



Musa's garden

Mari Gonzalez Curia

Overview



A lonely muse invites a disenchanted daydreamer into her magical garden to reawaken his inspiration and, in doing so, her own.

When they discover that her garden is actually a prison borne of fear, will they find the strength to switch roles and break free?



In the safety of her garden, Musa has everything she could ever want... except perhaps company. She sees helping and inspiring others as her calling, but her guests never stay and, over time, loneliness erodes her own passion.

After a long rest, she meets Dante, a disheartened student who has forgotten everything that once moved him. Determined to try again for his sake and her own, Musa invites him into her Garden, secretly wishing for change.

Her wish is granted, but after she helps Dante reconnect with his former self he proves to be *too* different from her other guests: he asks too many questions, sees right through her smile and, upon realizing her “haven” is actually a prison, cares too much for her to leave her behind.

As they explore the garden and each other’s fears together, Musa must answer the difficult questions she has been avoiding for so long, and face the truth behind her garden, her magic and herself.

MUSA’S GARDEN is a story about avoidance and the prisons we build for ourselves, to hide from the pain we don’t want to remember (and how we must face it to move on).

Overview

Specs

Audience: Young Adult

Estimated page count: 200-220 pages

Ideal final trim size: A5 / 6 x 9 in

Style: Full Color

Estimated Timeline

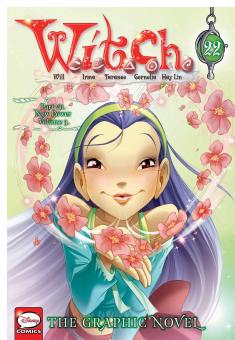
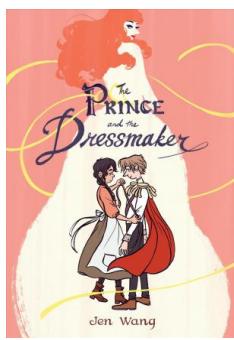
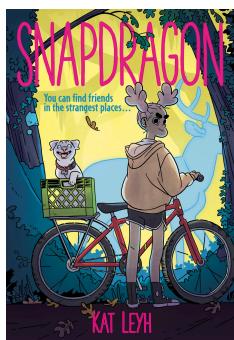
Script & Thumbs: 3 to 6 months

Pencils: 9 to 12 months

Line Art: 6 to 8 months

Colors: 6 to 8 months

Comp Titles



Musa's Garden is a fantasy story featuring resilient, non-conforming characters like *Snapdragon* (Kat Leyh) who support and inspire each other to live authentically like *The Prince and the Dressmaker* (Jenn Wang), set in a deceptively perfect magical world created to shelter from trauma and avoid reality like *WandaVision* (TV series, Marvel), with an expressive and colorful art style often compared to *W.I.T.C.H.* (Alessandro Barbucci, Barbara Canepa) and heartwarming narrative style heavily inspired by the work of *Studio Ghibli* and *Makoto Shinkai*.

Other similar books & influences:

- *My Own World* (Mike Holmes)
- *Don't Go Without Me* (Rosemary Vallero-O'Connell)
- *The Sprite And The Gardener* (Rii Abrego, Joe Whitt)
- *Taproot* (Keezy Young)

Musa

- She / Her
- 18 years old



- **Altruistic to a fault.**

Tends to put others' needs before her own.

- She wants connection and company, but is **afraid to be vulnerable**.

- She tries very hard to hide her insecurity and melancholy behind an overly positive facade (**Toxic positivity**)

- Creative, empathetic and resilient.

Dante

- He / They
- 19 years old



- **Skeptical and sarcastic.**
He doesn't take most things at face value.
- He used to be more **curious and adventurous**, but was criticized and made fun of for it until he restrained that side of him.
- He usually expects the worst of people and situations to avoid being hurt or disappointed (**Defensive Pessimism**)
- **Introspective, inquisitive and observant.**
- Tends to space out and get lost in thought.



About the project

Musa's Garden has been a part of my life, in one way or another, since 2011, growing and changing with me along the way. Over the years, as I honed my storytelling skills, its title, characters, and even format transformed, revealing a story that was much deeper and more personal than I ever imagined.

In 2018, after completing my previous short comic, *The Shadow*, I decided it was time to give this story my full attention. After a long process of rewriting and redesigning characters, I found a version that resonated with me at the time. By late 2019, I shared a few pages online, eager to connect with my audience.

Their response was invaluable. It made me realize that the story had great potential, but it was also clear this project deserved a different format for it to truly shine. After more research, continuous refinements, and with the unwavering support of my mentor and peers, the project took on a new and exciting shape, evolving into a Graphic Novel.



This process has been a healing and cathartic experience for me as an author and I'm confident that this story has the potential to do the same for others, whether it's trying to step out of their comfort zone, confronting a history of avoidance or navigating the collective trauma of the pandemic.

Musa's Garden invites readers to step out of their comfort zones, embracing connection and acknowledging that, while our safe place may have helped us, true happiness awaits beyond its walls.

Synopsis

MUSA'S GARDEN opens in the torch-lit halls of a church in 16th Century Castille, as a girl faces trial for witchcraft. Heartbroken, she uses her magic to break free and lock herself in the scriptorium, where she casts a last-resort spell to save her life.

When she opens her eyes again, she finds herself in a small pond surrounded by a seemingly endless meadow, with no memories of her past life. As soon as she steps out, flowers magically sprout at her feet and she quickly realizes she can shape this world at will. The mirror-like pond serves as her only window into the outside world, which she begins to observe and learn from.

One day, as she watches a pianist struggle with her music, her desire to cheer her up accidentally transports her in front of her. Trying to make sense of the apparition, the pianist believes her to be a Muse which she happily runs with (even adopting the name "Musa") and invites her back to the garden to be inspired by its wonders.

