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Tohru Kousaka (Illustrator), Hitoyo Shinozaki (Original Author)

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?????? 01 Details

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From Reader Review ?????? 01 for online ebook

Lizzy Bennet says

3.5

Mizuki says

What can I say? The story itself is nothing but a bunch of cliched BS but the characters are so pretty!!!!!!

Nocturnalux says

Okane ga Nai is a very odd fish. Throughout its run- and this review will be dedicated to the first volume almost exclusively and assumes the reader is familiar with it- it manages to bulldozer its way through virtually every single type of possible discrimination. It is both a bundle of clichés that coalesce with agonizing slowness across a series of events that repeat themselves almost to the t every single volume and an almost unique in the BL genre. It is utterly absurd almost without missing an opportunity for going completely off the pale yet it remains remarkably self-aware, to the point that **Okane** can be seen as both reveling and undermining the tropes that even when this one was first published were already highly formulaic.

What makes **Okane** unique is, in itself, remarkably telling about the genre as a whole: Unlike virtually every single other title, this manga is written/drawn by men. This may not seem like all that relevant to the Western reader but in Japan, it is almost unheard of. This peculiarity- that of having actual men writing a story with male queer characters (and more on that later)- may account for the second other point of differentiation in **Okane**, namely, that the point of the view is that of the *seme*.

This volume sets the tone for what later becomes the franchise's dominant *modus operandi*: it starts with Ayase, the lithe, fey, über delicate young man (that the manga wisely states as being 19 years of age, thus managing to avoid pedo vibes by a hair's breadth), naked and being auctioned as a sex slave. In comes Kanou, the super *seme*, broad shouldered, manly to the point of silliness, ready to rescue Ayase by buying him.

So far this is fairly standard fare (and that is already interesting- for lack of a better term- in itself) as far as BL goes. But here on, the story changes gears into almost uncharted territory. Instead of the narrative following Ayase as he wakes up in an unfamiliar home and his emotional reaction, the inner dialogue zeroes in on Kanou and stays there.

This results in a sort of displacement: for starters, it does reduce Ayase to a pretty doll alone, but it also shows us how the overly dominant males in BL reach their conclusions, how they think their way into 'rape is okay because love' and how horribly broken as human beings they are. Again the manga goes off into horrifyingly realistic territory as the mandatory rape is presented as horrifying indeed.

The whole point of **Okane** is to predicate a manga on rape upon rape, rape in the context of kidnapping, rape

as currency, and rape presented in varying lights and more often than not it is about as fluffy as it most definitely it should not be. But this first introduction to rape stands out: Ayase ends up bruised and huddled in bed, shaking uncontrollably and very obviously deeply distraught.

Here **Okane** falls back into the very tried pattern of 'bad rape' to oppose 'good rape'. In other words, when the appointed love interest does something so monstrous that in any other scenario he would end up in jail, the mangaka will spring a villain who is even worse: thus while Kanou robs Ayase of his identity, keeps him as a veritable sex slave, strips him any sense of self-worth and only reluctantly comes around to making allowances (in this volume, these include letting Ayase keep his dead family's photographs and childhood mementos as opposed to getting rid of them, as Kanou first planned, because they'd serve as a reminder of Ayase's past and thus keep him from truly focusing on Kanou. this villain runs the human traffic casino and is intent of selling Ayase to depraved individuals who would vivisect him, literally eat his flesh while he is alive and so on.

When the stakes reach such a level, the moral scale is so utterly off that Kanou becomes 'heroic': The 'hero' category is voided of meaning and Kanou can fit it through sheer bravado, disregard for his own physical safety and increasingly more dangerous of putting himself on the line to save Ayase from the never ending stream of men who want to violate and kill him.

Ayase, in fact, is the default victim of the genre as delicate, sweet, naïve boys have been the fodder on which BL thrives but he is also very much the victim of a society that systematically abused him to the point he found himself in the sad position he is in. Already in this first volume we see Ayase being bullied for being half-Western, albeit only in an extra 4-koma (a can of worms that **Okane** will actually confront) and learned that once his parents and later his grandmother died he was left adrift in life, profoundly alone and ready to be sold into slavery by a cousin who incurred a debt he could not possibly pay back.

