



Malice in Ovenland: Vol. 1

Micheline Hess

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Lily Brown is a bright, curious, energetic young girl from Queens, New York. When her mom forces her to stay home for the summer and do chores, Lily fumes. Little did she know that the greasy oven in the kitchen was going to give her more excitement and adventure than she could possibly handle.

Malice in Ovenland: Vol. 1 Details

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Author : Micheline Hess

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From Reader Review Malice in Ovenland: Vol. 1 for online ebook

Bina says

Review originally published on my blog ifyoucanreadthis.wordpress.com

In middle school, I was one of those kids going through all the adventure books the library had to offer. From the The Famous Five to kid detectives to opening that wardrobe, I loved it all and then had fun with my friends digging holes, running away from imaginary bad guys and hidden doorways. After that, a lot of “grown-up” books were a disappointment to me at first until I learned to embrace speculative fiction and started to consider other topics exciting as well. But this is a very long-winded way of saying that I still am that kid looking for adventure stories and when I heard about Malice in Ovenland, I knew I had to give it a go. And yes, middle-grade books still deliver the same fun and no, I did not try to explore behind my kitchen oven, cause that would be weird. (it was very dusty!)

Malice in Ovenland is a middle-grade comic by Micheline Hess and published by Rosarium. The first volume introduces fierce young, Black Lilly Brown, who does not get to spend her summer at camp like her friends but instead has to take care of her mother’s organic garden and a list of other chores. Already, and with adult eyes, I find this positioning important: Lilly lives with her mom and loves fast food but her mother has chosen to grow organic food to take care of her daughter and herself and Lilly also has responsibilities that she might not enjoy but takes care of nonetheless. This is not your spoiled middle-class kid and I love this glimpse of Lilly’s mother. And then, when Lilly attempts to clean the oven she tumbles into Ovenland, like Alice once fell into Wonderland.

How fantastic are those colors and especially that last panel!?! I love all the details like the cracked glasses and the horribly-green Bleh! Now in Ovenland, Lilly is locked into the dungeon, meets a queen and finds a kingdom in crisis over the lack of incoming grease. Yup people, if you’re going organic, make sure you’re not cutting off the kingdom behind your oven!

Lilly is everything I’ve always wanted from a heroine in an adventure story and I was in turns delighted and grossed out with her. There is a lot of monologuing going on initially but keep on reading it’ll get better and I did not find the message overly preachy, so hopefully middle-graders won’t either. I think there is a lot of potential in this story and I look forward to future volumes and Micheline Hess’ next project. I wish I’d had more female characters of color to look up to when I was younger, especially ones so visually present as in comics, and Malice in Ovenland totally delivers. It makes me want to get some kids from somewhere just to push this comic on them. And since I don’t have and don’t want kids, this is high praise indeed.

Malice in Ovenland Vol.1 will be out August 31, get it for your kids and your inner child! Also make sure to check out Rosarium Publishing, they specialize in multicultural speculative fiction, comics, and a touch of crime fiction.

Disclaimer: I received an egalley of this book from the publisher. But never fear, I remain my opinionated self!

Sara says

This one was a lot of fun.

Rick Riordan says

Malice in Ovenland is a super-fun graphic novel, great for elementary readers and up. Obviously, this is a new take on the Alice in Wonderland story, with a young heroine Lily Brown from Queens who doesn't like her mom's "healthy" new cooking until she is told to clean the oven and falls headfirst into a netherworld society which lives off the excess cooking grease from Lily's mom's oven. Lily has to find her way back to the upper world while pursued by a whole host of enemies who blame her for the recent draught of life-giving grease. Lots of fun, this is a fast-paced read with beautiful illustrations. It would make a perfect read-together story for parents and kids! After reading, you might even be tempted to find cockroaches cute . . .

Heidi The Hippie Reader says

Malice in Ovenland by Micheline Hess is a graphic novel for children. Lily Brown's mom tells her to clean the kitchen- and her adventure begins.

An excellent pick for reluctant readers, this story is a cute, gross, and, endearing romp through a fantastical world hidden behind an oven.

Lily's heroic journey reminded me of the comic series, *Princeless*, Vol. 1: Save Yourself by Jeremy Whitley. In *Princeless*, the heroine tires of waiting for a prince to come save her, so, she sets about saving herself.

Lily is no wilting flower either, despite her name. ?

With art and a storyline appropriate for the pre-teen crowd and an empowered female protagonist, I could see this being a great addition to any juvenile's graphic art collection.

What I enjoyed most about *Malice in Ovenland* were the homages to other great works of children's literature.

The obvious one, of course, is to Alice's Adventures in Wonderland & Through the Looking-Glass but I also caught shades of the Lord of the Rings in the poem included at the end of Chapter 1.

The moment that Crumb comes to visit Lily in the dungeon reminded me of when Taran met Gurgi in the *The Black Cauldron*.

The Queen's advisor, named Crispodemus, reminded me of Nicodemus the rat from the classic children's story, *Mrs. Frisby and the Rats of NIMH* by Robert O'Brien. (One of my all-time favorites, by the way)

And finally, *The Royal Rangers* reminded me of the Beagle Boys from *Duck Tales*— bumbling, minimally intelligent thugs, who would be harmless if they weren't so determined to be bad.

