

Hawkeye
 (4 issue limited series)
 Writer- Chuck Dixon; Penciller- Scott Kolins; Inker- Tim Dzon

PREMISE: ORPHANED AS A BOY, Clint Barton ran away and joined the circus where, under the training of the mercenary rogues known as the Swordsman and Trickshot, he became the world's greatest archer, taking the stage name Hawkeye. Inspired by super heroes to seek greater thrills and acclaim than the carnival could provide, Barton used his archery prowess and an arsenal of specially gimmicked arrows to become the swashbuckling costumed crimefighter called Hawkeye, eventually joining the Avengers and becoming one of the key, longtime members of the group despite various leaves of absence, during one of which he met and married the costumed crimefighter called Mockingbird. Following her recent death in action, Hawkeye has taken a leave of absence from the Avengers to seek solace and solitude in the harsh isolation of the Canadian north.

Appraisal: Since advance publicity was billing this as a series in the mould of *The Punisher*, I feared for the worst, with visions of gratuitous murder and meaningless mayhem running through my mind at the mere suggestion of the sardonic, devil-may-care Hawkeye being turned into yet another two-dimensional bloody vigilante. Thankfully, nothing of the sort has happened, and *Hawkeye* is thus far proving to be one of the best comic books to hit the mainstream market in quite some time. Dixon's story is tense, fast-moving, suspenseful, and accessible even to the new reader. The first-person narrative by Hawkeye himself (a favourite device of Dixon's) gives the script a great deal of immediacy and involves the reader, facilitating the development and illustration of Hawkeye's character. Speaking of which, Hawkeye is very much in character as the endearingly brash, wise-mouthed, secretly insecure daredevil readers have come to remember, but with a sharper edge in the wake of Mockingbird's death. He's nastier, as witness the object lessons and flesh wounds he hands out to a pack of poachers chasing down caribou with snowmobiles



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and shotguns-- a satisfyingly blackly humorous action sequence. At the same time Hawkeye retains his characteristic ego and sense of humour, refreshingly unique among comic book heroes. The plot, like Dixon's scripting, is characterized by economy- nothing is said or done that does not reveal character or advance plot. The supporting cast is just that, but they emerge as characters nonetheless- most notably Rover, a genetically engineered humanoid wolf Hawkeye rescues from the hidden mountain base of a covert subversive organization called the Secret Empire. Rover falls into the role of de facto sidekick, providing both comic relief and dramatic moments (says Hawkeye: "He's either a friend or a pet. I haven't decided which."). Meanwhile, the Secret Empire (whose operatives include Hawk's mentor, Trickshot; a femme fatale called Javelyn; and a psychotically ruthless nihilist called the Viper) plot the deaths of Hawkeye, Rover, and anyone else who jeopardizes the secrecy (see a pattern here?) of their plans- hence, our heroes are hunted across the Canadian wilderness. Story aside, the art by

newcomer Scott Kolins and inker Tim Dzon is fabulous. Kolins has a good sense of layout, an excellent sense of storytelling and pacing, and a flair for both action and personality in his figures- the opening scene with the poachers is a visual treat, and this level of quality persists throughout. Unlike many popular stylists, Kolins can draw a convincing and naturalistic variety of people and places. The clean, polished and well-detailed Kolins/Dzon artwork is a perfect complement to Dixon, fleshing out the sketchy script with lots of room to move. The book is a bit violent, but thankfully not over-the-top, sparing us from yet another murderous comic hero. A unique and entertaining character combines with a riveting story and extraordinary artwork to make *Hawkeye* the gem of the Avengers spin-off crop.

There'll be more to come of the Avengers books in this column over the next week or two- including, at the very least, reviews of *Force Works* (Avengers West by any other name) and *Avengers* itself.

BOOKS

The Burnt House by Adam Lively

BY ALDERA CHISOLM

This novel revolves around a broken-down, fire-gutted, derelict house in London. American news anchor Bob Morton buys the house, and is joined by his daughter Laura, who is sick of America, and Aidan, who works on the house.

The plot of the book mirrors the plot of a sci-fi novel Aidan reads - and we get excerpts from his novel throughout this one. This is a dark book, travelling through drugs, parties, and Soho peep shows, but it still retains a comic edge. Some of the characters are simply too bizarre to be believed. On the other hand, I got pulled in by this book because I could see myself in its characters. For example, Laura's boyfriend is completely paranoid and thinks the entire world is against him. Silly right? Still, I don't know about you, but I certainly feel that way some days.

Also, I could sympathise with the characters' efforts to "find" themselves. That is what this novel is really about: the journey you take to find yourself, whether it is Laura's trip to London, Bob's obsession with his house, or the journey taken by the spaceship in Aidan's novel.

You won't find any lecturing or over-philosophising in this book, though. Whether or not you care about the symbolism, or appreciate the circularity, you will still appreciate the plot (Hey, maybe it was just my hangover from being an english major). I really liked this book- I only wish I could read whatever it was Aidan was reading, too!

Cantora By Sylvia Lopez-Medina

BY JENNIFER CASELEY

This book deals with the lives of three generations of Mexican women and their struggles in life and love. The book is interesting in set-up, but also confusing.

Every other chapter is written in italics; it is these chapters that become confusing because they are about the past, and sometimes the future, as opposed to the main storyline in the present-- and often the names used are the same as those in the main story line. Still, *Cantora* is light reading and a good way to release some tension. An interesting note: at the beginning of the book is a family tree where you can look up who's who and who belongs to who. The book becomes almost like a soap opera in the end when you find out that someone's baby... well now, that would be giving the story away, wouldn't it?

Read it for yourself and you'll find out. Oh yeah, the cover is very well illustrated- good job, Cathleen Toelke.

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