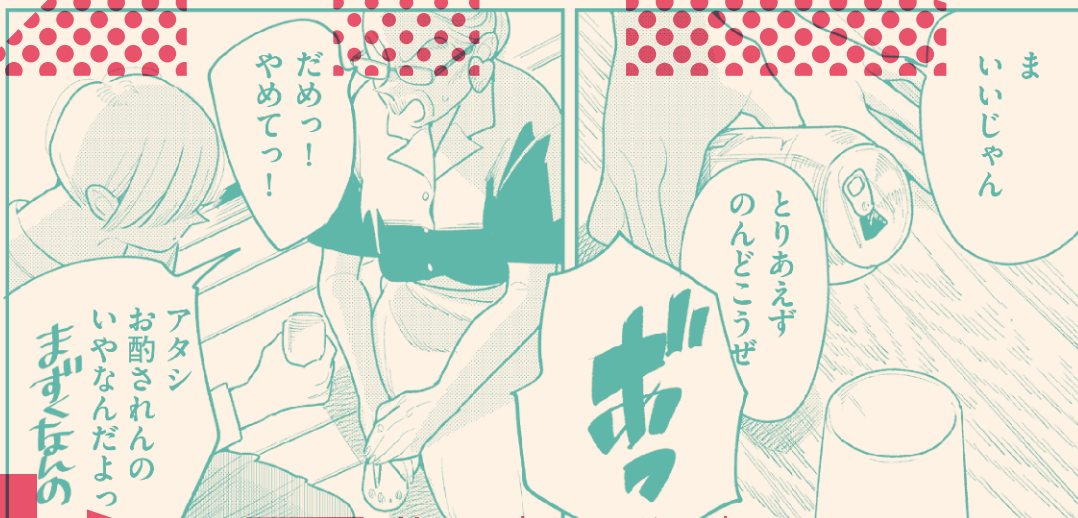
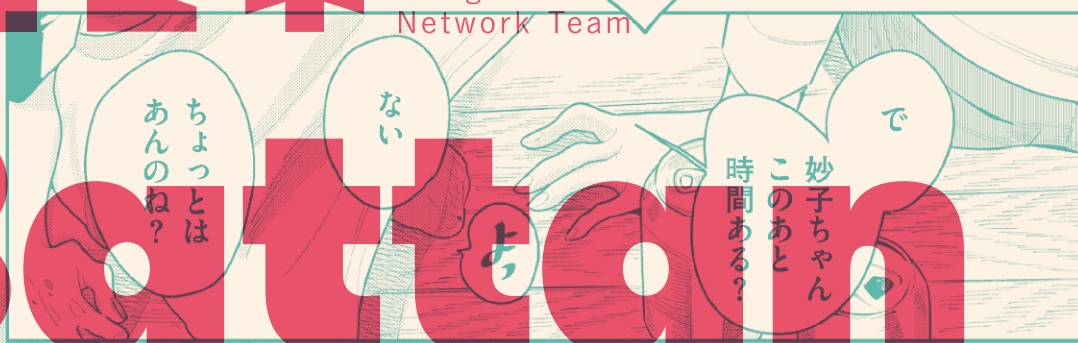
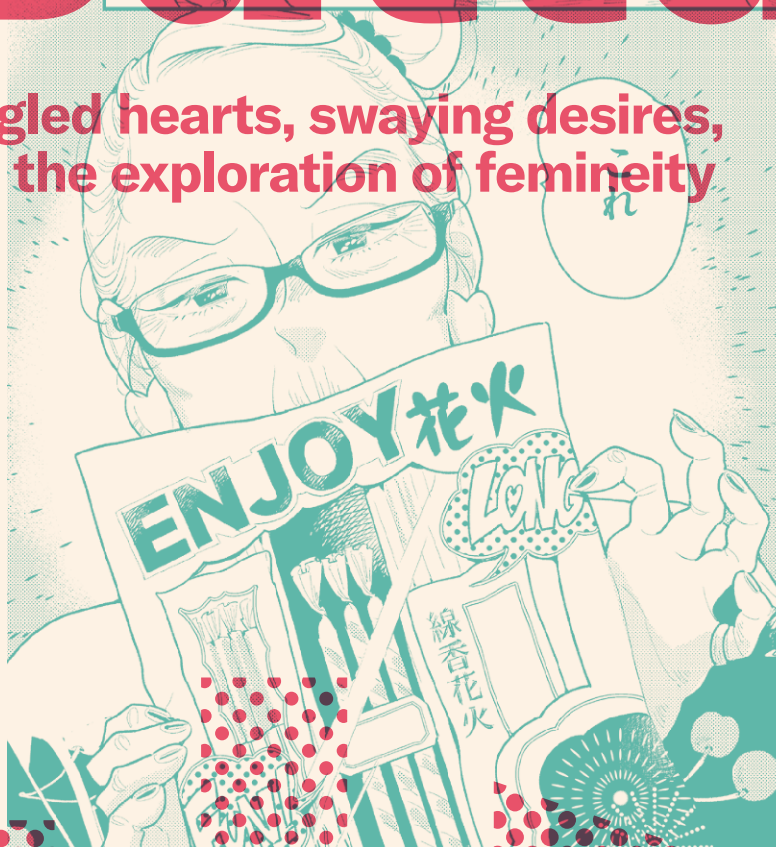




