



The Case of the Simple Soul

John Allison

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The Tackleford gang is back with a new case that demands solving! When Tackleford's derelict barns begin going up in flames, Linton and Sonny are on the case with a moderately mysterious new friend. Paths cross, however, when Lottie and Mildred meet a terrifying yet misunderstood creature living beneath a bridge! Throw in an overly enthusiastic Fire Brigade, a transforming skate ramp, and a new French teacher and you've got the kind of charming genius that can only be found in John Allison's Bad Machinery.

The Case of the Simple Soul Details

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From Reader Review The Case of the Simple Soul for online ebook

Stewart Tame says

I'm not sure if it's all webcomics, or just the ones I happen to read, but the tone is different. Traditional newspaper comics--and even alt-weekly comics--are usually funny, generally with the gag in the last panel. The few that aren't are usually serious soap opera type storylines. Occasionally things will get changed up for a strip or two, but that's about it. For some reason, though, webcomics are different, mixing jokes and story in whatever portions seem right to the creator. The gags will happen when they happen, as will the tears. To readers of traditional comic strips, the timing feels ... off. It can take some getting used to.

Still liking this series. The stories, while fun, almost feel like an afterthought. If an entire volume was published with no mystery to solve, just the principal cast sitting around griping about how boring their summer was and chatting with each other, I'd probably love it just as much. If I were still of school age and living in the UK, these are the kids I'd want to hang out with. Heck, I want to hang out with them anyway, despite how creepy that makes me sound. Recommended!

paula says

Honestly, I would be perfectly happy reading nothing but Bad Machinery for the rest of my life. These books, half aimless British middle school banter and half ridiculous mystery, make me giggle out loud.

Katja says

I liked volume 3 as much as the ones before with one small point of criticism: Why is it that English people of all political colors seem to perceive the Irish as a people of thieving rule-breakers? Even awesome artists like John Allison who writes and draws about people of color and LGBT seems to have no qualms about introducing Irish kid Colm, who, of course, is a shop lifter. It really made me cringe. Colm is still a sympathetic and interesting character, but I can't get over this stupid stereotype that easily.

Especially after all the Irish had to endure under the hands of the English over the centuries...

Bruce Gargoyle says

I received a digital copy of this title from the publisher via Netgalley.

Ten Second Synopsis:

Six teenaged friends wrangle love, arson and underbridge-dwelling troll-men.

Despite enjoying the overall experience of my first stab at the Bad Machinery series, it would probably be wise for other newbies to start at the beginning. While it didn't take long to figure out some of the backstory that I'd missed (graphic novels are great for getting to know characters quickly) it would have been generally

more satisfying to visit this tome as an old friend. Having said that, this offering has impressed me enough that if the other two books in the series were to fall in my lap, I wouldn't be averse to reading them.

There's a decent amount of fun to be had with the Tackleford six (plus Irish weirdie Colm) provided you're a fan of teenaged, sarky, dry humour. I can imagine the general tone of the humour and it's delivery could get tiresome for some readers very quickly, but if it's your kind of thing, there's enough to keep your face in a perpetual smirk while reading.

I particularly enjoyed the plot line featuring the troll-man and the girls' attempts to gentrify him in order to find him a bride. Visions of a new reality tv show called "The Bachelor: Bridge-dweller" swam in my head as the girls worked their dubious magic. The introduction of the Irish villain was interesting, but all is not as it seems and I enjoyed the final reveal in the barn-fire plot line.

If you're a fan of quirky, British humour that's all a bit random (as the young folk say) then this will be a pleasant diversion.

Recommended.

David Schaafsma says

Fun volume for tweens/YA where the clever and funny Allison continues his web-comic-turned-to print, with Charlotte, Shauna, and Mildred (the three girls!) and Linton, Sonny and Jack (the three boys!) solving crimes, like the Hardy Boys/Nancy Drew only with more laughs. And British. Jokes dominate over story, which is fine if the writer is funny. And Allison is laugh-aloud funny.

Tackleford Barns on fire: Linton and Sonny are on the case. Lottie and Mildred, seeing so much "coupling" happening among friends, get curious about what this means for them, and then they meet a troll and try to rehabilitate him so he can meet girls. It's just silly fun, but clever and witty fun. 3.5 for me.

Elizabeth says

A group of boys and a group of girls are trying to solve a mystery in their town of who is setting fires. Don't judge a book by its cover and don't dismiss possibilities without thinking carefully about motives. Adults are characterized as pretty out of it and the teens have got it together. I am sure that is why these books appeal to that age set!

A Reader's Heaven says

(I received a free copy of this book from Net Galley in exchange for an honest review.)

When Tackleford's derelict barns begin going up in flames, Linton and Sonny are on the case with a moderately mysterious new friend.

Paths cross, however, when Lottie and Mildred meet a terrifying yet misunderstood creature living beneath a

bridge!

