



Banana Fish, Vol. 1

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New York City, 1985. A dying man leaves gay gang leader Ash Lynx a strange drug, the key to something called "Banana Fish." The mysterious potion will lead Ash to a disturbed Vietnam vet who remembers a massacre – and into brutal battle with the mafia over control of the drug.

Vice City: New York in the 80s... Nature made Ash Lynx beautiful; nurture made him a cold ruthless killer. A child runaway brought up as the adopted heir, hatchet man, and sex toy of "Papa" Dino Golzine, the East Coast's Corsican crime lord, Ash is now at the rebellious age of seventeen – forsaking the kingdom of power and riches held out by the devil who raised him, preferring a code he can live with among a small but loyal gang of street thugs. But his "Papa" can't simply let him go – not when the hideous secret that drove Ash's older brother mad in Vietnam has suddenly fallen into his insatiably ambitious hands.

It's exactly the wrong time for Eiji Okamura, a pure-hearted young photographer from Japan, to arrive in NYC and make Ash Lynx's acquaintance... and fall with him into the bloody whirlpool of pride, greed, lust and wrath unleashed by the enigma code-named Banana Fish...

Banana Fish, Vol. 1 Details

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Author : Akimi Yoshida

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From Reader Review *Banana Fish*, Vol. 1 for online ebook

Miguel says

Banana Fish is one of the more fascinating manga that I have encountered, equally for its engaging story, fascinating characters, and circumstances surrounding its advertisement. Branded a "shoujo" manga because of its shounen-ai or "boys love" subtext, this is a work filled with a degree of violence, sexual and otherwise, that is totally outside of the scope of the shoujo genre. In fact, such a category is a total misclassification. There's very little, in fact, in the first volume — beyond an astonishing scene in the third chapter, which I'll get to — to sexually titillate readers who are looking for representations of queer love or sex. In fact, the opposite is true. Much like the Salinger story from which the manga gets its title, the manga makes masterful use of euphemism to avoid reproducing sexual violence whilst engaging with it quite seriously.

Ash Lynx, the main character, is enslaved (for the purpose of sexual exploitation) by a mob boss, Papa Dino. Dino and Ash's interactions in the novel are charged with terrifying tension, but any explicit details are left unsaid between them. Indeed, another mobster, Marvin, makes an allusion to liking Ash's "videos." The reader is to understand these videos to be pornographic in nature, as Marvin goes on to say "you're still not too old to be a star." Thus, the disturbing cocktail of sexual exploitation and pedophilia is exposed without the need to narrate explicitly the events of Ash's tragic past. This goes a long way of making the use of these topics seem more engaging and honest, rather than as props to prove the universe of the fiction is gritty and dark — though it is certainly that.

The "selling point" of queer love in the context of shoujo manga is not the terrifying suggestions of rape Marvin threatens Ash with, but rather the budding love affair between Ash and Eiji, a visiting photographer from Japan. However, precious little romance passes between Ash and Eiji in this first volume, and only the generic classification draws attention to the inevitable direction of their relationship. The euphemism that makes the disturbing themes more palatable serve to narrate their relationship as well. In the third chapter, in Ash and Eiji's first exchange, the feminized/infantilized (but not effeminate or childlike in actuality) Ei-
"chan"'s eyes fall to Ash's "bulging" gun, his "piece" (close enough to be a homonym to "penis"), and Ash takes (whips) it out for Ei to hold. To express that degree of sexual charge in a mundane exchange is fairly impressive, particularly in a manga. This textured and robust literary sense follows from the Salingerian evocation of the *Banana Fish*.

The fascinating symbol works on two registers. Within the fiction of *Banana Fish*, the characters are aware of the status of the banana fish drug, the spectre and lynchpin of the plot's forward momentum, as a reference to Salinger. Dr. Steven Meredith tells Ash, "When you meet the 'banana fish' you want to die. It's the fish of death" referencing the suicide of Seymour in Salinger's story. The self-awareness of this reference, however, takes nothing away from the symbolic register. Banana fish operates in all its phallic, homoerotic, and pedophilic valences throughout the text. Dr. Meredith taking the moment to explain an aspect of the symbol is a fascinating creative choice. Yoshida has other winks to the reader (both her reader and simply one who is well read), with the Faulkner Penitentiary and a police detective named Charles Dickenson.

For a text with so much violence within its pages, it's the negative space of sexual violence that deeply unsettles and sits solidly at this manga's tumultuous core. Though this is certainly not a shoujo manga (I'd make the argument for seinen as the most applicable genre) it will be interesting to see to what extent the Ash and Eiji relationship gets played out on the face of the text and to what extent it will be metaphorized and metonymized. The care with which Yoshida handles the explosive theme of sexual violence, sex trafficking, and child pornography in this first volume imbues me with a great deal of hope that her

thoughtful engagement of these topics will continue in a thought-provoking, rather than sensationalizing, fashion. As for Ash and Eiji, they both seem to be deeply compelling characters with far more depth, disqualifying them from the category of objectified bodies to sexual titillate.

Andrea says

I thought that this vol. of the book was a little boring, but i guess it's because i'm comparing it to manga i've read and really enjoyed that was called "FAKE". This volume is taking the shounen-ai details very slow. So in order for me to get to the good stuff, I have to read the rest of the volumes.

Daniel says

The art's not the best, and idk if this is ever going to get romancy at all, but it's awesome. Excited to see this animated, and the oop volumes reissued. :)

Martina says

I have no idea what this is about but I'm reading it for the title.

