

All I Want is You -- Lair

### **Desire**

ISBN: 1569709793

by Maki Kazumi

Digital Manga 2004

Toru thinks he has all he needs ñ a loyal best friend, Ryoji, who makes him laugh and an encouraging art mentor, Kashiwazaki, pushing him to excel at painting. Never mind that he's been in love with Ryoji for years ñ he knows there's no hope there, and so he's content to keep his friend. Then life gets complicated. Ryoji, a jock who has a string of girlfriends, suddenly confesses that he thinks about Toru when he's having sex. Startled, Toru cannot comprehend what Ryoji hopes for until Ryoji proposes they try it out ñ once so he can see what it's like. Toru is at once ecstatic and miserable ñ he can finally touch his beloved but must suffer through knowing he's no more than a fling for the curious Ryoji. Ryoji is persuasive to the point of being pushy, and Toru gives in knowing that Ryoji would never knowingly hurt him. Though awkward and uncomfortable, Toru relishes the contact even while anticipating desertion. Then Ryoji wants to do it again. It seems to Toru that every time he thinks he's got his friend figured out, he turns around with another proposal. The pair's shrewd friend, Tadashi, sees the tension growing between his friends and, once he figures out why, warns Toru of hurting himself by allowing Ryoji to get his way. Not sure what to do, Toru confesses all to Kashiwazaki, who encourages him to break it off with Ryoji by instead appearing to date Hashizaki himself ñ then Toru could tell if Ryoji's feelings for him were at all serious. Of course, the best laid plans backfire, and what can Toru do when Hashizaki seems a little too interested? This newer shonen-ai/yaoi title is more explicit than other titles, hence why it's in [The Lair](#) ñ the sex scenes are along the lines of an R rating and the publisher has slapped a (perhaps overzealous) explicit content advisory on the cover. That being said, though it may seem from a plot summary to be all too soap opera-esque, this title is a compelling high school drama with teenagers who definitely act like teenagers. Trying to figure out the difference between sex, b friendship and love is a minefield for any teen struggling through first times, and this title is remarkably free of fantasy-driven romantic contrivance so common in this subgenre. As fans of such series as [Gravitation](#) and [Fake](#) grow older, titles like **Desire** will satisfy.

review by [robin](#)

[back to top](#)

### **Fake**

by Sanami Matoh

Tokyopop 2003-2004

Imagine your typical buddy cop show: one detective, blunt to a fault and with a high opinion of himself, is saddled with a naïve but well-meaning partner. After the expected whining about rookies and rank, the two men maneuver through their new partnership and their work, tracking down clues, puzzling through evidence, and wading through office politics. Now, add to that the fact that our lead detective ends up with more than a little crush on his new cohort, and you've got **Fake**. [read more...](#)

If you like, you can skip to individual volumes in the Series:

[Fake Volume 1](#)

[Fake Volume 2](#)

[Fake Volume 3](#)

[Fake Volume 4](#)

[Fake Volume 5](#)

[Fake Volume 6](#)

[Fake Volume 7](#)

reviews by [robin](#)

[back to top](#)

**Until the Full Moon** (Volume 1)

ISBN: 1932480889

by Sanami Matoh

Broccoli Books, 2004

U.S. manga readers know Sanami Matoh as the author of [FAKE](#), an endearing (and, for shonen ai, fairly realistic) romantic drama about two (male) police officers who fall in love. **Until the Full Moon**, the second of her works to become available in English, is something else entirely. Fans of [FAKE](#) will recognize the author's fondness for flamboyant hairstyles, outfits, and love at first sight, but **Until the Full Moon** takes place in a very different world. This is a world populated by vampires and werewolves, who trace their ancestry back to fairy tales and legends. David Vincent, a notorious player, is the son of a prominent vampire family. As a child, he was inseparable from his friend Marlo- son of a vampire father and a werewolf mother. He hasn't seen Marlo for ten years when Marlo's family arrives to pay the Vincent's a visit. They've come with a problem for Dr. Arnet Vincent, a famous doctor in the vampire clan. It seems that Marlo has inherited an unusual trait from his mother's werewolf clan: on full moon nights, instead of becoming a wolf, Marlo becomes a woman. Anxious to protect their child, Marlo's parents want to arrange a marriage between her- when she is a her- and David. Marlo protests, but, as her father remarks, "I'm not going to let 100 or 200 year old kids go decide what's best!" David, on the other hand, is intrigued- he's had feelings for Marlo since they were teens. As the two try to make sense of their situation, Marlo's female self begins to return David's love. Is Marlo prepared to accept that love as a man?

