man before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Box Man:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. An overdose of surreal phantasmagoric imagery that seems to say something has gone terribly wrong...By ewomackSome things don't make narrative sense, at least on the surface, but nonetheless provide a wild aesthetic ride. "The Box Man," a gekiga manga that originally appeared in 2004, will likely perplex, or possibly disgust, anyone who scans its vibrant surreal landscape. Yet something remains undeniably compelling throughout the entire mad journey. Almost none of the manga's drawings contain dialog. The quaint "du du du du" of the main character's scooter dominates the soundscape. Phantasmagorical and sometimes graphically violent

imagery dots the tale as the man on a scooter and his companion, presumably a half kappa creature, putter along various scenes to who knows where. The artwork shines throughout and, for many who choose to complete this ineffable little book, may provide the dominant reason for carrying on despite the increasingly inexplicable events that unfold. And then there's the intriguing little box with the crab claws. Right away the story takes a surreal turn. The man and his creature companion get blown off course by a Godzilla-esque creature that leaps from a river. Their scooter crashes and ignites, but they soon obtain another one from a man sitting in a vast junkyard listening to baseball. The pair rides along through what looks like an early to mid-twentieth century Japanese city. Everything seems half abandoned and Kanji litters the walls of the dilapidated industrial scene. They ride through a corridor of the city as wires and pipes slither out from ceilings and walls. An immense train blocks their path momentarily. Things seem to go fine, though the scenery becomes more bleak, until the scooter's front wheel jettisons off on an elevated walkway and the duo plunge into a web of brittle wires. The strange box shows itself for the first time. A human face peeks out, followed by crab claws. The man slams it shut and the trip continues on foot through the murky nightmarish streets. Police try to stop them, but the crab claws behead one of the officers and appears to castrate the other. They flee with the box into a side street that takes them to hallways lined with highly ornate, but also highly creepy, carved ancient artwork. A small floating head speaks in pictographs and leads them to a larger masked body who seems to get angry at the pair's lack of response. The box comes to the rescue by producing a psychedelic frog. This apparently allows them to continue and they pass through a 1950s - 1960s style Japanese home, complete with television, nick-knacks and a two-headed pig. The hallways lead them to a series of rooms where a strange clown-like creature gleefully watches a series of monsters abusing women in various ways. A fiendish chipmunk holds a Japanese schoolgirl in a painful wrestling hold. A smiling science fiction monster twists the legs of a woman wearing hot pants and stockings. One incomprehensible monster drools over the head of a pinned down woman. A slithery slimy monster covered in tentacles grasps a girl wearing what looks like military dress and tickles her armpits. Other women get coiled in lizard tails, pulled up by their underwear or covered in worms. Later, men also succumb to the grisly tortures. The clown-like man watches all of this with great joy. One of the women escapes and beats the clownish man until his brains spill from his head, but the man pursues the woman and splatters his brains all over her head. It then appears that these scenes actually occurred in a film that all of the monsters and the clownish man laugh at while seated in a room with snacks. The scooter man and his companion witnessed all of this behind the scenes and now they try to creep past the group unnoticed, but, horrifyingly, one of the monsters spots them and they follow them. After a series of somewhat unexplainable events in which it appears that the monsters have enjoyed tormenting the pair, the crab claws once again save the day. The monsters get a taste of their own cruelty and after two of them get spit out by a giant mass, they chase the pair enraged. As luck would have it, they come across another scooter, presumably stolen from a man engrossed in karaoke. His song lyrics resemble Thai. Another chase ensues and the pair cruise by a table of policemen. They gaze at a wanted poster with a picture of the pair on it and instantly recognize them. A monster bites the head off of a policeman and the policeman shoot the monster in turn. This leaves a single police car pursuing the scooter over rooftops and past advertisements for "The Wasp Woman" and various foods and medicines. They eventually lose the police and continue on down a shoreline. The scenery becomes less cluttered until the scooter stops before a mosh pit of imagery. Framed by what looks like a fallen battleship and covered with icons of pop culture and other indescribable things, the overstimulating cacophonous scene appears vomited up from the depths of a half horrifying, half pleasurable melange of iniquity. The man on the scooter then takes off his glasses, revealing a starkly realistic face. He then opens the box and a part crab part human creature emerges. The human part of the creature resembles an old bearded man in what looks like traditional Japanese dress. Then, in an almost Darth Vader moment, the scooter man addresses the monstrosity as "father." He then tells his father that since he has become half crab he has become too decadent and so will leave him in the "sea of decadence." Then, leaving his poor kappa companion behind, the man rides off on his scooter. The crab man grabs the kappa creature and heads towards the morass of decadence laughing. The end. Perhaps this story just appeared piecemeal from the author's head and he followed it where it took him. In other words, "The Box Man" may just represent an experiment in stream of consciousness comics. Sort of a manga equivalent of David Lynch's "Eraserhead." Obviously, some people will appreciate this effort more than others. The book reads like a vivid dream and its drawings often produce real shock. But it also feels like a rejection of some sort. The scooter man abandons his father and the kappa creature in what resembles a miasma of shallow popular culture hedonism. Along the way they react to the scenery, especially the macabre chambers of monster tortures, with anger and horror. Maybe the scooter man has rejected the culture in which his father has raised him? His father, now a monster of sorts, has become uncontrollable, so the man just decides to abandon him and go his own way. The journey to the "sea of decadence" allows the reader to witness the man's disillusionment. The final scene represents the man's declaration of independence from what his father has come to symbolize. Other possible interpretations obviously exist, but it remains difficult to deny that something has definitely gone wrong in this world. "The Box Man" will not please everyone. Some may find it deliberately obscure or accuse it of "weirdness for the sake of weirdness." Fair enough. Others may find the drawings and narrative a fount of symbolism and meaning and try to pick apart just what this visually appealing but largely unpleasant story attempts to communicate. Those seeking a challenge or simply

