



Sloth

Gilbert Hernández

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Troubled teenager Miguel Torres has had it with life. The only alternative he sees is to willfully slip into a coma. But one year later, Miguel becomes a walking urban legend after he wakes up virtually unchanged -- except for his sloth-like pace. Soon, a haunted lemon orchard, the mysterious goat man, and murder will collide as Miguel, his girlfriend Lita and their best friend Romeo take on the teenage wasteland that is suburbia in the 21st century.

Will Miguel find love? Or has he risen from his slumber just to end up another rock and roll suicide? In this hypnotic, coming-of-age tale, Gilbert Hernandez deftly defines what it means to truly be alive in a land where life is not precious.

Sloth Details

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Author : Gilbert Hernández

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From Reader Review Sloth for online ebook

Jim says

An interesting, but spare, graphic novel featuring Mexican American (I think, at least they seem to be Chicano) teenagers dealing with life in a lemon-grove town with a urban-legend mysteriousness about it. Focuses more on typical teenager issues than on social or political issues. The story takes a couple of twists, which makes you question all that came before. First time I have tried one of this artist's works, though he is supposedly well known for another series featuring the Chicano community.

Norman says

I'm not much for these stories with bands that seem prevalent in graphic novels for some reason, but I loved this one. Very surreal.

Michael B Tager says

Books like this is why I read comics. There's so much that comics can do that normal books cannot and it's in that sweet spot of literary exploration and visual power that Sloth falls. It's a little reminiscent of Ghost World in the ennui of suburban life, but the magical realism and dreamy pace/tone set it apart in the right way.

It's the kind of book where I'm not exactly sure what happened--nor do i think logic is necessarily the point--and I'm still thinking about it a few days later. I know I'll be delving back into it soon to make my own understanding of it.

Bryony Nelson says

This book made literally no sense

Sam says

This is a bit of strange surreal story that tells of three teenagers growing up in a small town with a lemon grove that feeds their imaginations and is an integral part of the town's urban legends. As one of the teens awakens from a year long self induced(?) coma they decide to investigate the legends and find themselves changing and swapping their identities (in turn making you reread what came before just to make sure you hadn't missed anything) trying to find the truth about the grove and themselves. The illustrations are simple black and white and in their simplicity they add to the story and keep you focused, which is vital for this story. An interesting read but not quite what I expected. I imagine it's one of those that becomes more substantial as time goes on and the subtleties of the story really sink in.

Daniel Clark says

I really didn't get the "point" of this book. I couldn't relate to the characters. At times the art was confusing. "is that a lemon or a pear."

The saving grace in the book is the style of the art. Non-superhero art is really refreshing and how so many possibilities.

Maybe I need to reread a few times to appreciate the story and the characters but at the moment this wasn't my cup of tea.

Jeff Jackson says

A sort of suburban 'Mulholland Drive' by the Great Gilbert; a love story about twisting identities, alternate realities, the allure of lemon groves, and the gentle beauty of being in a coma; all tightly packed into 150 pages without a single wasted frame.

Walker says

I continue to try to like the Hernandez brothers. I feel like I'm supposed to like them, and I would really like to like them, but in the end they're not my favorites. (To be fair, this book is only by one of them.)

The main gripe I had with *Sloth* (aside from the art, of which I wasn't the biggest fan) was that it couldn't decide on the rules of the world in which it was set - or, rather, that it couldn't decide on what the characters *thought* were the rules. I'm more than fine with occasional (or not-so-occasional) flashes of the weird or the inexplicable, but it is real tough to identify with a character when you can't figure out their reactions to these phenomena. Miguel and Lita are sometimes truly freaked by the things they see, but other incongruous experiences fail to receive even a raised eyebrow. Their reactions to random non-mystical encounters tend to baffle, as well. Why isn't Miguel confused when he's threatened with a knife for no reason by the guy who was calling him "homey" several pages ago? What causes Miguel and Lita to erupt into two pages of shouting at the elderly lemon farmer? I can't figure it out. I want to root for these characters but it's a little like rooting for a dog who will fetch the newspaper seven times out of ten, but the other three times will instead put on a top hat and monocle and with a straight face perform a flamenco dance on your countertop.

All the same, there's plenty to recommend this book. I like the theme of characters as actors who will take on any part required of them by whatever story they find themselves in. There's a certain amount of snappy dialogue (though not all of it by any means). It was an okay, quick read.

Craig says

This one never felt like the narrative fully coalesced to me. The doubled story, the twists, even the characters... It all just ended up feeling rushed and full of narrative dead-ends.

Certainly not an awful GN, but not something I would claim as one of the best, at any stretch.

Bert says

This was cute and mysterious and I really like the illustrations which are a bit ghost world/scooby doo, though i'm not sure if it made a hell of a lot of sense but that's ok cos that kind of adds to the overall dreamy darkside of suburbia mood of the book.

Nadia says

One of Gilbert's non-Palomar books that I would recommend...

Kathryn says

I've heard really good things about Love & Rockets but never read any of the series ... it just seems too long and daunting, like the comix equivalent of Proust! I was told this is not Hernandez's best work, and unfortunately I have to agree. The topics explored were fascinating--teens falling into mysterious, seemingly willed comas, the urban legend of the Goat Man--but he didn't succeed in bringing all these elements together into a cohesive story. I found myself really thrown when, halfway through the book, we suddenly learn that the heroine has been in a coma as well as the hero. Another character has somehow become a rock star. There's no continuity and a few tantalizing suggestions about the "Goat Man" taking over characters' lives, but the book never really follows through.

The art is clean and has a kind of retro simplicity that reminds me of a hipper, edgier Archie comics. It almost seems like Hernandez is edging into Charles Burns territory here, but the vibe is wrong.

I have a feeling this is not a good introduction to his work, so I'll try reading something else ... any suggestions?

Matisse says

Blaaaaaaah. This was awful.

I think I get what this wanted to be...? It has a Donnie-Darko-like somber tone, and it uses an unusual storytelling method. The art is black and white and heavy-handed. Symbolism is obvious.

'Sloth' might have appeal with kids new to graphic novels. They don't know books like 'Blankets' and 'Lost At Sea' exist.

sweet pea says

an interesting suburban legend with a switch-up that makes it more interesting. plus, haunted lemon orchards are cool.

Imogen says

Dude. Yes! My girlfriend has a total boner for Love & Rockets so I bought her this. I was like, 'Isn't Gilbert the one you like better?' She had a fever. She was like, 'No.'

So anyway then I went to bed and read it the next morning and it totally rules. Comparisons to that movie Lost Highway are kind of inevitable, because of... um, not to give anything away, but because of some things that happen to some folks' identities. It's a little more explained here than it is in Lost Highway, though. Plus there is a monster! And parts where people who can't walk very fast just sort of take flight! I love that shit.

I was talking to Alex about it at Rudy's after I read the first chunk of it. I was like, 'I think I don't care at all about what happens in a story as long as the atmosphere draws me in and either stays consistent or changes compellingly,' and she was like, 'I know. It's a very annoying thing about you. I'll ask you, "what happened in that book you loved so much," and you'll answer "I dunno. It was sad."'

Also: lemon orchard as site of mystery and terror is a totally new thing for me! I love that.