Which brings me back to one of the refreshing topics that **Okane** taps: homophobia. BL is all about shiny, shiny, flowery stuff, and even when it gets rapey- and it gets rapey remarkably often- but it is ultimately about selling a fantasy. Homophobia, sexual orientation as such, even gay people as an identity are other nullified, rendered irrelevant if not non-entities altogether. There is a deep irony in a genre predicated on males engaged in queer behavior without at all fostering one whit of tolerance for queer people in the readership.

To be fair, this does not apply to the great majority of Western readers but the target audience of Japanese females can- and does- devour bundles of gay related fiction without giving a single thought to the real life queer people in the real world. If anything, BL does plenty to perpetuate the discourse of gays are 'depraved', and it skews the matter of representation so much that when it comes to manga and homosexuality, it is what female authors write to their female audiences that immediately comes to mind. Which is not to say that this applies to every single Japanese consumer of BL but the genre as a whole is marketed as a product that reinforces heterosexuality (more than one BL magazine has used, at some point, variations on the motto 'for girls, by girls', which about as official a means of establishing the readership and the authorship) since it plays on the fantasies of straight females. An overlap between this structural scaffolding of BL both as a media and an industry and lgbtq+ concerns is minimal. Not surprisingly, plenty of queer activists in Japan absolutely despise everything about it.

Perhaps because **Okane** is authored by men, homophobia exists. Kanou's hypocrisy on the subject is called out by a character that does identify, in-universe, as homosexual. While it is a brief episode in a volume that is a bit all over the place, it is telling and will become more so as the story progresses. It isn't just that **Okane** denies the erasure of homophobia, it acknowledges internalized homophobia and by implication the

profoundly unbalanced relation between the 'seme/uke' dynamic and by further implication, a latent misogyny.

Kanou oozes testosterone and is the epitome of masculinity so he cannot see himself as at all gay. He is highly emphatic about this and has no qualms calling his drag queen friend (okama are not quite drag queens but it is a close enough counterpart to serve for the purposes of this review) a 'homo'. Being in any way 'like a woman', be it because one is a receiving partner (even when forced into it) or because one presents as femme, is just gross as far as Kanou is concerned.

Kanou tries to elevate Ayase from this pile of degeneracy but it is as unconvincing as his regret over repeatedly raping Ayase. **Okane** moves in the idiom of BL with firmly set knowledge of the operating codes- and then gets almost meta and it alerts to reader to a certain self-consciousness in this regard- and this is visible from the very aesthetics.

Kanou and Ayase are drawn in such opposing styles that they could almost be different species. So it makes perfect sense that Kanou should comment on how 'like a cute animal' he appears and in one of those inspired moments of absurdity that the manga achieves on occasion, Kanou is fooled into using a guide on how to handle small animals to instruct him on how to interact with Ayase.

Okane presents itself, on the surface, very much as your average rape-centric BL and through an unlikely combination of unlikely turns and highly formalized visual imagery manages to both add something new and plod along with very worst of them.

The question that arises from all this, is, is this manga worth reading. I am unsure. I find the humor darkly impressive, few manga ever made the laugh as hard as **Okane** systematically and unfailingly does. The character artwork is rather poor and exaggerated to the point of distraction and even if this is for the sake of obeying and probably even mocking visual codes, it can detract from the overall effect.

I am, against all odds, something of a dedicated fan of this series. It is so radically opposed to all that I think and believe, it takes such gushing delight in going into every single trope that I so loathe in BL that I am unsure as to how I could ever like, let alone appreciate this one.

Over the years- for I have actually followed **Okane** for a long time, having bought all 8 first volumes in a bundle when I first visited Japan (for a bargain price, too)- I have wondered about this several times. I eventually reached the conclusion: what makes **Okane** so genuinely funny for me is its self-awareness. It is rape apology that knows itself to be that, it points out the severe flaws of its schizophrenic cast even as it proceeds to mock them relentless, and at the end of the day, it feels like a catharsis of sorts: **Okane ga Nai** makes fun of BL in a ruthless, brutal, absurdist kind of way.

