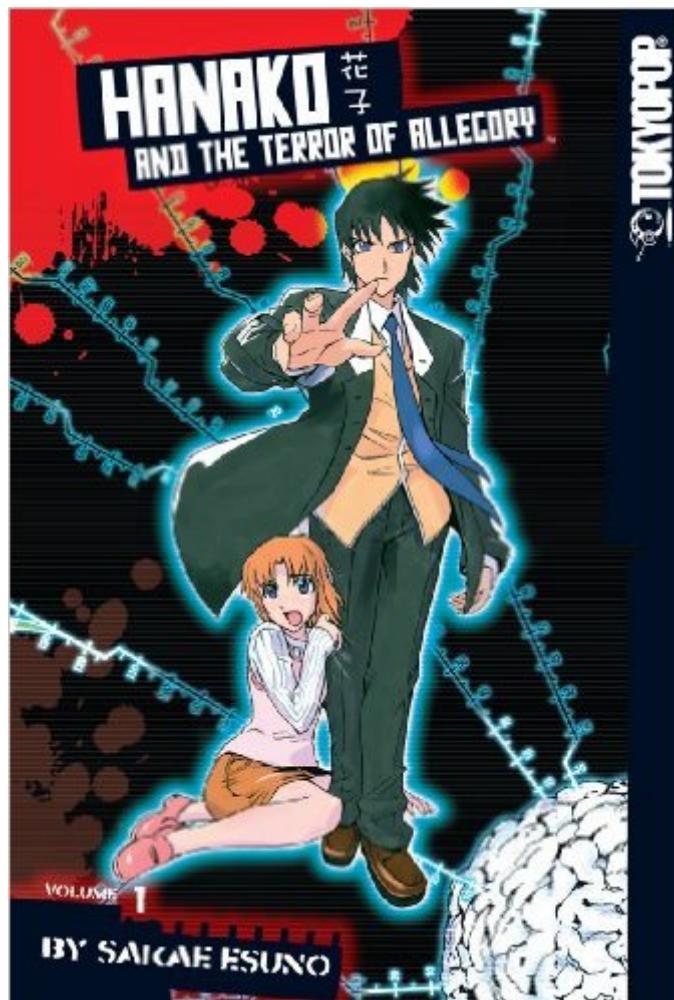


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Hanako And The Terror Of Allegory, Vol. 1



Synopsis

The 'No-mouth Woman', 'The Man Under the Bed', and the 'Human Faced Fish' are supposedly urban legends. But what few people know is that just at the moment when someone believes them to be true, they become reality and appear before them! Enter Daisuke Asou, a folklore detective who deals with such cases. He calls these fantastic creatures 'allegories'. What's a folklore detective to do?

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Customer Reviews

This series is really awesome! It's a collection of short stories that later fit into a cohesive whole. It's a nice look into Japanese urban legends. The main reason I picked this up was because the author also did Future Diary, which is even more amazing! In the end this story held up the whole way and I really enjoyed it!

After seeing the preview inÂ Deadman Wonderland Volume 1, I was really looking forward to "Hanako and the Terror of Allegory." After all, the series was being done by Esuno Sakae, the creator ofÂ Future Diary, which is a series I absolutely love, and the topic was Japanese folklore, which I love so much I got a Master's Degree in it. But unfortunately this first volume in the series just didn't deliver. The story opens with Hiranuma Kanae, a young girl who is being hunted by "The Man under the Bed with an Axe." She knows that the story is nothing more than an urban legend, but her belief in it is so strong that it has manifested in reality. Through a rumor in an internet chat room, Kanae locates Aso Daisuke, the Allegory Detective. Daisuke specializes in cases like

