

ByteNoise

Cheeky Angel

Cheeky Angel is a manga written and drawn by Hiroyuki Nishimori. The English language version is published by Viz in the USA and Canada. It has also been adapted into an anime, the only English language version of which is a fansub.

It's probably safe to assume that this story about a boy who has been cursed to have a female body was at least partly inspired by Rumiko Takahashi's Ranma 1/2. Despite the similar basic plot, however, the author still manages to produce something quite different. The playful anything goes martial arts techniques have been replaced with street fights, and the increasingly complex love triangle-turned-web is nowhere to be found, leaving in its place a much more straightforward case of unrequited love. While the constant fighting seems gritty and dark, it takes a back seat to someone trying to win the affection (or at least attention) of the protagonist. Make no mistake, this is still a reasonably lighthearted romance.

The characters

A fifteen-year-old boy cursed with a female body, Megumi Amatsuka is the protagonist of the series. As the story is more lighthearted than realistic, he doesn't get particularly depressed, except for one bizarrely trivial seeming suicide attempt. He generally switches between thinking that all boys (presumably except himself) are pathetic attention seekers (which, in all

fairness, most of the boys in the story are) and wanting to be seen as one of their equals.

Genzo Soga starts off being depicted as the school bully, who doesn't care about anyone else and who can get any girl he wants. When Megumi manages to beat him at fighting, yet refuses to go out with him, he changes character. Constantly vying for Meg's attention, he becomes cute - both in how he acts and how he is drawn - and harmless, except when fighting to help Megumi. As Miki points out, he is much like Meg would have turned out, had he not been cursed.

Miki Kabanain is Megumi's best friend. She is at least slightly romantically attracted to him, but spends less time flirting with him than she spends getting annoyed at his masculine behaviour and telling him to act like a girl. She just wants him to fit in, and act like a "normal girl." Curiously, this means that despite being attracted to Megumi herself, she actually gets excited when she thinks he secretly loves Soga (part of her definition of being a girl, let alone a normal one, appears to involve falling in love with a boy).

The drawing style

The people are usually drawn in a serious and detailed style, only becoming cute when they act appropriately. The only cartoonish quality present in most of the panels is the mitten-shaped hands the characters are often drawn with. Occasionally metaphor is used to good effect, with people wearing symbolic hats or getting stabbed by the speech bubbles of hurtful dialogue. For the most part, though, the style itself is detailed and well drawn, without drawing too much attention to itself, so you can focus on the story rather than being distracted

by the artwork.

Conclusion

So is it worth your time reading about some confused teenagers fending off annoying boys? If you're looking for a straightforward, silly romance, then this is as enchanting as any, and great fun to read. If your tendencies lean towards the more serious side of manga, however, you'd best look elsewhere.