

Parasocial

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A disturbed fan kidnaps her favorite television star in the graphic thriller *Parasocial*.

Luke Indiana is an actor appearing at a convention dedicated to Rogue Nebula, the television show he costarred in for several years. Due to fears of COVID-19, Luke snaps photographs with fans from behind a clear barrier. When the day is done, he drives off—followed by a fan, Lily. An accident leaves him stranded, and Lily seizes the moment to offer “help” in the form of a ketamine-spiked Gatorade. Luke wakes bound to a chair at Lily’s house, and a battle of psychology and survival plays out between them.

The book portrays an extreme relationship between a fan and the subject of her obsession, but it also captures the general strangeness of conventions, where people gather to meet actors who play fictional characters. The fickle nature of fandom, and the mercenary relationship between actor and audience, is shown through authentic-looking social media postings and text messages, giving the conflict between Lily and Luke a convincing, claustrophobic background. Luke and Lily are complex characters, and their interactions, both verbal and physical, are tense and exciting.

The book uses bold colors and expert linework to convey literal images, but also moods and attitudes, as seen in Luke’s greenish hue as he dreads entering the convention center. When Luke attempts to lower Lily’s guard by seducing her, the images shift from reality to a manga-influenced perfect dream, giving a sense of what’s happening in her clouded mind.

Parasocial is the gripping graphic novel in which a minor celebrity is taken hostage by a fan.

PETER DABBENE (September / October 2023)

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