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Monstress: Vol 1. Awakening

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Maika is a seventeen-year-old survivor of a horrible war between human and Arcainics, animal-dark-magic hybrids. Now, humans sell these Arcainics as slaves, experiment on them, and collect Lilium, a precious magical chemical, from their dead and dying bodies. Cumaea are the powerful witch-nuns who do a majority of the killing and harvesting from Arcainics. Maika, one such slave, is trying to figure out her own past, her place in the world, why her mother was killed, where the unknown voice inside her is coming from, and what she’s supposed to do about all of it. She finds friends in a cat and a young Arcainic female fox, who help her survive and realize that in unconscious moments she devours others.

This graphic novel is a dystopian feminine powerhouse, and the beginning to a six-part set. The full-color book has good print quality and paper. The plot is intriguing, though, much like the main character, the reader is dropped in the middle of a story, war, and place that they are given little to no previous knowledge about. It takes a little while to get into the story and start piecing some of the information together, though the plot has good movement and the characters are well thought-out. A majority of all of the characters are powerful women, both on the good and the bad sides. Though there are a few men illustrated throughout, they do not have as much page time or character development as of yet. This is a darker book with the topics and themes of war and slavery, recommended for late-teens and older. Awakening is a good start to what is sure to be an epic adventure tale.

*Contains moderate violence, moderate sexual content, and moderate language.