Malice in Ovenland would be a great title for a reluctant reader or a reluctant eater. The story, in addition to the adventure, teaches kids to not be afraid to try new things- either food or life related.

It's a message that can't be repeated enough.

The humor is mainly gross-out or potty-related but, as a mother of a soon-to-be-10 year old, that's exactly where her humor is at right now. It's perfect for the audience that it is seeking.

Big thanks to NetGalley for providing me with a free digital edition of this title for review purposes and thanks for reading!

Beth says

This is a fun book, but not a masterpiece. I was looking for graphic novels featuring African American main characters and I think this will be a great addition to the classroom. My son (entering 4th grade) loved the book and also declared at the end that he was going to start eating healthier foods (there is a message in all the adventure).

Terence says

A fun read with a definitely younger audience in mind than my usual graphic fare.

I was wondering what to get my 10-year-old niece for Xmas this year (2017), and Ms. Hess has made it easy.

Elise (LiveLoveYarn) says

I have often wondered what it would be like to read books like *Captain Underpants* and *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* as an adult- would I find these titles as funny as the young'n's who love them? Or would the humor be totally lost on me? Well, while reading this comic, I think I got my answer. Now, let me justify my two star rating by saying that I am not the target audience for this comic series but I *am* glad I read it and I *am* going to recommend it to our junior fiction buyer because I do think that kids will love it. The story goes like this: Lily Brown falls down the oven hole when her mom makes her clean it one day. There she discovers a whole world, full of grease-loving creatures who are bent on punishing her for the recent lack of grease flow that is the result of Lily's mom starting to cook more healthy foods. Adventure and hijinks ensue, Lily is home safe in time for dinner. Reasons I think this is a great comic for kids: we can never have enough comics/graphic novels at my library- the kids *love* them, gross out humor, fun and approachable art, and even a little lesson about healthy eating and appreciating your Mom/mom figure/s. Also important: POC main character, POC author/illustrator. As I said earlier, I was not the intended audience for this comic but I do think that those it is intended for will really enjoy it.

Jim says

?A cute story! Because the writing can be overly silly, I think this will appeal more to kids than to adults - but there were several times that I laughed.

And the message was good - if a bit obvious.

Recommended for reminding kids the importance of eating food that's good for us.

Thanks to Netgalley and Rosarium Publishing for a copy in return for an honest review.

Yomna Assem says

I received a review copy from Netgally in exchange of an honest review

Malice in Ovenland is unlike any other comic I have ever read. From the title you can notice that this is a spin off of Alice in Wonderland, It is unique, colorful and has a main character that is lovable. The idea of the comic was original, it was written wonderfully and it was just the right amount of pages. A fun comic to read.

Mark says

Cute, updated urban take on Alice through the looking glass, although I don't think this author was hallucinating quite as much as Lewis Carroll. My chief criticism would be that the characters of oven land were fairly one dimensional and predictable -and they all looked alike. I suppose there is only so much you can do with grease but a bit more differentiation as well as perhaps another group of characters or two would have been very beneficial. Nevertheless, an enjoyable story with good art, my qualification notwithstanding. I recommend it.

I received a copy of this book from Netgalley and the publisher in exchange for an honest review.

Edshara says

This was cute, but this is one of those that is definitely for children. The dialogue was better suited for the juvenile audience but there were some clever puns that made me chuckle. I enjoyed the obvious similarities to Alice in Wonderland and appreciated she left out the more whimsical aspects while still managing to have the adventure.

I appreciated the author's overall message within the story and since it is geared towards children, I can definitely get behind that. I loved the colorful and detailed illustrations and the fact that she incorporated some of the different aspects of being an African-American girl (I can identify with the hair issues!) I could have done without some of the gross parts, but I can't fault the author for that, its just a personal thing. Overall, this Graphic Novel was well done and I'm glad I gave it a read.

Paul Franco says

Schoolgirl in NYC has to stay home and do chores over vacation while all her friends go do fun stuff. As if that wasn't bad enough, she has to put up with her mom's organic food—even has to trek to water the garden—and then her mom goes away; is it legal to leave a kid that young alone? But she perseveres and does as told, getting everything done until the last item: clean the oven. A creature steals her earring and it's

all Alice in Wonderland, greasy style, from there.

There are some great lines in here, like "Now I know how a French fry feels." There's a poem called "The Day the Grease Stopped Flowing." I knew organic food was bad for you! The Ovenland crest has crossed spatulas under a plate of bacon. . . I want one.

"Ahem!" Never seen a ghost beg for attention.

The protagonist talks out loud rather than thinking it—that's a bit annoying, but thankfully corrected midway. The "Lily Ma'am" thing pops out every once in a while and it always makes me chuckle. She somehow manages to turn a giant roach into a puppy. There's even a reference to Pizza Rat.

Don't really buy the ending; maybe she likes the food now, but the chores?

6 pages of bonus art, including a cover that would have been better than the one they used. Never thought I would say this sentence, but there's a cover of Lily "riding the roach," and no, that's not a euphemism.

