

Fake

The Complete Series

[Fake Volume 1](#)

[Fake Volume 2](#)

[Fake Volume 3](#)

[Fake Volume 4](#)

[Fake Volume 5](#)

[Fake Volume 6](#)

[Fake Volume 7](#)

all reviews by [robin](#)

Introduction

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**.

One of the first *shonen-ai*, or "boys love," titles published in English, **Fake** is also one of the best of the subgenre currently available. Make no mistake, **Fake** is a romance, and can get as silly as any such genre title out of Japan, but rather than concentrating only on romance, **Fake** actually has plot-- a good bit of plot. In tangling with a variety of cases, from minor cranks to serial killers, our heroes confront a variety of issues. There's the daily struggle of how to track rumors and read people fast enough to keep one step ahead of fleeing criminals. On top of that, trying to keep a sense of humor in a job that makes you confront death and cruelty daily is not easy, not to mention all too often being forced to face personal demons.

This all makes the series sound very serious-- but never fear, the slapstick humor so often present in *manga* is far from absent. Everyone seems to scream a little hysterically, weep a little more frequently, cackle a little devilishly, and blush way more in *manga* than anyone in reality (I'd be rather alarmed if my friends ever acted in such a manner). Everyone is just on a more melodramatic emotional scale. All of this is indicated in the artwork-- characters' faces distort or take on animal characteristics to indicate attitude (wolfishness, for example) and it's not meant to be taken literally but to instead show emotions. For a new reader, the shifting from serious conversations to comical whining, fighting, and tussling at the drop of a hat feels a bit strange, but if you just go with the flow it all begins to fall into place in your heart.

Dee Laetner, rogue that he is, proves that despite his arrogance, he is an excellent and loyal investigator while the more fragile-seeming Randy "Ryo" McClaine has an iron will when pushed too far. Neither fall completely into stereotypes, and display conflicting traits that are unusual in romance comics-- Ryo, admittedly more effeminate, when provoked can be the more violent of the two, while the more masculine Dee is the one who preens over his hair. Opposites attract and the key to this series is the fine working partnership, full of respect and loyalty, which slowly shifts into a more romantic synchronicity. On top of all that, kudos for the translators-- they have a lot of fun making sure the dialog works, both as being correct to New York and as being realistic to a cop's, and a man's, world. Though there is the occasional odd word or two, the casual slang, insults and bragging make the whole environment feel that much more real.

Art

Sanami Matoh's art is clean and beautiful-- I confess Dee is totally my type, if cartoons came to life-- and her dynamic use of line, grey tones, and panels give all her scenes great energy, whether featuring an

emotional confession or a chase through the streets of New York. Speaking of New York, the author readily admits that she knows little of NYC or police procedure, so don't expect the legal or geographical details to hold up under scrutiny. Also, both Dee and Ryo wear, shall we say, creative outfits that might be a bit out of place in a NYPD precinct, never mind the impracticality of those snazzy high-heeled dress shoes. Just go with the fashion-- it's more fun that way.

One note: Dee and Ryo are both adults, and thus the story level is best suited to older teens or adults. The romantic entanglements throughout the series consist mainly of intense kisses and groping-- until the final seventh volume. This volume's scenes of (ahem) consummation are more explicit than most teen romances and thus firmly pushes the series into the adult content category. If you're purchasing this for a library, and are unsure about the content, the safest bet would be to put the whole series in your adult section where interested teens can still find them. That being said, volumes one to six are just the kind of teasing will-they, won't-they romances teens (and adults) crave.

[back to top](#)

Fake Volume 1

ISBN: 1591823269

By Sanami Matoh

Tokyopop 2003

The first volume introduces us to the darkly handsome Dee and the endearing Ryo. Intrigued by his new partner's shy manner and modesty, the out-as-bisexual Dee immediately starts needling Ryo about his sexuality and, in the tradition of wacky romances, enjoys creating situations where Ryo must go along with gratuitous displays of public affection. (Those bad guys are looking for our witness? Well then, we'll just make out in the street to distract them and all will be saved...) Ryo, understandably flabbergasted, protests, but he can't help but be softened by Dee's inherent good nature. As they work through cases involving renegade tweens, the amusingly attitude-filled Bikky and pretty pickpocket Carol, Dee begins to realize that what started out as teasing means more to him than just a way to mess with Ryo's head. The first volume also introduces us to more comic relief-- J.J., a lovelorn sharpshooter (and how many times do those two things go together?) who hopelessly pursues an uninterested Dee. As Ryo takes in the wayward Bikky and draws Dee more and more into his life, Dee begins to hope that, just maybe, Ryo protests his advances a little too much.