Oyceter says

<http://oyceter.livejournal.com/622442...>

Marta says

3.75/5

Como apunte fuera de la valoración, la catalogación de este manga deja bastante que desear. Esto tiene de shoujo lo que yo de hetero, vaya (la clasificación en el manga en general ya de por sí me parece una mierda, aunque ese es otro tema). Que sea antiguo tiene un pase, pero ignorar toda la trama principal de la mafia, asesinatos, acción, etc. en favor de la relación m/m le hace flaco favor a la representación.

Volviendo a Banana Fish, una vez pasado el primer capítulo más introductorio y algo lento para mi gusto, me ha enganchado. Me lo han recomendado por activa y por pasiva y estoy avisada del dramón que se me viene encima, así que tengo expectativas altas.

TW: menciones de pedofilia y abuso sexual implícitos.

Dalyne says

:)

Shannon says

I present to you my new obsession

MY BOYS ?*‘??*?

???

Sakura says

For a shoujo series, this really feels "non-shoujo". In fact, it can very well pass for a seinen crime-drama. There are definitely some BL hints/jokes and some pretty looking characters (like Ash and Yut-Lung) but don't let that stop you from picking this up. You should know within 1 or 2 volumes whether you will like this series or not. It's definitely a good mystery with "What is this 'banana fish' and what does it really do?"

Pros:

- Great character development and interesting dialog.
- Simple, clean art. Panels are very easy to read and understand.

Cons:

- Typical shoujo readers might be disappointed with this series (please don't pick it up just because it's labeled "shoujo" - pick it up because the plot interests you).
 - Because it's a "shoujo", it might steer typical non-shoujo readers away from it (if you like crime-dramas, please give it a try regardless of what it's labeled - you might surprise yourself).
 - Some might be put off by the 80's style art (I personally like it - it's typical of the time period and I've read a lot of 80's manga).
-

? Silvia ? says

I know I'll regret this but apparently I can't stay away from painful things

Miriam says

I meant to write a review yesterday (Aug 12) when it was the author's birthday, but I forgot so I guess I can slack now, y/n?

Kinda dated, but still with interesting ideas and execution. I wished it moved a little faster as I'm more interested in the longer plot reveal re: the mystery drug than the current gang war and police investigation, but will read on.

Alexander Case says

This felt a lot like the manga equivalent of an exploitation film. We practically get the shots of characters on 42nd street, in front of the array of various grindhouse movie theaters. However, unlike exploitation films, this manga has a production volume you can see on the page. Akimi Yoshida has an art style that reminds me, a *lot* of Katsuhiro Otomo, from the way she draws faces, to the detail in her background.

If I was to lay one complaint at her work, it's that she doesn't draw black people very well. It's not that the characters are drawn like Black Sambo (like some artists have a bad habit of doing - lookin' at you, Akira Toriyama). The character of "Skip" is supposed to be a black kid in his mid-teens - but his lips are drawn just a little too big. It's not so much that it's a caricature, but it's enough to stand out and be jarring.

Dov Zeller says

I liked this but not sure yet if it's a series I'll follow to the end. It's pretty violent, but the characters are intriguing and the plot, though not generally my thing (gangs and drugs and gang/mafia/police politics...) is compelling. Between a three and four rating. I will probably read the second book in the series at the very least.

Several people write in their reviews that 'fortunately' the main character is not really gay. Which makes me 1) annoyed 2) less interested in reading the series. I was pretty excited to read a graphic mystery with a young, queer, smart, tough gang leader -- with a compassionate side or at least a strong sense of gangland ethics -- as its lead character. I also understand that to call a male character gay or queer who has sex with other men in the context of gang life is not necessarily understanding the complexity of human sexuality and power dynamics under these particular circumstances.

I'm most curious to learn about the connection between the drug situation and the war situation (Vietnam) and the relationship between Ash and, well, a bunch of different characters. And, that's about all I have to say.

Anto says

Cuando salió el primer episodio del anime, quedé enganchada al instante. Sinceramente creo que es uno de los mejores de la temporada. Y hoy de pura curiosidad se me dio investigar si tenía manga ¡y sí!

El manga está ambientado en los años '80 mientras que el anime es de la época contemporánea. Por un momento pensé que eso podría "arruinarme" un poco la emoción, pero para nada, casi que ni lo noto, y lo disfruté bastante.

Al ser el primer tomo tiene una buena introducción de los personajes y la trama en general, mientras te va dejando pistas que te hacen imaginarte el gran esquema de la situación.

Los personajes me parecen de lo más interesantes, y el arte si bien no es la gran cosa para mí, tampoco me desagradó.

Si bien está clasificado como un shoujo, yo diría que es más un seinen, de shoujo no le veo nada la verdad.

Policía, mafia, pandilleros.

Drogas, prostitución, abortos clandestinos, pedofilia, asesinatos. Son algunos tópicos a los que se hace alusión en la obra, así que están avisados por si no es de su gusto, aunque no es nada explícito, al menos por ahora.

Y como esto ya lo vi en el anime, sé que se viene el primer -y ruego que el último- momento super sad :(

Rick says

Banana Fish is one of those sprawling manga series that takes up multiple volumes. It is considered *shojo*, meaning that it supposedly intended to appeal to both male & female readers. Well, sure, maybe.

Superficially this series is about a mystery to uncover the meaning of *Banana Fish*, but it's really about the growing & evolving relationship between Ash Lynx, a young NYC gang leader, & Eiji Okumura, a displaced Japanese young man who is hopelessly out of his element. This volume sets the events spiraling into motion and begins to introduce the ever expanding & evolving cast of characters.