Throw in an overly enthusiastic Fire Brigade, a transforming skate ramp, and a new French teacher and you've got the kind of charming genius that can only be found in John Allison's Bad Machinery.

This book started out well enough for me. The characters are well and truly independent of each other i.e they looked, talked and acted differently (unlike some other comics/graphic novels I have read recently.) the clear definition made it east to get into the story early and learn about the individuals involved.

However, my biggest concern was longevity. My interest in the storyline started to waiver around the halfway mark and it was a slog to get to the end and I simply didn't enjoy the storytelling by the end.

The illustrations, however, were very good. Clean, easy to read dialogue, and well spaced - almost comic strip-like panels - made this part of the book well worth a look.

Paul
ARH

Emily says

Love this series!

Jenn Estepp says

My favorite, thus far. In addition to being funny and weird, this one was genuinely sweet.

Charlos says

Wry and real.

Allie says

I like the Bad Machinery comics better when they're about weird, possibly supernatural stuff. I love the bits about Mildred building a ramp and charging people to ride their bikes off it. And Charlotte is, as always, fantastically bonkers.

Bonnie says

Oh Bad Machinery. I love you so very much.

Jenna says

I'm not one hundred percent certain what I think of the relationship drama within this issue, but the story itself was just as fun and I liked the changes in the non-romantic relationships between the friends. If that makes any sense. As quick-paced and silly as the rest of the series. I'd like more, please.

jzthompson says

When I reviewed the last Bad Machinery book earlier this year I inferred from the references to creator John Allison as "The Creator of Scary-go-Round!" that it maybe wasn't quite drawing the audience it deserved. Sadly this seems to have been born out to an extent as between now and then Allison has announced that the case that wrapped earlier this year will be the last. I'm a huge admirer of Mr Allison's skills as a cartoonist and a storyteller - and his recent side project "Expecting to Fly" was the most dramatically mature thing I've seen from him so far - so I trust his instincts and look forward to seeing whatever he does next. All the same I've been a huge fan of Bad Machinery from the start so I'm a little disappointed we won't get to see kids grow up as we would have if the series had played out as originally projected with three cases per academic year... Still The Canterbury Tales went a bit "off plan" as well and most people don't grumble too much about that.

So "The Case of the Simple Soul"; four stars is possibly a bit on the harsh side but judged against Mr Allison's best it doesn't quite warrant the same rating as "The Case of the Good Boy" or (when it comes...) "The Case of the Fire Inside." The mysteries (Who is the fire bug? What is the troll? What is new boy Colm's deal?) don't really gel into a cohesive whole the same way as they did in earlier cases and it's notable that after this story Allison stopped trying to find something for each of the kids to do per story in favour of focusing on one or more character per case.

Even here Jack and Shauna are sidelined for quite a bit of the story as the focus shifts between Mildred and Charlotte "helping" the troll and Sonny and Linton investigating the firebug mystery with Colm.* Colm - who pops up now and again as a bit player in future cases but really only gets real focus here - is the protagonist and emotional centre of this case. He's older and more worldly than the other kids, with hints of a desperately sad and lonely home life, and his attempts at winning the friendship of the Mystery Boys and the affections of Charlotte backfire in a way that felt very real despite involving serial arson and a fire department with a two wheeled fire engine (for taking corners faster, obviously). I've said elsewhere that despite her popularity and status as the "Face" of Bad Machinery I don't really care for Charlotte; I'm afraid I find her something of a one dimensional gag machine in a cast otherwise full of real people. But she's possibly at her best in this case until the recent "Case of the Modern Men" - I especially liked her complete lack of interest in any form of romance and sadness about losing her best friend's attention to a (temporary) boyfriend. A nice observation about how kids at that age mature at very different paces and how this can be quite straining on even the most well established friendships.**

So; maybe not quite the best from this particular writer but still funny, smart and sweet without being saccharine. It's better than most things on the market and would make a fine Christmas present for mystery hungry kids and such like.

*Despite his lack of "screen-time" over the years Linton is probably my favourite of the regulars, Allison has said that the ninth Bad Machinery case would have been Linton-centric and I hope that eventually we see some of that making it into whatever his next project with the Bad Machinery kids is.

**In later cases I thought there may have been a plot line developing about how as the kids drifted further into adolescence her relative academic underperformance and immaturity was starting to isolate her from the group that would have been interesting to follow. I guess the cancellation means we will never know if that was "all in my head" or not.

Jeannette says

I didn't enjoy this one as much as I enjoyed the first volume, which is probably why I forgot to write a review of it. The girls are pretty fleshed out as characters by this point, so I really understood and appreciated their care and desire to reform their troll friend. The boys are a little less developed, so their scenes were less exciting to me, and I wish we had gotten to know them better. Not to mention, the new addition of a really creepy boy to their mystery-solving gang. I didn't love the ending, but it was still a fun enough story and I like Allison's work enough to give the next volume a shot.