Despite the somewhat unbelievable premise of Marlo and David's sudden engagement, **Until the Full Moon** shares [FAKE](#)'s essential sweetness. David's love for Marlo knows no gender divisions, and Marlo's gender transformations are handled with sensitivity and humor. The story moves so quickly, however, that it's a bit hard to believe in the intensity of David's feelings. The couple have declared their love by the end of the volume, but their personalities have yet to be fully established. The publisher has rated Volume 1 for ages 16 and up. While Marlo and David are sometimes a straight couple and sometimes not, depictions of sensuality are fairly mild throughout. **Until the Full Moon** is not necessarily a must-have for manga collections, but it is an oddly endearing tale of love and acceptance.

review by [jen](#)

[back to top](#)

**Cheat**

ISBN: 1929998473

By Christine Norrie

Oni Press 2003

I will admit, I fell in love with Ms. Norrie's artwork when I read the first [Hopeless Savages](#). Cheat is her first solo book, and her artwork just shines all the way through. The black and white flow of her ink is

beautiful and fully suited to this modern cautionary tale. Cheat is, rather obviously, about cheating. In this case, it's all about romantic cheating, and the many reactions to and consequences of such a situation. What isn't so obvious about Cheat is the resonance of the emotions and the simplicity of a well-told tale. There's are no fateful plots twists or revelations. Conversations are mundane in the best sense of the word -- familiar and welcoming. There's a truth in behavior shown by keen observation of just what romantic betrayal means, and the fallout for each person involved. This title is good for older teens and adults, and not really because of content (the one sex scene is not particularly explicit -- in fact, it's quite beautifully rendered) but more because of the sophistication behind the feelings contemplated. That being said, it's a shoe-in for all those people who love romance comics -- this one just gives them a little more to chew on than most.

*review by [robin](#)*

[back to top](#)

### **Box Office Poison**

ISBN: 1891830198

By Alex Robinson

Top Shelf Productions 2001

If anyone ever asks you if a graphic novel is a "real" novel, hand this over to them and watch their eyes goggle. Alex Robinson's 600 plus page whopper doesn't just prove comics can sustain length -- it's a sly, funny, melancholy mix of romance and relationships. The grand message here, if you're looking for one, is simple: no one can really help who they love, and it's not wise to try -- you're stuck with who you love, and even if no one else gets it, it's worth fighting for. Intertwined with all the romantic pairings and betrayals is a compelling tale of a famous comic creator who still gets no royalties off his work due to a naive faith in the industry, and in the background, everyday life and work moves along with all its quirks and small surprises, both good and bad. I was particularly drawn in by the snide take on working in a bookstore -- not unlike working in a library, my friends -- but the heart alongside the snide comments makes the whole tale affecting as well as funny.

*review by [robin](#)*

[back to top](#)

### **Dumped**

ISBN: 1929998414

By Andi Watson

Oni Press 2002

Andi Watson has a bit of an odd curse -- for some reason, people always think he's a woman if they've never met him or been told otherwise. I certainly did. I think it might be that "i" at the end of his first name at first glance. Then again, if you read his work, you might also just accept the stereotype that only women write sweet, low-key romances. Happily, Mr. Watson proves us wrong. This time around, in **Dumped**, we're led into the awkward but undoubtedly real lives of a boy who collects old books and a girl who collects vintage clothing. Is their love of all things antique and lost enough to bring them toward true love?

review by [robin](#)

[back to top](#)