

Headline:

From Otaku To Manga-ka

Sub-headline:

Internet provides real-life “Cinderella story” for artist of SERENITY, America’s Premiere Inspirational Manga (sm)

The road to the professional ranks in manga is usually a long and arduous climb, starting with fan art submissions, then an apprenticeship, and finally becoming the lead artist on a project.

Or success can come in an e-mail from a stranger.

“We had just lost our original artist due to a scheduling conflict and were anxious to find a replacement,” says Buzz Dixon, founder of Realbuzz Studios, which is producing SERENITY, America’s Premiere Inspirational Manga in conjunction with Barbour Publishing. “We interviewed and took samples from several professionals. While all of them were top notch, there was something that just didn’t ‘click’ with our story.”

SERENITY is a comedic teen soap opera about an unhappy girl who finds a happy ending. Serenity Harper arrives at her new school with a truckload of angst, anger, and animosity. She’s almost written off by the rest of her classmates, but one tiny group of students decides to go the extra mile in befriending her. That little effort makes all the difference, but Serenity’s road to happiness remains a bumpy one with many ups and downs until she finally finds the love and acceptance she’s been seeking.

“Her story is both hilarious and painful,” says Dixon. “It’s about real life situations and emotions, and about overcoming pain through love and compassion. The artist who assumed the creative chores on SERENITY needed to be able to balance humor and emotion in a touching, bittersweet style.”

Unable to locate such an artist, Dixon began searching the Internet. That’s when the “Cinderella” effect occurred. “I started with the webpage of an artist who was referred to us,” he says. “That artist was unavailable, but he had links to other artists, and those artists had links to more artists still. At about the third level of links, I found Min Kwon’s page.”

Born in Seoul, Korea, Min “Keiiii” Kwon came to the U.S. at age 14. A recent Rutgers University graduate with a degree in linguistics, she works primarily works in the manga style using digital technology, but is skilled in a variety of different styles and media, including traditional ones.

“When Buzz first contacted me, I said no,” says Min. “It was never my dream to become a professional manga-ka. In fact, from an early age on -- way back in second grade! -- I told myself I wouldn’t pursue an artistic career. But SERENITY’s concept aroused my

curiosity and I asked for more information about the series. Finally I agreed to do three sample pages to see if my style meshed with the story.”

“Min was actually finishing up her final year of school when I contacted her,” says Dixon. “She had never been professionally published before, much less done an entire graphic novel, but in her student efforts I saw the quality I was looking for in SERENITY.”

How is Min Kwon working out? “She is perfect,” says Marlon Schulman, principal in Realbuzz Studios, and who while at Bandai was one of the pioneering executives who helped launch the current anime and manga wave in America. “She is not only wonderful in expressing the emotions and inner feelings of our characters in their faces, but she’s even able to use their wardrobes to add subtle depths to their characters. She has just recently completed volume three of the series while volume one, SERENITY: Bad Girl In Town, hits shelves in November.”

The books, each one 90 pages long in full color, will arrive every other month from Barbour Publishing with a \$7.97 price point. SERENITY launched her own web site with additional art and continuing fun at www.SerenityBuzz.com while information on Realbuzz Studios may be found at www.RealbuzzStudios.com.

“SERENITY is a blast,” Min says. “I’m having lots of fun. It was a bigger artistic challenge than anything I had tried before, but it’s proving to be a wonderful experience. I love the story and characters.”

Min Kwon currently lives in New Jersey with her family and a lovable Alaskan Malamute named Mocha.