The pianist eventually leaves and, with a heightened feeling of loneliness, Musa begins inviting other people into the garden, only for them to inevitably leave too. This cycle repeats over and over, isolating her further and eroding her passion until, wishing someone would just stay, she decides to rest for a while.



A century later, in 2018 Buenos Aires, a weary student named Dante wishes he could escape the hellish, vicious cycle of his routine. Musa is instantly intrigued.

On his way to work, Dante learns about an exhibit of medieval manuscripts featuring the mysterious MIRROR MANUSCRIPT, rumored to be enchanted. He scoffs at the thought of magic being real, showing his disillusionment with the world and his frustration at forgetting his own hopes and dreams.

Mirroring Musa's own discomfort, he wishes he could just *leave*. Right as he convinces himself things will never change, he locks eyes with Musa across the street. She's finally met her match. Secretly wishing for change, Musa invites Dante into the garden to reawaken his inspiration and in doing so, her own.

Dante is skeptical at first, but Musa's unrelenting cheerfulness inevitably tears down his pessimistic defenses and, by confessing her own loneliness, she also makes him feel safe enough to open up about his past. Dante gets to experiment with the Garden's magic to create things of his own and, in the process, he remembers his old dream of becoming a Botanist. However, the joy is outlived, as the Garden also manifests the painful memories that led to his disillusionment.

Something *familiar* stirs in Musa as she watches his memories play out. For the first time, she is not in full control of what happens and she begins to panic. Dante finally faces the source of his fear and, as the visions dissipate, is filled with renewed determination and gratitude for Musa's intervention. Seeing his recovery instantly reminds Musa of her purpose, but this time, she regrets, she needs to be selfish.

She invites Dante to stay in the Garden, but he's actually ready to go back to his life and start over. Bitterly, Musa puts his wishes before hers and tells him he's free to go. After everything she's done for him, however, Dante cares too much about her to just leave her behind. Catching her completely off guard, he makes a counter offer: *What if she leaves with him?*

On the verge of tears, Musa reveals that, no matter how hard she's tried, she can't leave the Garden. Not ready to give up, Dante insists they investigate. While searching for clues in her old paintings, they find a spot in the Garden she's always feared and avoided: an old church, towering over a bramble-covered field.

They explore the interior and finally uncover Musa's past. In a shared vision, Dante witnesses how she was chased by the same people she tried to help and how, as a last resort, she gave away her body and memories to create the Garden, a safe haven where she could never be harmed. Right before the vision ends, Dante recognizes the Mirror Manuscript as the book she used to cast the spell.

As Musa's memories return and she is overcome with despair, the spell that holds her world together becomes unstable and the Garden begins to fall apart around them. She begs Dante to leave and even tries to force him out, but even then, he refuses to give up on her. They vow to meet again and he agrees to return to the outside world, find the book and help her break the spell.



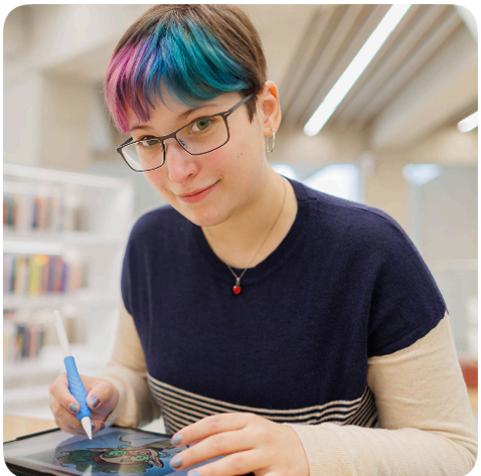
Once in the outside world, and with only a few hours to go until the exhibit ends, a work notification tempts him to return to his old routine, but his promise to Musa fuels him to rush through the city towards the Museum. Once he's in front of the book, however, he quickly realizes that breaking the spell is entirely in Musa's hands: even with all the spell's conditions met, the final choice is hers.

As the garden continues to collapse, the book starts to smoke as if burning from the inside, engulfing the whole room in darkness. Dante makes his final plea and confronts Musa with the harsh truth she's still trying to avoid: her garden isn't safe anymore. If she stays, she will die. Confronted with this truth and encouraged by his words, she gathers her courage and takes the leap into the unknown.

The book bursts into flames and its pages fly out, magically combining to give her physical form again.

Outside, they are greeted by a cool, rainy morning - a new beginning awaits.

About the Author



I'm Mari Gonzalez Curia (AKA *MariLimmy*), a Comics Creator and Illustrator, born and raised in Buenos Aires, Argentina.

Combining vulnerable, heartwarming storytelling with a vibrant, expressive art style, my work is always an invitation to explore real emotion within a fantastical realm, usually featuring themes of fear, resilience, and mental health.

My goal is to create stories that resonate, change, and inspire others like so many stories have done for me.

I studied Graphic Design at *University of Buenos Aires* and honed my craft through mentorship courses in Digital Painting and Visual Storytelling with former Disney Artist, *Chris Oatley*. My first comic, *The Shadow*, was published in Argentina by *Purple Books* between 2017-2019, with a few self-published copies sold at local events and book stores in Calgary, Canada, where I lived for the past 3 years. Since then, I've continued to create short stories while developing my Graphic Novel.

I'm currently looking for a literary agent to bring my debut Graphic Novel, *Musa's Garden*, to print as well as to represent my future projects (as author/illustrator or in collaboration with writers).

In my free time, I enjoy practicing yoga, playing D&D, and learning about psychology and nature. I love learning languages, traveling and finding new ways to connect with the world around me.

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