On a side note, the racial distinctiveness in this series is inconsistently represented-- Bikky (half-African-American and half-Caucasian) looks barely different from Ryo (half-Japanese and half-Caucasian) who also looks essentially the same as Dee (Caucasian). Side characters are given more distinct visual cues of ethnicity including dreadlocks and darker skintones-- the reasons behind the presence or lack of such visual representations are puzzling, but not intended to be stereotypical or offensive.

[back to top](#)

Fake Volume 2

ISBN: 1591823277

By Sanami Matoh

Tokyopop 2003

Volume two finds Dee and Ryo taking a much needed vacation in England. Dee has anticipated

the ultimate seduction -- candles, wine, moonlight -- until pesky Bikky and Carol crash the party (as they are wont to do) and Ryo stumbles across a corpse. At first content to leave matters to the local police, the two detectives are inevitably drawn into the case. Just who was that alluring man Ryo spotted the night of the crime, much to Dee's jealous dismay? Add lovesick J.J. into the mix and it's bound to get complicated -- and funny. This first tale involves ghosts, racial prejudice, and a lot of good-natured squabbling among the "family" forming between Dee, Ryo, Bikky, and Carol. Also arriving on the scene is Berkeley Rose, the sly and calculating superior who throws a wrench in the works by pursuing Ryo almost as relentlessly as Dee, putting Dee on the offensive and confusing poor Ryo even more.

In later stories, we get some illuminating insight into Dee's childhood when his guardian is attacked. Dee's struggle with justice and vengeance is elegantly done, the anger bleeding into his personal life showing the pressures cops endure enforcing and bending the law. A sweet finish comes in the form of a window into Bikky and Carol's budding relationship. This volume remains one of my favorites, despite some unsettlingly forceful pouncing on Dee's part (see [the whole dominant suitor/wilting flower trope](#) in romance *manga*).

[back to top](#)

Fake Volume 3

ISBN: 1591823285

By Sanami Matcho

Tokyopop 2003

In volume three, installments continue to take a more serious turn, though the slapstick humor, most notably in Dee and Bikky's antagonistic bickering, is still very evident. Dee and Ryo end up with one of the most chilling investigations to hit the precinct: a string of violent murders that seem to be the work of a serial killer while at the same time also hints at drug connections. The ever-conniving Berkeley (who makes Dee's romantic tactics seem sweet by comparison) brings in an old FBI friend, the kick-butt Diana, to help out with the case, conveniently pairing her with Dee while keeping Ryo for himself. The ensuing investigation and outbursts of possessiveness force Ryo to blurt out some of his own feelings for Dee, but (of course) they get interrupted before actual confessions can be made.

The violence level in this volume is a bit more gruesome than usual, but not gratuitous, and the higher stakes make for a very satisfying drama. The playful Diana makes a great addition to the cast, especially as someone who humanizes Berkeley and who sees the developing triangle more clearly than anyone caught within it. A shorter vignette gives us an appreciated look into Ryo's past including the death of his parents, which will lead us into later volumes' more serious stories, and ends with a sweet look at why no one should spend Christmas Eve alone. In a familiar pattern, this volume also includes with another installment in the progress of Bikky and Carol's lives -- this time Bikky seeks to prove himself worthy of Carol by competing with his perceived rival, Lai, on the basketball court. Never mind that though Carol flirts, her heart belongs to Bikky -- she just has to figure out how to drill that into his thick skull.

[back to top](#)

Fake Volume 4

ISBN: 1591823293

By Sanami Matcho

Tokyopop 2003

The fourth installment, pardon the bad pun, starts out with a bang, literally. A bomber is threatening Bikky's school, but without any warning or logic that the police can piece together. Nothing is ever simple for Dee and Ryo – they end up tracking down a trail of vendettas and past crimes, all the while worried for Bikky's safety. They soon realize the bomber is playing a game with them and struggle to figure out his true purpose before anyone else gets hurt. Despite all efforts, all too soon a wounded Dee and panicked Bikky are caught inside a building set to blow. In the fallout, Ryo finally shows Dee just how much he cares about him (though, of course, confirmation is fleeting), but the perpetrator behind the bombings is not going to let them get out of danger quite so easily.

This volume also features a shorter and highly amusing vignette in which Dee, sick as a dog, attempts to go home but can't help but do a good deed that only manages to make him more ill. In his fevered state, we finally get a glimpse of the tenderness Dee's bluster covers – as much as he steals kisses from Ryo whenever he can get them, he wants more from Ryo than just a roll in the hay. The romantic in me gave a big ol' sigh and started rooting in earnest for Dee to get his wish. This also marks the difference between this series and the attitude of other recent *shonen-ai* titles like [Gravitation](#) – in this tale, you actually cheer for the characters to get together rather than wondering what the lovesick fool sees in the cruel and distant object of his affection.