All in all, fun enough for kids, though maybe too gross for the younger ones.

3.5 pushed up to 4/5

tony dillard jr says

For those of you not familiar with Family Comic Friday, I write this weekly article (normally on my blog) to help parents, teachers, librarians, and guardians to better understand kid friendly comics and graphic novels. You'd be surprised the number of times I have been in a comic book store and a parent goes to the clerk and says 'My kid loves Wolverine. He's six. Is this book okay?' The volume in question is Old Man Logan in which the Hulk and his cousin She-Hulk and their children have become a tribe of incestuous cannibals! Even more alarming is how the clerk responded "Oh, Hell Yeah! Your little dude's gonna love it!"

For today's Family Comic Friday, I choose the 2016 graphic novel Malice in Ovenland. The debut title by Micheline Hess, it tells the story of a little girl from Queens named Lilly. Because of questionable school grades, the young girl can't go to camp like her friends. Instead, Lilly also has to work in her mom's garden where it's all hot and sweaty and even worse- mom has started cooking healthy! Eggplant puree instead of chicken nuggets and fries!?! YUCK!

Due to a family emergency, Lilly's stuck at home alone one summer weekend. Her mother has ordered that the house be cleaned from top to bottom by the time she gets back- including the oven!!! That appliance doesn't seem to have been cleaned in decades and it's going to require Lilly really get down and dirty inside of it! But don't get too close Lilly or you'll fall in.... too late!

On the other-side, Lilly finds herself in Ovenland. Ruled by a fierce Queen, Ovenland has undergone a bit of a famine. The life sustaining grease that once flowed into the kingdom has dried up... all thanks to Lilly's mom eating healthy. Unwilling (and unable) to get the grease flowing again into Ovenland, Lilly finds herself imprisoned and cellmates with a ghost! Will Lilly get back home in time to clean the oven? Or is she to become the main course for her ghostly roommate?

One main reason I choose Malice in Ovenland is it's similarities to that Lewis Carroll classic Alice in Wonderland. I have loved that story since I was a child and I was interested in checking out this take of the beloved tale. Lilly is a fiercely independent young lady with a lot of smarts. She encounters quite a few unusual characters like Alice. Plus, there's some riddles, poems, and mysteries as like in the Carroll book.

I really enjoyed Hess' artwork. My favorite character was a tiny resident of Ovenland named Crumb who assists Lilly in her journey. The little guy along with the cockroach Max were an adorable pair that made Hess' new land a wondrous place to visit; no matter how grimy or smelly it might be.

This is Micheline Hess' first graphic novel. In terms of story and art, I thought the book was fantastic. But there was one part that nagged at me a little bit and it has to do with grease. See, the soldiers of Ovenland use the valuable stuff as artillery for their weapons. If this stuff was so gosh darn vital as foodstuff for the Frites of Ovenland to live on, why is it being used as a weapon? There were a couple of other times it seemed that the logistics of things wasn't so clear cut. But I chalk that up as rough edges that would get polished out as an artist/writer gains more experience drafting up further adventures.

As for further adventures, I don't think this is the last we have seen of Ovenland. At least, I hope that is the case. Lilly, Crumb, and Max are too great to just be used once! Further fun starring the trio is requested!

Malice in Ovenland, published by Rosarium Publishing can be purchased via Amazon in a number of formats. The three single issues that make up this story can be purchased digitally individually. A collection of the four can also be bought in both print and Kindle form as well.

A fun story with classic roots retold by an up-and-coming graphic novelist. Malice in Ovenland and Micheline Hess are ones to watch!

Recommended for ages 8-12!

Natasha says

While cleaning the oven, Lilly falls into Ovenland, where bugs and rats and creatures called Oven Frites have a kingdom that thrives on old grease and food leftovers that get stuck in the cracks and crannies of the kitchen. Lilly joins forces with outcast Crumb and ghost Chef to bring some healthy food options to the attention and favor of the queen.

A fun look at nutritious eating without being heavy-handed or didactic. It won't teach kids to pick eggplant over crisps all by itself, but it will reinforce lessons they learn elsewhere.

Wayne McCoy says

'Malice in Ovenland: Vol. 1' by Micheline Hess collects the first 5 issues of the comic. I've read some of the individual issues out of order, so it was nice to get all the context.

Lily Brown used to love her mom's cooking, until her mom started eating healthier. When Lily is left home to do chores, she loses an earring in the stove while she is cleaning it. Climbing in after it, she falls into a hole behind the stove and finds herself in a strange world that lives below her stove. It is ruled by strange creatures that live off of grease, but with Lily's mom's new diet, the supply of grease has kind of dried up. Lily is imprisoned, but finds strange allies in this new world, including someone who may have a new idea of how to feed this world.

It's a strange story, and all the grease references are a little gross, but maybe that's the point. The art is perfectly fine for this book, and it's a good story for younger readers. Lily is a brave hero and her new friends show us that we can find help in places that you may not be looking for it in.

I received a review copy of this graphic novel from Rosarium Publishing and NetGalley in exchange for an honest review. Thank you for allowing me to review this graphic novel.

