

## Critique of “Dragon Gate”

Dragon Gate is an eight page comic by Ta’Neal Chandler and an excerpt of a larger idea that she intends to make into a web comic. Dragon Gate follows Rukia the koi fish as she trains to become an adventuring ninja and eventually become strong enough to climb the waterfall to the Dragon Gate, like her mother did. Doing so will turn her into a dragon and grant her mystical power and authority; what she will do with that power is something she will have to figure out along the way since she does not really know what it means to be a dragon. She also has her friends along the way to help her, her sensei and her mother’s close friend, Onizamu the catfish, and her rival and later best friend, Zuka the eel. For the most part, the main comic will be episodic with longer storylines interspersed through it, such as *Usagi Yojimbo*’s structure. This comic is just one part from her adventure early on in the entire idea’s story.

The actual eight page comic allows the reader a glimpse into the characters’ personalities. Rukia is headstrong and enthusiastic, while Zuka is steady and reserved. Onizamu is not as present as the other two characters, but he is knowledgeable yet lethargic as he sips tea while watching his students spar. The story is a look into their interactions. The comic’s color choices are generally mid-tones, meaning they are neither bright nor dark, making it easy on the eyes to look at. However, this also means that there is not as much contrast to make things stand out from each other. All of the lines are smooth and the thickness of them gives the art its cartoon feel. Because the background is simple and the use of onomatopoeia is not evasive, the emphasis stays on the characters and the narrative that unfolds. Ta’Neal’s use of action lines shows her inspiration from manga. The style of the characters is generally round and they all have relatively

large eyes, invoking the styles of Tezuka and Disney. Though Onizamu has a thicker physique, Rukia and Zuka have essentially the same body type as each other, so perhaps if they were to be redesigned, Ta'Neal could exaggerate features and proportions to really make them stand out from each other more. Overall, the story is easy to follow, the characters are charming, and the artwork is well done. I think you should give Ta'Neal an A.

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