

***Trespassers* by Brenna Bard**

Gabby Woods is spending a week of summer vacation with her family at their lake house in the north woods of Wisconsin. She'd planned on reading a stack of mystery books, but finds out there's a real mystery afoot! So instead of reading, she starts writing her own story about the mysterious disappearance of a prominent architect and his model wife some decades before. Reluctantly befriending her new neighbor, Paige, they begin to work on the story together. Paige is more rebellious than Gabby, and ultimately coaxes her to trespass on the property once belonging to the architect and his wife. They find clues in the house and concoct a pretty elaborate scenario of what happened to the couple, involving affairs and murders. When a friend of Gabby's family becomes Paige's prime suspect, it forms a rift in their burgeoning friendship. The mystery is ultimately solved in the end, which is satisfying and melancholy at the same time.

As an avid mystery fan and a voracious reader of graphic novels, this was absolutely right up my alley. Gabby reminds me of me at her age, just wanting to read books on vacation and not being terribly interested in socializing. However, I would have been right there with her trying to solve the mystery of the abandoned mansion overlooking the lake. Her relationship with her parents and siblings comes off as realistic, and her reaction to some bad news while on vacation seems authentically selfish for an 8th grader. Gabby's shaky friendship with Paige also seems pretty true to life. They're from different cities (Green Bay and Chicago, respectively), with vastly different life experiences, so it makes sense that they would go in different directions with their ideas for the story. In a funny local connection in the book, Paige's parents threaten to send her to live with her great-aunt in Peoria if she keeps acting out. Which Paige thinks will be the *absolute worst thing in the entire world*.

Bard's art is beautiful in its simplicity and her use of a different color scheme and frame for the panels featuring Gabby's story is a great way to see that play out. Despite the fact that this is a mystery, and potentially a murder, there's nothing gory or scary in the book. Just a fun mystery, some great characters, lovely art, and a cat. I hope that Bard writes a sequel to check in with Gabby, Paige, and their families at some point down the line. I'd love to see what they come up with for their murder mystery story now that they know the truth of what actually happened.