



Arisa, Vol. 01

Natsumi Ando , Andria Cheng (Translator)

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Tsubasa thinks that her pretty and popular twin sister, Arisa, has the perfect life. Everyone at school loves Arisa—unlike the hot-tempered Tsubasa, whose nickname is “the Demon Princess.” But when Arisa attempts suicide, Tsubasa learns that her seemingly perfect sister has been keeping some dark secrets. Now Tsubasa is going undercover at school—disguised as Arisa—in search of the truth. But will Arisa’s secrets shatter Tsubasa’s life, too?

Includes special extras after the story!

Arisa, Vol. 01 Details

Date : Published October 26th 2010 by Del Rey (first published 2000)

ISBN : 9780345522412

Author : Natsumi Ando , Andria Cheng (Translator)

Format : Paperback 208 pages

Genre : Sequential Art, Manga, Mystery, Graphic Novels, Romance, Shojo

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From Reader Review Arisa, Vol. 01 for online ebook

Kate says

Basic premise: Tsubasa pretends to be her twin sister, Arisa, attending school and fooling classmates in order to find out why Arisa would attempt suicide.

After four volumes, I still don't really know where this story is going. I am going to need to request my library to pick up volumes 5 and 6. I'm interested enough to continue the story, just not interested enough to actually buy the series myself.

This is the same mangaka that wrote Kitchen Princess, which was a cute enough story if not a bit on the melodramatic side. My issues with Arisa aren't so much about the drama so much as the choppy pacing of the story. I feel like things jump around a bit too much and situations that I would expect to take more time to develop resolve quickly - or rather, the story just moves on to the next twist or reveal.

Manabe is cute, though, so I hope he ends up being a good guy. :P

Nicole says

This series has potential. In this first volume, we meet two twins (Tsubasa and Arisa) who were separated at a young age when their parents divorced - one girl went to live with mom, the other with dad. But the girls have always been close and kept in touch with letters. Tsubasa has grown up to be a bit of a tom-boy, always better friends with guys than girls and always wishing she had the girly-perfect life of her twin, Arisa. According to Arisa's letters, she's popular, she has a boyfriend, and she has tons of girlfriends to pal around with. However, when Arisa and Tsubasa reunite for the first time in 3 years, Arisa attempts suicide. This leads Tsubasa to question everything she thought was perfect in her sister's life and to embark on a bold plan of impersonating her sister in an attempt to experience her day-to-day school life to figure out what drove her to attempt suicide. At this point, the story takes a bit of a spin. There is something strange going on at Arisa's school for sure - a strange sort of bullying instigated by a mysterious cyber game created by someone called "king." I actually think the story could be a little more successful with a realistic exploration of bullying in schools - rather than this strange mystery cyber presence. Nonetheless, I think the story has potential and I'll keep checking it out...

Sesana says

I loved Kitchen Princess, so naturally I was excited to read Arisa. It starts out as a fairly standard, fairly cute high school book, with the typical twin trick of switching places for a day. And then there's a huge shift of tone at the end of the first chapter. That marks the beginning of what is, so far, a strange and sometimes deeply creepy story. The central mystery has almost no clues so far, and there's still quite a lot left unexplored about it. I think I'm hooked.

I really like Natsumi Ando's art in general. Here, it's even sharper than in Kitchen Princess. I admit to missing the tempting-looking food displays, but I'm pleased with how the character work has progressed.

Sean O'Hara says

Tsubasa and Arisa are identical twins but they haven't lived together since their parents divorced. In the three years since they've become very different people, Tsubasa a tomboy and Arisa a girly-girl. They've kept in touch through email and Tsubasa believes she knows what kind of life her sister leads, but she learns how wrong she is when she goes to visit Arisa.

Arisa suggests they pull a twin switch so Tsubasa can see what her life's really like. At first it seems as shiny and happy as Tsubasa imagined, with lots of cute guys panting around after her and cute girls who want to go out for parfaits after school, or whatever it is popular girls do. But then Tsubasa finds a note in her locker warning her that snitches get stitches. When she goes back to see Arisa, Arisa attempts suicide by jumping from a window.

After that Tsubasa decides to go undercover at Arisa's school and learn just what's going on. She discovers that her sister's class is involved with something called the King, a website where students can post wishes. The King will choose one and make it come true. And those who oppose the King are dealt with harshly.

Conceptually there's an interesting idea here and I'll keep reading the series, but the execution in the first volume is problematic. There's a loner bad-boy in class whom Tsubasa immediately singles out as her prime suspect and the volume ends with a cliffhanger involving him. But this is only the first volume in an ongoing series. Story logic dictates that we can't find out who the King is this early, therefore the bad-boy is just a redherring and the cliffhanger will end up as a misunderstanding of some sort. The plot would've been better served by establishing all the students in class and introducing suspicious elements about each of them, building up a paranoid thriller.

