

## Time Travel Increases Predictability in *Seconds* by Gigi Strollo

When most people hear the name Bryan Lee O'Malley, the most common response is a resounding "Wait, who?" Many people don't recognize the name, but they definitely remember his most prominent work, the *Scott Pilgrim* series. Piles and piles of screenshots and GIFs of the movie adaptation, *Scott Pilgrim vs. The World*, flood sites like Tumblr and Twitter, the dark humored, yet somehow uplifting quotes, being the subject of numerous people's statuses. Even those who have never seen the film recite the ever-popular "Bread makes you fat?" line, originally uttered by Michael Cera, now repeated on the site Dubsplash countless times. O'Malley makes a massive comeback from the famed series that concluded in 2010 that left his fans hungry for more and served up his new standalone graphic novel, *Seconds*.

Enter Katie Clay, the spunky red-haired heroine of *Seconds*. She's a driven twenty-something-year-old woman who's the head chef and owner (read: co-owner) of a restaurant that shares the same name as the book itself. After being abandoned by the founding members of Seconds, she sets out to start anew in her own restaurant, a more stressful endeavor than she had envisioned. The book begins with our hero having a quite literal rude awakening, finding the "house spirit" of Seconds, named Lis, crouching on the top of Katie's dresser. She utters a single ominous warning ("If things...go wrong...Don't forget.") before Katie seemingly wakes up from the encounter.

After a particularly stressful day in which an employee gets burns all over her arms from fryer grease (which Katie blames herself for, as she was messing around with her chef protege, Andrew), she goes home to discover a small package behind a hidden panel in her dresser. Contained inside the box is a single mushroom, a notebook titled "MY MISTAKES", and a small instruction card.

She follows the directions and gets one "retake", preventing the accident from ever happening by writing her mistake of "canoodling" (her own words) with Andrew. The events that occur as an effect of her fixing really give a new meaning to the title *Seconds* as she now gets a second shot at all of her mess-ups. Consequently, her life changes dramatically after every change, sometimes for the better, more often for the worse, as she desperately tries to revise her revision's mistakes.

O'Malley works with Jason Fischer (drawing assistant), Nathan Fairbairn (colorist), and Dustin Harbin (lettering) to create the interesting and quirky world of *Seconds*. The characters are noticeably more anime-esque than his previous designs in *Scott Pilgrim*, with characteristic big eyes and short torsos that are a staple of the Japanese cartoons. Color plays an especially important role that helps drive the story--Katie's "revision" scenes are clearly marked by red-tinted panels that replay the "mistake" situation in a more favorable way. Fairbairn's grasp on color is impeccable and able to flip the mood from happy to terrifying with a simple palette change. Aside from the visual aspects, the story is very unique, employing the fantasy concepts like "house spirits" and the idea of the magic "redo" mushrooms.

Even so, the book isn't all it's been chalked up to be. It suffers from a severe case of predictability. Perfectionist + real life undo button = dire consequences. Right off the bat, you

know those mushrooms in the hands of a stickler like Katie will give her trouble. Also, you really have to pay attention (which, to be fair, with such a pleasing art style, it's hard not to) or else things can get really muddled really fast. It's hard to keep up with Katie's revisions, confusing love life, and new characters. House spirits in particular threw me off my first read through. The creatures weren't fully explained until later into the story, and the only thing to let me know Lis wasn't human was the fact that only Katie can see her. The humor in the story definitely isn't for everyone, being the usual dry and sarcastic style that prevails in O'Malley's writings.

Overall, I give this book an 8 out of 10. *Seconds* is a refreshing comedy compared to O'Malley's older works. Even though it still has his signature humor and small nods to his previous graphic novels, it doesn't take away from the distinctive new story. These predictability and slight confusion are easily forgettable when you take into account the visual aspects. *Seconds* is host to a beautiful world of colors and a bold art style. Lastly, this plot-driven novel is written well and likely able to attract people interested in multiple genres from fantasy to science fiction to comedy.