[back to top](#)

Fake Volume 5

ISBN: 1591823307

By Sanami Matoh

Tokyopop 2004

The fifth volume marks a darker chapter – all is not wine and roses. A case lands on our pair's plate that at first appears routine, if a bit gruesome – a couple murdered in their home, no immediate motive, no leads to the perp. Triggers start to sound for Ryo, though, and while he appears normal on the surface, Dee senses something is seriously wrong with his partner. With a little investigation of his own, Dee pieces together enough to realize that this case is a mirror of Ryo's own parents' murders, down to the weapon and M.O. Ryo, out of control with rage and grief, gets a chance to confront his parents' killer with only Dee and a wavering sense of right and wrong to keep him from a very tempting retribution. In the aftermath of that disastrous meeting, Ryo breaks down and attempts to blank out his actions and take comfort in Dee's arms, but for all the wrong reasons – can Dee resist the offer of everything he's been waiting so to have? This volume also offers a welcome focus on J.J. which shows him to be a lot more than Dee's ardent shadow – we finally see him as a principled and decent cop who faces the sudden shift of loyalties in his old partner and friend with understanding, regret and grace.

[back to top](#)

Fake Volume 6

ISBN: 1591823315

By Sanami Matoh

Tokyopop 2004

Like a ghoul out of a particularly grisly urban legend, a killer is haunting the streets of New York, stalking

Fake Volume 6

ISBN: 1591823315

By Sanami Matoh

Tokyopop 2004

Like a ghoul out of a particularly grisly urban legend, a killer is haunting the streets of New York, stalking young girls until finally murdering them and chopping off their hand as souvenirs. The entire department is called in to work the case, though no one realizes the killer has already spotted his next victim - Carol. Dee and Ryo attempt to warn Carol to be careful, but her characteristic kindness and independence lead her right into the killer's clever trap. Of course, that same sass makes her a far-from-terrified victim, ready to fight back at a moment's notice, and once Dee, Ryo, and Bikky realize she's vanished, they're using all their skills to track her down before it's too late. Amid all of the tension, Dee is trying to figure out how to progress from kisses to more intimate attentions without spooking the nervous but willing Ryo. We finally get away from the (often irritatingly) dazed compliance Ryo's displayed in the past -- instead of staring off in space wondering what to do, he's trying to do something about his own internal barriers, and Dee gets to show how sensitive he is of Ryo's hesitation despite being (understandably) frustrated.

The second thread of story leads us back to Dee's teen years as an orphan taken under the wings of a no-nonsense nun and a flawed but fatherly cop. Dee's life has always been tough, if full of affection, and even when the grimmest of realizations brings a disheartening betrayal to light, his talent for seeing to the true heart of the matter harkens what will make him a good cop and a better friend. This volume's crimes are a bit more icky than usual. The sexual side of the stalking of underage girls in the first story is not hidden and the tale of Dee's teenhood addresses issues of sexual abuse and rape (though there's only one explicit panel), so this volume is definitely for older teens and adults.

[back to top](#)

Fake Volume 7

ISBN: 1591823323

By Sanami Matoh

Tokyopop 2004

Fake's final volume starts out with Dee and Ryo being dragged into an FBI witness protection case -- their witness being an informant on the mob who also just happens to be the wife of Ryo's parents' killer. Neither partner is looking forward to the work, especially as the wife seems to be up to quite a bit more scheming than usual for an innocent witness. The one nice part of the case is reteaming with the high-energy and blunt Special Agent Diana Spacey. In getting reacquainted, Diana casually asks just how far Ryo's progressed with Dee, and when Ryo blushingly admits to only kisses, she's astounded. Knowing a bit about pinning herself, she gives Ryo a good kick in the pants and warns him if he doesn't figure himself out, all he'll be doing is breaking Dee's spirit and heart slowly instead of showing Dee the honesty he deserves. Ryo strains to maintain balance as he's confronted once again by his parents' murderer, but in the end he finds himself in Dee's comforting embrace, acknowledging at least that side of his heart. Will he backpeddle the morning after, or will Dee finally get his heart's desire? As they work through their case, the very twisted example of love and loyalty at its climax jolts both into realizing that the time has come to admit their feelings (finally, amid the cheers of readers everywhere).

As a finish for the series, this volume is a fine achievement, though any fans of Bikky and Carol will be