looking for something different will find it here. Similar to most art, it will speak to some and repel others. And that's probably how it should be. 2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Boxed in by its own craziness
By Sam Quixote
A man on a moped with a box on the back and an odd Pokemon-type creature at his side cruises past an alien landscape alongside typical Japanese architecture. Except things are a bit off - monsters and half-man creatures are everywhere, the police are after him for harbouring a lobster creature in his box, and a disturbing-looking little bald dude with sunglasses is voyeuristically watching as monsters wrestle with humans. What the hell is going on? I don't know, but it's an interesting little book. It's mostly wordless and there are loads of psychedelic scenes which reminded me of Jim Woodring's work, and some of the monster/human scenes looked like straight out of a Charles Burns book. But besides a few well-drawn pages and a feeling of unreality throughout, I didn't get much out of the book. It's too weird, too all over the place, to really make much of an impression and the lack of coherent storytelling made it less interesting to read rather than more. I appreciate Drawn Quarterly putting out alternative comics from Japan but I wouldn't say this was the best pick as it raises too many questions without answering any, so it's frustrating to read rather than enjoyable. 4 of 4 people found the following review helpful. DQ picks and chooses well
By Rob
I have to admit I'm a sucker for gekiga AND psychedelic patterns so I'll easily sing the praises of this nearly dialogue free freak poem from Garo great Sakabashira. Unlike Yokoyama, who seems to be the critics current favorite with respect to spacing and travel, Saka-san was doing this many years before, as evident by this book's first half. A homeless errand runner and his Saturday morning cartoon cat are delivering a box through a maze of shredded paper and pipes and rubber with the police, sewer monsters and the comic panel itself closing in on them. Don't get lost, there's an awful lot of shading. It's a fast read, but not without a purpose. It boasts a wonderful centerpiece of several different exploitation-style images in a variety of styles, one per page, for the course of most of this book's center, before going on, delivering the mysterious, crabby package and...well, I won't spoil it. This comic will make your head spin with its speed and delivery squeeze your amygdala with its low-brow, psychedelic monsters. It rules. The one thing I have to critique is the packaging. Don't get all hurt, I love DQs hardcover decisions, and this one is no different, except the content begs to be enlarged. Really, I think this would hugely benefit from an over sized, hardcover printing, if only to better frame those freaky centerpiece pics; something like a coffee-table book. The art is worthy of it, honestly, and when he's good, he's real good, as these centerpieces are close to Suehiro Maruo level awesomeness! If you like psych art and travel and cats, this is a must.

THE FIRST STORY TO BE TRANSLATED INTO ENGLISH FROM THE SURREALIST AND ALTERNATIVE MANGA-KA
Enter the strange world of Imiri Sakabashira, whose denizens are zoomorphic creatures that emerge from one another as well as their equally bizarre environs. The Box Man follows its protagonists along a scooter trip through a complex landscape that oscillates between a dense city, a countryside simplified to near abstraction, and hybrids of the two; the theme of hybridity permeates throughout. One is unsurprised to encounter a creature that is half elderly man, half crab, or a flying frog in this world where our guide apparent is an anthropomorphic, mollusk-like cat. Sakabashira weaves this absurdist tale into a seamless tapestry constructed of elements as seemingly disparate as Japanese folklore, pop culture, and surrealism. Within these panels, it becomes difficult to distinguish between the animate and the inanimate, the real and the imagined a tension that adds a layer of complexity to this near-wordless psychedelic travelogue. Imiri Sakabashira (real name Mochizuki Katsuhiko) was born in Shizuoka, Japan, in 1964, the same year that Garo, the influential manga anthology in which he would first be published, was founded.