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Serenity Volume 3: The Shepherd's Tale



Synopsis

One of Serenity's greatest mysteries is finally revealed in *The Shepherd's Tale*, filling in the life of one of the show's most beloved characters—Shepherd Book! Who was Book before meeting Mal and the rest of the Serenity crew? How did he become one of their most trusted allies? And how did he find God in a bowl of soup? Answers to these and more questions about Book's past are uncovered in this original graphic novel by rising stars Zack Whedon (Dr. Horrible, Terminator, Fringe) and Chris Samnee (Blackest Night: Tales of the Corps, Daredevil). A pivotal chapter in the ongoing Serenity saga, *The Shepherd's Tale* is also a rollicking, action-packed epic in its own right! "Dark Horse's Serenity displays the key ingredients of the series in a substantial and entertaining way."—BrokenFrontier.com

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Those who watched *Firefly* and *Serenity* are aware of Book's implied rich past. As the series was unfortunately canceled, we find out very little and all sorts of questions remain open. When I first saw this novel available for sale, I expected it to provide some relief for my curiosity. To put it bluntly, I am very disappointed. The biggest problem is the extremely short length. You could easily fit all the text on a single page and I could tell you the whole story in 60 seconds. One would expect a book published with the purpose of filling in the gaps of a story to do the thing properly. This doesn't even come close. Furthermore, there are a number of inconsistencies, and we arguably end up with more questions than before. * SLIGHT SPOILER */ We know that Book had ties to the Alliance (from

that Firefly episode where they heal his wounds), but we find out that there was a "falling out" and they (quite literally) threw him out. Why they would treat him as a VIP, save his life and then let them go (as was done in Firefly) is a complete mystery and we're, once again, left hanging./* END SPOILER */Basically, this is a bad fanfic. Save your money and pretend it doesn't exist.

Others have pointed out the problems with this - big and small - before, but I just read it and I want to vent a little bit. There is nothing about this comic book that warrants it to be a published comic book where they charge people money. There is no story to speak of (unless you count a screwy plan to turn Shepherd Book into a cyborg double agent....which is actually the climax of the comic) and the artwork literally looks like the storyboards for a movie that were drawn up over coffee just before filming. (The artist might have great talent, I don't know, but it's definitely not in the comic.) The biggest point of a Shepherd Book comic is obviously to reveal (a) what horrible sins he committed that he was repenting for throughout the series and (b) why the Alliance held him in such high esteem that they overlooked his involvement with a gang of thugs to give him VIP medical care. The comic book does a lousy job of answering the first and doesn't answer the second and, in fact, contradicts the TV show. The first point was based off of an enigmatic incident in the episode 'Safe'. In that episode, Shepherd Book has been wounded and, hoping for some mercy, the crew takes him to an Alliance spaceship that has medical facilities. The Alliance rejects their plea for help until they look at Shepherd's "ident-card" at which point he's given emergency VIP treatment. Why would the Alliance treat some religious guy with such esteem? So, you think that maybe Shepherd is maybe some sort of Alliance spy. Or maybe he was an assassin and did a favor for some high-level Alliance politician and that's the sin he's repenting for, too. (This latter notion would also match up with what Shepherd said in the movie, 'Serenity'.) What does the comic book say that Shepherd did for the alliance? Nothing. He was just some officer who was angrily kicked out of the military for (what they believed to be) incompetence. This makes no sense. Why would they later on treat any ex military guy with the level of esteem that they did (in 'Safe'), and certainly why would they treat somebody who was fired for incompetence (and suspected of corruption). NOTE: At least one poster made the excuse that Shepherd was still, officially, in good graces with the Alliance because they swept his disastrous military service under the rug. But this is contradicted by the comic because they show an incident afterward where Shepherd gets beaten up outside of a bar by an ex-military guy whose pissed at him for what he did years before. It should be clear that the mysteries of Shepherd's past aren't just tangential curiosities of fans....it was a running point of mystery throughout the series and something that ANY viewer would expect to be answered, satisfactorily, in

any expanded universe stuff. This was really the character's defining element, next to his faith. Beyond that, there's no explanation of Shepherd's rock solid religious faith or what he was repenting for. There's, like, two pages of him going into some sort of Bible school and then there's a page of him praying, but that doesn't explain how or why he went in and what touched him so much. It was basically like a footnote. If he was trying to repent for what he did in the military, didn't he get that taken care of in that period within the abbey? And why was this never indicated clearly, if it even was the case? Even worse than that, though, is the pacing and structure of the comic. It goes backward in time - from the movie 'Serenity' through his childhood, but there's no serious rhyme or reason for it. To me, it honestly felt as though the writers thought, "I don't really need a story....I'll just make this seem deep and profound by using a chronology gimmick. It'll confuse people and they'll assume that there's some genius hidden within it." I hate to use this word, but it was pretentious. Between this and the 'Better Days' comic (which had some similarly colossal plot holes and was wildly over the top), it seriously seems like they're not making an effort at quality. There's a lot of criticisms about how Lucasfilm takes advantage of their hording fans by dumping tons of stupid, overpriced crap in stores, and that might well be true. But I can tell you that, even if Lucasfilm stuff sucks (which I think it often does), the 'Star Wars' comics and books at least have coherent stories and professional-level artwork. Now, we've got two "graphic novels" in a row (this and 'Better Days') priced around \$10 that are absolute, exploitative crap. This could've been a simple web-based comic done for free. They could've registered a domain name (SerenityScraps.com?) and said something like, "Hey fans! You know how we always tell you how much you've done for us and how we love you? Well, here's a freebie to thank you for that. It's not much - you can see ten-times more professional looking comics on DeviantArt - but it's free and you might have a good time debating it with your friends." That might be a bit much, of course, but they could at least just make good stuff. (And, by the way, there was a free web comic called "Serenity: The Other Half" a few years ago. Eight pages and pretty darn good.) In short, the comic was probably written and drawn in a day, it not only doesn't satisfy but it actually undermines the movie and TV show, and it will probably make you lose some esteem for the characters and the hidden mysteries of the 'verse.

It's \$15 for 56 pages. Please stop and consider that for a moment. I know it's Serenity. I know it's hard bound. This is a great property and a great publisher, but this is an obvious attempt to overcharge a fan base. Other licensed titles in hardcover format do not cost this much. I will not buy this book as I don't want to see more of this. Eventually it will be collected in a trade or an omnibus.

I can wait. I read it in the store yesterday, which I am not a fan of, but in this case I felt obligated. As someone else pointed out, the big question from the tv show, namely why is Book given a warm reception on the alliance ship, isn't even answered. It actually seems to contradict the show. It isn't worth \$14.99 or even \$8.49 with the discount. There is no reason this couldn't have been a \$5.99 double issue, other than to exploit die-hard fans. If you have tons of cash, you're already gonna order this, but if you are a Serenity/Firefly fan on a budget, you are gonna feel ripped off. Please just browse this in a store and see for yourself.

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