Manga International
Network Team



Tangled hearts, swaying desires,
and the exploration of femininity





Battan
manga artist

Soshite hiroin wa inaku natta 2
(And Then There Were No Heroines, vol. 2)
Publisher: Futabasha Publishers Ltd.
Publication Date: June 17, 2024

Tangled hearts, swaying desires, and the exploration of femineity

Manga artist Battan brings a vibrant edge to the messy complexities of human connection—the push and pull between women, and between women and men. It's a colorful dive into relationships that draw close, drift apart, sway, and collide.

Through Battan's singular lens, her characters' "toxic" traits—the calculation, the cunning, and even their deepest sorrow and rage—are masterfully flipped into something cute, sexy, and utterly irresistible.



Soshite hiroin wa inaku natta 1
(And Then There Were No Heroines, vol. 1)
Publisher: Futabasha Publishers Ltd.
Publication Date: May 16, 2024





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Soshite hiroin wa inaku natta 4
(And Then There Were No Heroines, vol. 4)
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Publication Date: Apr. 17, 2025



Review *by* Deb

Debora Aoki (US)

Japanese-American manga critic and editor

Run Away with Me, Girl (Kakeochi garu)

Synopsis

Maki and Midori were once high school sweethearts but went down different paths after graduation. Stuck in the past, Maki still remembers their love letters and the time spent holding hands and kissing . . . lots of kissing. In a twist of fate, the two reconnect after 10 years and Maki finds out that Midori is engaged. And yet despite this revelation, she begins to notice more and more red flags the more she hears about Midori's soon-to-be-husband. Will fate present them with the chance to rekindle their romance or will their love remain forever in the past?

Soshite hiroin wa inaku natta (And Then There Were No Heroines)

Synopsis

Taeko, a stoic woman around 30 years old, secretly harbors unresolved feelings for a lover she parted with three years ago. One day, she meets a flamboyant elderly woman, Tora, at a bar. Though Tora's loud and overbearing personality is the last thing Taeko wants to deal with, their shared heartbreak over men makes them eerily similar. A heartfelt, intergenerational story of sisterhood, where two women—50 years apart in age—embrace their unspoken love and longing.

Heroines, Friends, Sisters, and Lovers: The World of Women According to Battan

I first encountered Battan's work at a COMITIA show several years ago. Translator and manga tastemaker Jocelyne Allen was there at the show with me that time. She exclaimed, "Oh! Battan's table is a few aisles away! I have to see what she has."

I hadn't heard of Battan before, but my curiosity was piqued, so I followed Jocelyne to the table. What I found was a table full of self-published comics and illustration books—all beautifully printed and presented, with an art style that was soft, sensual, and feminine, but the women that Battan presented weren't just pin-up girls. They were curvy, sassy, maybe a little flirty—but they also felt like they weren't there to just be objects of desire. Behind their sleepy eyes, Battan's women look like they have lived, loved, been hurt, made mistakes, then got up, and kept going. They are

women you want to know because they surely have interesting stories to tell.

Another thing that makes Battan's work special is that she draws in a distinctive style that is immediately recognizable as hers alone. When Kodansha USA announced the English language publication of *Run Away with Me, Girl*, I immediately knew that it was a story by Battan, even without looking for her name in the credits.