It is most definitely not for everyone, I find it very difficult to even recommend it to anyone, but at the same time it has all the fascination of a crazy train full of insanity going down a hill, engulfed in a ball of flames, screeching in maniac laughter all the way down as it gathers momentum, speed, and dizzying vertigo as you realize you are aboard the carriage, the wheels are sparkling as they ricochet against the rails and you don't know what to do but join in the lunacy before the sweet, sweet embrace of death makes it all go away for good.

Language Notes:

The following is only of interest to those who read or want to read **Okane** in Japanese.

From a linguistic point of view, this volume is surprisingly rich: there are several modes of speech in play,

from the very technical terminology about shady business deals, contract traps, trading in general, money transfers and appraisal of property, to the very base *yakuza* slurs and extremely informal banter to *okama* speech, complete with feminine language and exaggerated outbursts, **Okane** puts the reader through their paces. Of particular interest are the terms as [???] which is how gay men refer to straight ones and [??????] that applies to drag queens and transsexuals who self-identify as female.

Alice says

[HENTAI. MAN ON MAN (that's a stretch...read on.). DOMINANT/SUBMISSIVE

Gretel says

I read this a long time ago in Japanese, understanding only parts of it because I was only a beginner in Japanese. I re-read it years later, in Japanese and English.

In all honesty, the first read was enough because the pictures alone tell the story: tiny wheeny-whiny uke baby (not dissimilar to the Japanese ideal of femininity, as always) is sold in an auction for rich people as a sex slave. But don't worry, the illegal aspect and the whole part about human trafficking, prostitution, and sex slavery is immediately dropped after the strong, tall, mountain site shouldered, rich seme gets the uke. No, not by busting the highly illegal auction and calling the police, that would make too much sense. Or give him something like a functioning brain and morals.

Instead he pays for the boy and takes him home. Apparently he knew him from his teenage years, when uke was still a child.

What ensues is the same old tired and boring idiocy in almost every unimaginative yaoi-manga: uke cries a little but in the end they have the most fantastic sex, including self lubricating assholes, and uke walks around in his shirt which is ooooooh so adorables cus wooby bwabwy is too tiny for the biggy-wiggy shirt!

This is basically the story about a teenager sex slave with Stockholm syndrome told from the perspective of the rapist who thinks his slave loves him for real. Only that Shinozaki is no Nabokov and doesn't get how horrible and trite her story is and how she should have used criticism to tell the story instead of romanticising sexual slavery and rape.

Unfortunately, this is one manga of many with this kind of plot.

I'm not even going to talk about the boring uke-seme dichotomy. The plot lost me at "illegal sex slave auction plot point being used to propell drama and the story in the first place without any impact whatsoever".

Dinjolina says

Weird, disturbing, dark and dramatic pornish mm manga with rape, prostitution, etc - **all done in the name of love!**

Oh, and I should add a mention of the angry 30ish man that orally and anally assaulted an 18year old... just so he could

make him gay (seeing as how the 18 year old is a proclaimed heterosexual).

You know I had to.....love this! Yes, yes, I am one sick puppy. What can I do? ^^

Yenny says

Lo ODIÉ. Joder, no me gusta que pongan tanto estereotipo como que el uke debe ser prácticamente una chica. ¿Cómo es que este manga es tan famoso? No entiendo. ¡ES UNA NIÑA CON PITO, POR FAVOR!

Gabriela says

En serio no entiendo qué mierda tiene esta historia que me gusta tanto.

Ah, cierto. Estoy enamorada de Kano san y quiero ukear a Ayase xD

SA says

Sometimes, you get sucked into a yaoi vortex, and you end up reading eleven volumes of something facepalmy.

Bookwatcher says

I loved/hate this yaoi.

Ayase seems so stupid sometimes... I mean, more than innocent, it's more stupidity than innocence. Kanou is like a really big perv, buying a younger guy. He is certainly protecting the stupid/innocent Ayase from someone more perv than himself? Probably yes, because Kanou really protect Ayase... but well, rape also????

So, I like it! Ohhh HOT HOT HOT! A guy buying another and using him as his sex toy! But also hate it... For example I hate the drug/alcohol abuse

and the rape scenes (more than one)

Makhda says

I just re-read this.

