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Review: 'Relish,' 'Artifice' keep things simple, delectable

BY ERIC HENRICKSON

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I've got two very different graphic novels to review today. Both made for enjoyable airplane reading on a recent trip, and they're both available now, so here ya go.

**“Relish: My Life in the Kitchen” by Lucy Knisley** **Relish**cover **(FirstSecond)**: It's funny that Alison Bechdel has a quote on the cover because her “Fun Home” is the first thing I thought of when I saw my review copy of “Relish.” Like “Fun Home,” it's an engrossing, illustrated memoir. But it's a more outwardly happy story, and it's in full color.

And it includes recipes!

Lucy Knisley is your typical foodie. She's not a pro, but she grew up with a chef for a mom and a foodie for a dad, so she knows her stuff. And she's great at sharing it.

Whether it's buying candy and street food (and porn) as a kid in Mexico or trying to master the lowly chocolate chip cookie, Knisley, well, relishes in presenting her stories. Her love of food is front and center, but it would be lost without her knack for storytelling.

There's nothing horribly dramatic here — just a series of simple stories, well-crafted and full of flavor. Her art is straight-forward and heartfelt, with nicely expressive faces and great use of bold colors. And each chapter ends with a recipe. Most sound yummy, but any cookie that contains coconut can not be called “best.” Ick.

But food, like art, is subjective. The best will challenge you, even if you don't always like it. Luckily, I almost always liked “Relish.” And even if you're not a foodie, I think you will, too.

**Artifice**page

**“Artifice” by Alex Woolfson and Winona Nelson (AMW Comics)**: Like many graphic novels these days, “Artifice” is a collection of Woolfson and Nelson's webcomic. The book is available at amazon.com and at [his website](#), where it's also viewable for free.

It's a NSFW (it never gets much more explicit than **Artifice**cover the above image, but it is sexy) story of love and what it means to be human. And while the story of an android falling in love with a human (and vice versa) isn't exactly new, it's more than the gay twist that makes this feel like a more original story than it really is.

It's told in flashback as the android, Deacon, is in therapy after botching a mission. (It was a violent mission worth botching, but that's, interestingly, almost beside the point.) Deacon is an advanced android prototype, and the company that created him is very interested in finding out why things didn't go as planned, leaving a survivor, Jeff.

Well, there's that whole, pesky human emotion thing.

Woolfson moves things along nicely without being too quick in building the relationship between Deacon and Jeff, a relationship that at first seems terribly wrong given the circumstances, which I don't want to spoil. But it works. And while the characters are gay, it's still a universal story. When things come to an end, it seems like this is just part one of the story. But it's really, truly, the end.

Nelson does a fine job with the artwork. There are a few awkward angles, especially when the doctor, Clarice Maven, gets extra mad at Deacon for dodging her questions. But Nelson is one to watch.

Woolfson is currently in the middle of a completely different story, “The Young Protectors,” on the book's website. It's a superhero story that's posted at least weekly as he raises more money to pay his artist. I recommend checking them both out (if you're an adult).



Eric Henrickson is a Detroit News copy editor who has also been writing about comic books, video games and anime for The News for more than 10 years. His favorite bit of geek cred so far: appearing in an online “Star Trek” fan series.

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