Run Away with Me, Girl is Battan's first work available in English. It's a 3-volume story published by Kodansha USA about two young women who were friends (and a bit more) when they were classmates in high school. They meet again years later, when both are in their twenties. Maki is single, but Midori is engaged to be married—but Midori's relationship isn't as picture perfect as it seems. As the two young women rekindle their friendship,

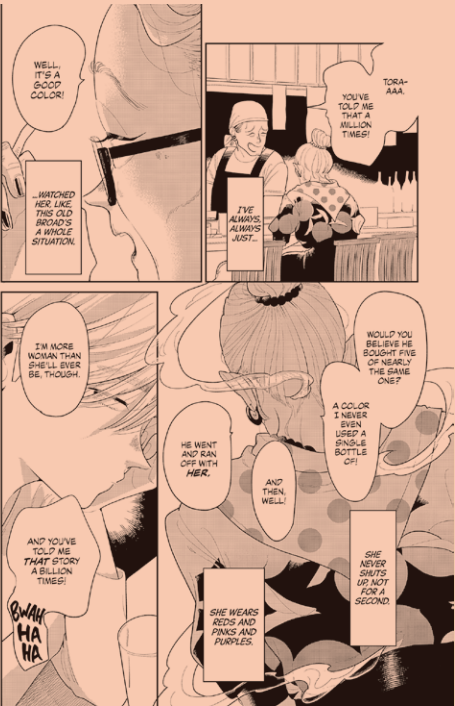
Maki invites Midori to go on a girls-only vacation, and eventually the pair make a fateful decision that turns Midori's wedding plans and both women's lives upside down.

Run Away with Me, Girl could have been pure melodrama, but Battan never settled for creating characters that are purely good or evil, or outcomes that readers can see coming from pages away. As Maki and Midori's inner and outer lives were revealed, we got to see the push-and-pull of their past friendship and regrets as teens, and their present-day reality as adults, including their ties to friends and family that add a layer of complexity to their life decisions. All of this makes for a situation where Maki and Midori's "happily ever after" was never really a sure thing but makes this story a compelling and satisfying read.

But since *Run Away with Me, Girl* was Battan's first work published in English, many readers have assumed that Battan is a *yuri* (girls love) mangaka. Yes, her stories about female/female relationships are a delight to read, and she does have a knack for drawing grown-up women with soft, sensual curves and depicting moments of intimacy that can leave you swooning. But ultimately, what makes Battan's manga so interesting to read is her determination to tell stories about all kinds of women—young and old, confident and insecure, shy and bold—all figuring out life and love in a world that doesn't offer them any easy answers.

And Then There Were No Heroines is an example of this type of story. While the cover of the first volume features a shy young woman in her twenties and a flashy, eccentric woman several decades older on the cover, it's not a *yuri* romance. Instead, it's a story about friendship and finding a way forward after having your heart broken.

It would be easy to assume that this story would depict the older woman, Tora, as someone who would regale twenty-something Taeko with wisdom and sassy tips on how to live boldly and independently without a man. But despite her fierce namesake (Tora means "tiger" in Japanese), flashy fashion-sense, and declarations to begin dating again, Tora can't hide that she too is struggling to come to terms with the man who left her, his broken promises, and her lingering hope that despite it all, he will someday return to her.



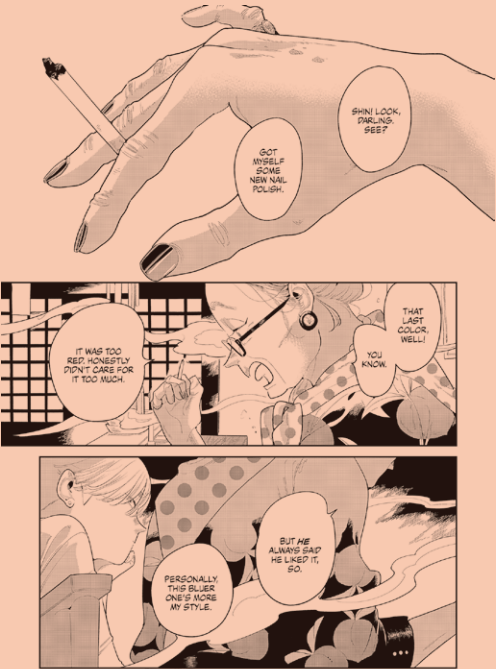
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Battan's visual storytelling tells us so much about her characters' inner and outer lives—her characters may say something (or sometimes say nothing at all), but the expressions on their faces, their hand gestures, body language, or even smoke curling up from a cigarette can convey feelings left unsaid or unresolved.