Kanae's in ridding the world of what he calls "Allegories," stories that have taken on a life of their own due to intense belief. Daisuke destroys the allegories by creating a situation where the believer is forced to confront the allegory, acknowledging that the allegory is nothing by a creation of the believer's subconscious, and that active disbelief dispels the threat. Kanae soon joins the staff, and Daisuke, Kanae and his assistant Hanako head off to tackle more allegory cases. There are three stories in this volume, all based on Japanese urban legends. The first one is "The Man under the Bed with an Axe," followed by the ubiquitous "Slit-Mouthed Woman" ("kuchisake onna") and finally the "Human-faced Fish" known as "jinmengyo" in Japanese which is a popular legend that pops up in the news from time to time. All of that seems pretty cool, which is why I was looking forward to the comic so much, but there is just too much here that doesn't work. To start off, "Hanako and the Terror of Allegory" is saddled with a really sub-par translation. I don't know if the translator, Yamashiita Satsuki, is a native speaker of English or not but the translation is really stilted and lacks fluency. The whole comic reads like the words were looked up individually then assembled with proper English grammar but without any emotion or sense of storytelling in English. Next, the series doesn't quite commit one way or the other to being a supernatural comic or a high-tech comic. The "Hanako" in the title "Hanako and the Terror of Allegories" is an Allegory herself, specifically "Hanako-san in the Toilet," which is an urban myth similar to "Bloody Mary" ie if you repeat the spirit's name a proscribed number of times in the bathroom alone, the spirit will appear. However, aside from the backstory, this Hanako is a computer genius who spends her time making a "de-visualize program" for the allegories that strip them of their allegorical nature and allow the believers to see them for what they truly are. At first I thought the series was going to be something like *Fables*, with the fairy-tale creatures being real, but instead the "de-visualize program" reveals that the allegories have no independent existence, and are nothing more than psychological projections of the believers. This forces the series to collapse under its own internal logic, because if Hanako is herself an allegory, wouldn't the "de-visualize program" destroy her as well? And as all of the rest of the allegories have some specific target, some human being with enough belief to cause them to manifest, who is manifesting Hanako? And while I was familiar with all of these legends, they are very Japan-specific, and the text offers little explanation for new readers. While everyone might recognize or understand "The Man under the Bed" and there have been a few movies released for *The Slit-Mouthed Woman*, I highly doubt many Western readers would be familiar with "Hanako from the Toilet" or "The Human-faced Fish." There is a single page at the end of the book giving a short explanation of some of the myths, but it really isn't enough. A good translator will make endnotes to deal with some of the cultural ambiguities, but that doesn't happen here. Maybe all of

this will be fixed in future volumes, and I have learned not to give up on a series after the first volume. There are some nice Lovecraftian notes, especially with the "Human-faced fish" episode, and I always appreciate that. A new translator would definitely be the first order of business. However, as it stands there isn't so much to recommend for "Hanako and the Terror of Allegory."

Many urban legends are meant to be scary. They're scarier when they come true. Ever heard of the axe man urban legend? The man stays under someone's bed with an axe and kills them after they've fallen asleep. The axe man is under Kanae's bed and she can't let herself fall asleep. If she falls asleep, she'll die. She can't make him leave, either. So she goes to a special kind of detective agency in desperate need of help. Aso Daisuke is a detective who likes to deal with nice, normal cases. However, he usually ends up dealing with supernatural problems instead. When urban legends start coming true for people, he says that they've been "possessed by an allegory." In other words, when people believe allegorical stories like urban legends enough, the allegory can become reality. After getting spooked by the tale of the axe man, Kanae now has an axe man under her bed. Whenever Aso is close to the spirits of allegories, he starts to hiccup. That lets him know something is wrong. Hiccuping might sound like a minor annoyance, except for one thing. There's an urban legend that says if a person hiccups more than one hundred times in a row, they'll die. This will end up being true for Aso. So not only does he have to vanquish allegory spirits, he has to do it quickly in order to keep himself alive. In gratitude for Aso's help with the axe man, and in order to pay off her debt, Kanae begins working at the detective agency. And more cases are always coming in. No matter how much Aso wishes he would get safe, normal cases, those pesky allegory keeps getting close to him. The first volume deals with three urban legends--the axe man, the slit-mouthed woman, the human-faced fish--breaking off in the middle of a mystery to make readers want to pick up the next volume. *Hanako and the Terror of Allegory* is a fun, spooky read. It never gets too scary, but it likes to be creepy. In terms of an audience, this manga gets an Older Teen or 16+ rating. It receives this rating for violence, nudity, and dirty jokes (like the ongoing cracks about Aso's collection of pornography). If anything, this will probably earn the book more readers. As of now, *Hanako and the Terror of Allegory* promises more ghoulish tales and urban legends stalking people. Stories of horror will always have a certain fascination among people. In the future, it would be nice if Kanae became a stronger character and did more to stop the allegory spirits, rather than turn to Aso for help. But wherever Hanako ends up going, readers will be sure to follow.-- Danica Davidson

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