AWESOME.

My first yaoi ever. I was dumbstruck. And then months later, I found myself in M/M land. Thank you, Internet.

Warning : Dub/con, Non/con.

Honey says

When Ayase is being sold at an auction in order to pay off his cousin's debts, he is saved and bought by Kanou, 28 year old businessman. They apparently know each other, however, Ayase doesn't remember him and whether that's a result of the drugs that were given to him at the auction or something else is never fully explained. Kanou takes him home and after a heated argument, tells Ayase that the only way he will get to leave him is after he gives back the 1.2 billion yen he paid for him. This will be done by taking away 5 hundred thousand from the debt each time they are together.

I loved this first volume, Kanou is so desperate for Ayase that he makes mistakes over and over. His mistakes are always a result of the panic that sets in when he thinks he's going to lose Ayase and although he comes off as harsh and unfeeling at times, his motivations are always explained soon after. For his part, Ayase is sweet and naïve. Family is everything to him, he lost his parents when he was young, so even after the mess his cousin gets him into, he can't help but need him too. I can't wait to see what happens next!

Steph Goose says

The drawing is very well done and the story is great. It's a slave/master story, but it has a lot of touching moments and where these two originally met continues to be a mystery!

Leah says

It's hard to separate my feelings about the Ovas from the manga but I'll try *shrugs* No Money chronicles the budding relationship, if you can call it that, between Yukiya Ayase and Somuku Kanou. Aya-kun is a stereotypically über feminine, ridiculously naive and kindhearted 19 year old who is sold by his dumb ass cousin to pay off outstanding debts. Kanou-san, a 30 something Yakuza loan shark, buys Ayase because Yukiya helped him after he was beaten up and downtrodden in an alley. Ayase doesn't remember helping Kanou but apparently his kindness moved the supposedly straight Somuku to be attracted to Yukiya. Blah Blah blah. Kanou pays MILLIONS of dollars for Ayase at an auction where some other perverts planned God knows what with him in a seeming gesture of gratitude. BUT Kanou is SO attracted to Ayase that he wants to own him too....and sex his freaking brains out. Yukiya proclaims his heterosexuality and rejects Kanou only to be raped by him. Umm it's worse than it sounds. Kanou proposes that Aya-kun pay off his debt with sex; every time Kanou gets off Ayase gets money reduced from his ridiculous debt. Kanou appears to be a brute but loving and knowing Ayase slowly transforms him to a kinder and more compassionate man ...when he's not raping him or sucking Yukiya off. Ayase appears immature and foolish but this experience also transforms him. I HATE & love so many things about this manga....

EDIT 8/1/11

When I first read this manga I was new to yaoi. I had NO idea that rape romances were the norm. I'll admit I

really enjoy dubcon as a genre of erotica targeted to adults, it's a kink of mine, yeah I know how can I be a feminist and enjoy it?....*shrug* I just do; I can explain it but not here. I lowered my rating of No Money because I'm sick of it. I'm sick of the fragile bottoms, the overly masculine tops, equating rape with love in a medium meant for very young girls. I just hate reinforcing stereotypes *stepping off of my soapbox, for the moment *

Lör K. says

Trigger warnings for *Okane ga Nai: Volume 1*: rape, possibly abusive situation, possibly Stockholm Syndrome, dubcon

I remember years ago finding *Okane ga Nai* online, the anime series that was never completed to my knowledge, and I remember watching it and slowly turning to love it after the drastic turn of events at the start.

The manga starts out very much in the same, with rape scenes and drunken sex scenes.

However, as the manga goes on, it's clear to see that the man first portrayed as an abuser, genuinely loves the "victim" and just doesn't know how to deal with his feelings. It took me a long time, an abuse and sexual assault survivor to get around this first part in the anime, but after watching on, I was more than happy to try the manga out and I love that I did.

The manga is more detailed than the anime, adding more depth to the characters, with extra chapters that help you understand why they act the way they do. Although rocky at first, the story develops and blossoms into something beautiful and you can even see it starting to happen within the manga even in this first volume.

I've always loved this series, and the manga has definitely refuelled my love for the series. 5/5 I fully recommend this to anyone who enjoys these kind of mangas.