While it may not be the life lessons that readers might have expected from this unlikely friendship, Taeko and Tora seeing each other play the “tragic heroine,” helps them to realize that they can be heroines, minus the tragedy, once they find the courage to stop dwelling on past resentments and start moving forward to whatever—good or bad—lies ahead.

Battan is a manga creator who keeps readers coming back for more, because she keeps challenging herself to do something new and different with each story. From romance to slice of life to suspense (as in her currently serialized work *Fatale Game*, about a seductive manga editor and an artist who gets tangled in her web)—while playing to her signature strengths: women navigating the ups and downs of modern relationships. Her stories are always gorgeous, sometimes a little spicy, and never boring.

-Debora Aoki



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Interview Battan



What made you want to become a manga artist?

I didn't set out to become a manga artist. I started drawing after my mother passed away. Drawing helped me cope with that loss, and through it I realized manga was what let me express myself most naturally. I never trained in art—just sketched for fun. Manga was actually the first thing I drew seriously.

Q1

What part of the manga-making process do you enjoy most?

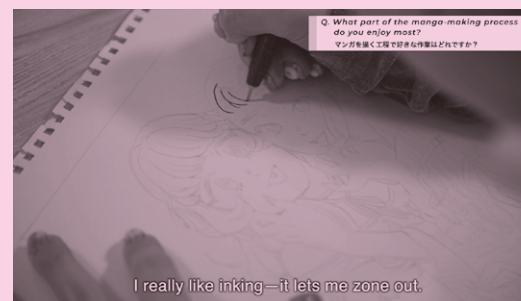
I really like inking—it lets me zone out. Thinking gets harder every year, so I've come to love tasks I can just finish by moving my hands. Storyboarding lately . . . I drag my feet. With storyboards, if I don't dive in the moment I'm ready, I just never finish.

Q3

Were there any works that influenced you?

I'd say older *shojo* manga had the biggest impact. There aren't any specific titles that jump out, just those classic *shojo* works.

Q2



Could you share a memorable moment from making manga?

This *dojinshi* was something I created for my first solo exhibition. Until then, I didn't have much confidence in my drawings. When someone suggested, 'Why not do a solo show?'

I honestly thought, who would want to buy my drawings? I remember being completely taken aback at the thought. But once the exhibition happened, everything sold out. I had no idea what was going on. The pressure was really intense.

Q4



How would you describe your style in one phrase?

"Psychological sparring between women." Every single character I create is based on some flaw of my own.

Q5



Why did you shift from romance to friendship in your stories?

I've written stories about same-gender relationships between women in the past. But as I've gotten older, I don't really fall in love much anymore. So I started wanting to draw friendships, relationships that still feel close but a bit more distant. I wanted to blur the lines between all kinds of human relationships. I liked the idea of a different kind of bond between two women so in one story I added an age gap.



Is there a message you hope to share through your work?

That's a really tough question. Of course, I want to write happy endings, but I also feel like real life doesn't always work out that way. I try to find a balance between the two.

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What do you focus on when writing romance?

When I'm drawing romance . . . I try to stay attuned to where the character's excitement is, that moment of fluttery tension.



How do you choose your publisher?

I change publishers depending on the project. Every editor wants to make different kinds of work, so I match the project to their strengths. For example, the editor I work with on *Soshite hiroin wa inaku natta* (And Then There Were No Heroines) gives me a lot of creative freedom. On the other hand, the publisher for *Kakeochi garu* (Run Away with Me, Girl) put a strong focus on entertainment value. They really guided the work toward being more commercial. So I switch publishers depending on the story.

How do you relate to your characters once their stories end?

I care a great deal about my characters. But once the story ends, I feel like... that's it. I see them as actors, in a way. Once the work is done, I don't think about them much. If they existed in real life, I'd hope they're living happily somewhere. But their future? That's not something I feel I need to write.