Miriam says

Given the blurb, I was a bit surprised at how fast the source of Arisa's troubles are being revealed and they seem so weird in origin (I was expected some more standard school woe like mean girls). I'm not wowed by the quality of the art or writing but am interested enough in the plot to get at least one more volume.

Dani - Perspective of a Writer says

Chapters 1-4.

I was really intrigued by the premise of twins separated by divorced parents. I liked how Arisa setup her twin, Tsubasa, to learn about her life. Its hard to share when you work at hiding your unhappiness so long. I really liked Tsubasa's personality - her "demon princess" nature and insistence on doing what is right.

The king's room was so unexpected as everyone welcomes the Arisa posing Tsubasa. The Shiori event with Manabe as the instigator was quite confusing - I just wanted to understand what all this really was about!

I was happy we got to see more of Takeru (Tsubasa's best friend) and that he knows about her sister so he can help Tsubasa out. Midori, Arisa's best friend has a crush on her!

BOTTOM LINE: Compelling if a little confusing!

Molly says

Arisa is an amazing teen manga series. The story focuses on Tsubasa, who has been separated from her twin, Arisa, for many years and has only stayed in contact with her through secret letters. When the pair finally meet up again, Tsubasa (Who's also known as the 'Demon Princess' at her school and who only has male friends) can't stop talking about how great her sister's life seems. Arisa thinks otherwise though, and soon jumps out a window. Arisa lives, but she's thrown into a coma, and now Tsubasa wants to find out what could have caused her sister's suicidal behavior.

Once Tsubasa starts acting like her sister, she finds that her sisters class practically worships an unknown person known only as 'The King'. The King can grant wishes, from anything like giving somebody the answers to a test or to getting rid of somebody. Yikes. And now it's up to Tsubasa to find out who The King is.

The story is very exciting and has many twists and turns that leave the audience guessing. The overall feel of the story is very tense and there's constant threat of danger. Though it's a shojo manga, and there is a little romance, it is by no means a prominent theme of the story, and I see how the plot can appeal to many people. If you haven't picked this one up yet, I highly recommend this series.

Selena says

I was at the library the other day and just happened to stumble upon this. The cover looked pretty, and after reading the synopsis, I thought, "Ooh. Twin impersonating a twin for secrets after a suicide attempt. Touch of mystery, too. Interesting."

Honestly, you don't see too many books that bring up suicide. Bullying? Very common in shoujo manga and novels for teen-aged girls. But in both, the story is typically about how to deal. Find good friends who like you for you, believe in yourself. Blah, blah, blah. Kinda like reading a book that Dr. Phil advised on. Yeah, it's great if you're being bullied and can give you something to aspire to be (and this is from someone who was bullied in high school), but to tell the truth, the whole "This is what you should do" thing gets really old really fast. Sometimes it's better just to have a character break down.

In this story, the suicide attempt actually helps the anti-bullying argument without telling people "commit suicide" like everyone seems to think featuring a bullying-induced suicide attempt would do. Instead, you see the story from Tsubasa, Arisa's twin sister whom she hasn't seen three years, and see HER determination to help her sister and others like Arisa by stopping the source of the bullying. You see the effect of Arisa's suicide attempt on Tsubasa. It gets the point across without being preachy. And since it's from the point of view of someone who isn't the one being bullied but is trying to help the ones being bullied to the point of suicide, it's very easy to empathize with Tsubasa if you have been bullied or are a friend to someone being bullied.

This series is beautiful. I actually didn't recognize it as Natsumi Ando's work, though I liked Kitchen Princess, Vol. 1 well enough. This work, to me, is a lot more grown up than how cutesy Kitchen Princess started.

I like Natsumi Ando. The two works of her that I've read so far deal with deep subjects like suicide or the

perfectly fine with Tsubasa essentially no longer going to school and instead pretending to be Arisa. And everyone instantly accepted Tsubasa's weak explanation for why she no longer remembered the class's creepy "King time."

Complaints aside, this was a surprisingly gripping first volume. Tsubasa expected to learn that her sister had been bullied and instead discovered that the entire class was taking part in something called "King time." Every week at the same time, everyone in the class enters their wishes into a website. One person's wish is chosen and granted by the "King," whose identity no one knows. The King doesn't seem to care if anyone gets hurt, and anyone who speaks out against them (the gender of the King is also unknown) risks being ostracized. Ostracized students receive a note: "[Student's name] is a traitor."

By the end of this volume, Tsubasa has identified one particular student as potentially being the King, having some connection to the King, or knowing who the King is. While I'm kind of annoyed at her decision to meet with him in private even though he's already demonstrated that he can't be trusted, I'm intrigued enough to want to read more.

If I had more shelf space, I'd probably order a couple more volumes right now - the story is interesting enough to make up for the improbable situation and incongruous artwork.

Extras:

- A 6-page comic designed to show off a few of Ando's early character design sketches for *Arisa*.
- A 4-page comic in which Ando talks about getting a dog. It's adorable.
- Two pages of translation notes.
- A preview of *Arisa* volume 2.

(Original review posted on A Library Girl's Familiar Diversions.)
