The Undertaking of Lily Chen

Emma Patton
The Undertaking of Lily Chen is a graphic novel that features exquisitely beautiful art. Both the art and the story are dark and focus closely on death, the afterlife, and desperation. Though it does certainly have some humor, the overall tone is heavy and the concept is one that an American reader may find disturbing and morbid. In addition, the book is definitely for an older audience, either young adult or adult, due to mature content. Ultimately, the beginning of the novel is excellent and perfectly integrates telling through text and showing through graphics. The exposition is strong and the characterization has promising beginnings. However, somewhere in the middle of the novel, the narrative arc becomes confusing and the characters seem more unfamiliar. By the time a resolution comes, the ending seems rushed and too simplistic for the complexities of the story, so the excellent beginning is not sustained. However, the high quality of the art is consistent from the beginning to the end.

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