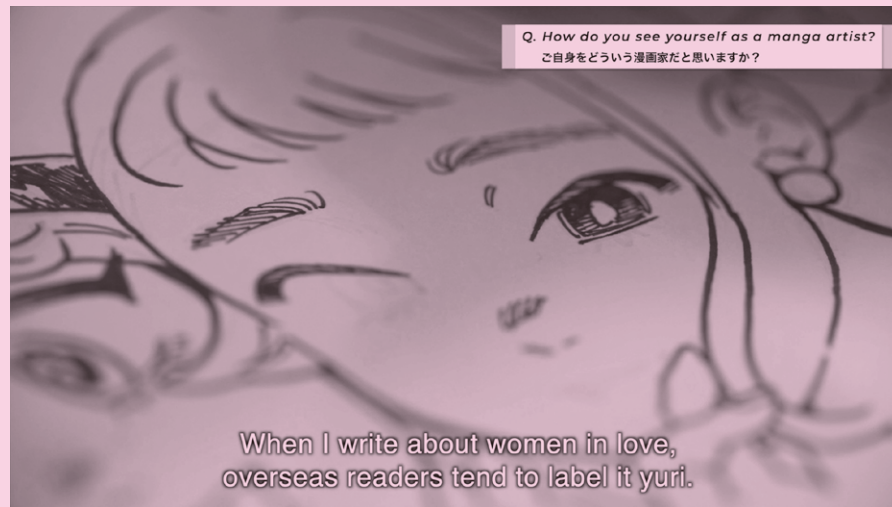


Do you interact much with other manga artists?

I honestly think being alone is best when you're making manga. Even when I see other manga artists, we don't really talk about manga. It's more like, "So, anything interesting happen lately?" Just normal, unrelated stuff. So yes, I do have manga artist friends. But the person I see most often is a childhood friend from preschool.

How do you see yourself as a manga artist?

Some readers think of me as a *yuri* manga artist, but that's not quite right. I just focus on exploring relationships from a female point of view. When I write about women in love, overseas readers tend to label it *yuri*. But in Japan, *yuri* can mean a lot more. Some people use it for any story about two women. I don't really understand how men think or feel. I don't think men and women are all that different, but... I just don't get the male perspective well enough to write it. So I hope readers also enjoy the stories I write that aren't about romance.



Do you keep readers in mind when creating your works?

I don't think about readers at all. Once I start factoring in other people's opinions I feel like the manga slips out of my hands. When someone shares a positive comment, I'll think, "Thanks," but... I don't fully take it on board.

What do you think about overseas readers?

Overseas publishing tends to happen without much involvement from us. I usually get my complimentary copy long after the book's already out. So I don't have a strong sense of how international readers view my work. That said, despite how this sounds, I'm actually very approachable!

Are you curious about how people react to your work?

I never search for my name online. If comments come in, I'll read them, but sometimes they're unpleasant. So I try not to absorb every single reaction.

How do you feel manga as a means of self-expression?

I think it's amazing to have a way to express yourself like this. Through manga, I want to capture those unforgettable moments. The kind of thing someone might still remember even at the end of their life. For me, I feel that's not something I could express through illustrations alone.



X @battan8



Instagram @battan8

About Battan

Battan debuted in 2016 with her title *Nijihiro konpurekkusu* (Rainbow Color Complex, KODANSHA). Her other works include *Ane no yujin* (My Older Sister's Friend, LEED), *Kakeochi garu* (Run Away with Me, Girl, KODANSHA USA), *Kemutai ane to zurui imoto* (Secondhand Sisters, KODANSHA USA), and *Fatale Game* (KODANSHA/KODANSHA USA). *Soshite hiroin wa inaku natta* (And Then There Were No Heroines) vols. 1-4 were serialized on the online comic platform *Web Action*. Battan loves dogs.

Publications

Soshite hiroin wa inaku natta (And Then There Were No Heroines)

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Publication Date: May 16, 2024 (vol. 1)



Japan Creator
Support Fund Website



MINT Website



MINT vol. I
Sample Catalog PDF

About MINT

Manga International Network Team (MINT) aims to support early career manga artists and their editors in Japan who are working to achieve a global presence, and to increase the recognition and value of manga's diversity overseas. This project is the manga section of the Creator Support Program, a program managed by the Japan Creator Support Fund, which in turn was established by the Japan Arts Council with a subsidy from the Agency for Cultural Affairs.

Organizers

Agency for Cultural Affairs, Government of Japan

Japan Arts Council

Japan Publishing Industry Foundation for Culture (JPIC)

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