



## Hellboy, Vol. 6: Strange Places

*Mike Mignola*

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### **Hellboy, Vol. 6: Strange Places** Mike Mignola

Mike Mignola returns with his first new Hellboy collection since 2002's *Conqueror Worm*. After leaving the Bureau for Paranormal Research and Defense, Hellboy's travels take him briefly to Africa, then for a two-year stint at the bottom of the ocean. An ancient witch doctor, a giant fish woman, and the keeper of the secret history of the universe force Hellboy to either accept his role in the coming apocalypse, or have that role stolen from him. Weird undersea creatures and talking lions populate this turning-point adventure, which reveals secrets buried since Hellboy's very creation. This volume collects Harvey-and-Eisner-award winner Mike Mignola's *Hellboy* series *The Third Wish* and *The Island* with over a dozen unused pages, and a new epilogue.

- *Strange Places* is the first Mignola-drawn *Hellboy* collection in over three years.
- With the 2004 release of *Hellboy*, the motion picture, Hellboy has become a media phenomenon! Look for production on the *Hellboy* sequel to begin in 2006!
- Collecting issues #1-#2 of *The Third Wish* and *The Island*, plus new material.

### **Hellboy, Vol. 6: Strange Places Details**

Date : Published April 26th 2006 by Dark Horse Books (first published 2006)

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Author : Mike Mignola

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## From Reader Review Hellboy, Vol. 6: Strange Places for online ebook

### Brendan says

The stories are quite long but not a complete storyline. I honestly wish they kept these away from the main stotylines The stories are good and the artwork top notch just annoying its disconnection with other stories.

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### Lata says

A return to the mysteries of Hellboy's origins and destiny, as Hellboy wanders after his departure from the BPRD. Hellboy's plain-speaking, cursing, and world weariness are present, as well as his adamant refusal to play by the rules of various gods and spirits and other beings.

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### Jordan says

The first half of this volume, "The Third Wish," is outstanding. It has every element you hope to see in a Hellboy story, then adds mermaids. It begins Hellboy's journey to Africa, just scratching the surface of the continent's rich mythology, and sets off his search for meaning beyond his ancient destiny and beyond his association with the B.P.R.D.

The second half, "The Island," doesn't work nearly as well. It's intended as an explanation of the "secret history of the world," but doesn't fit the exposition around much of a story. There are some nice reveals and stuff you assume will be important later, but it's an otherwise sub par effort. Although I must give it credit for one of my favorite Hellboy lines ever: "Don't mess with me, lady. I've been drinking with skeletons."

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### Amy says

My favourite Hellboy collection so far. Loved this from start to finish.

The first story, **The Third Wish** was just so sad, the ending is the closets to tears I have ever been reading a Hellboy story. Other than the emotional impact this story just had a lot going for it. It was fun seeing the African spirits reacting so violently to having the bringer of the apocalypses on their continent. And it was nice seeing the monsters of the world wanting Hellboy dead because they *don't* want the utter annihilation of the world. Yeah, they're horrible things that go bump in the night, but this is their world too, and they want it to stick around just as much as humanity does.

The second story in this collection is **The Island**, which I enjoyed but found a bit confusing in some places. I liked that we get more back story to the creation of the Ogdru Jahad and why Hellboy's right hand is the only thing that can set them free. But there were some bits about Hellboy's blood I didn't get, and I have no idea how the big bad was killed, apart from the fact that Hellboy's blood had something to do with it (I think?). But even when I was confused, I was enjoying the story.

## Brooke says

I've been making my way through the Hellboy trade paperbacks this week, and while I've really been enjoying them, this is the first one that I've felt the need to write a review for. I'm such a Negative Nelly that I'm speaking up because this is the first volume I've been disappointed in.

In the intro to one of the two 2-parters that are in this volume, Mike Mignola promises that he's going to provide some origin stories for the Hellboy universe. I was looking forward to this, but the execution left much to be desired. This volume had Hellboy off on his own, having left the BPRD to do some investigation into himself. The downside of this is that it's left him without anyone to really talk to, and therefore all of the information is learned through a monologue of exposition. I would have preferred to have Abe or Liz or Kate or someone else there that Hellboy has emotional attachment to. The way that it was done, it just feels empty. The volume ends with him headed back to London, so hopefully that's the end of this complaint.

I'm also a little fatigued from the many scenes where Hellboy is being knocked through the air and through walls and floors, but that's a minor complaint. I often want to offer him an aspirin, though.

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## T.E. Grau says

Africa. The tinkling of bells. Doomed mermaids. The Bog Roosh. Hecate. Davy Jones' Locker. Blasphemy and Inquisition. Atlantis, Lemuria, and Urr. The Watchers. The 32 words. Ogdru Jahad. The 369 Ogdru Hem. The Golden People. Hyperboria. Thoth. The Black Goddess. The Right Hand. The secret history of the world. And that's before we get to the eight pages of the original version of *The Island*, which is an homage to William Hope Hodgson.

Any nod, no matter how small, to WHH has my immediate attention. When Mike Mignola does it, declaring his love of fungus people and throwing in rough sketches of the same, I'm totally on board, with big round red hearts for eyes.

An excellent one-two-three punch of myth, mayhem, and Hellboy greatness.

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## Melissa McShane says

I've finished my re-read of the first five volumes and am moving on into new material--I've read a few scattered later volumes in the series, but this one was new to me. Two stories pick up where we left off in *Conqueror Worm*, with Hellboy leaving the B.P.R.D. and going off in search of...even he's not sure what, but it begins with him heading to Africa. I like the first story better than the second, mainly because the triad of the three mermaids' wishes is so poignant and so perfectly fairy-tale-like (the original fairy tales, not the children's versions that are famous now). Even so, both are excellent, and Mignola's description of the failed story "The Island" makes me hope he'll figure out a way to tell it someday.

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## Andy 117 says

Hellboy starts his journey of self-discovery and life re-evaluation after quitting the B.P.R.D., wandering to far-off lands to... well, to have more Hellboy adventures. But they are more deeply personal Hellboy stories than ever, once more focusing on Hellboy and his role in the foreseen apocalypse of which he, supposedly, will be the harbinger.

Okay, so, this book is fantastic, from start to finish. From Mignola's deeply revealing introductions, to Hellboy's ever-so-charming "wisecracks" (if blurting out "son of a- !" and "geez!" can be said to be cracking wise), to the pages and pages of abandoned panels and concept sketches, this is classic Hellboy, with only a minute change in perspective providing a fresh narrative hook. There are two stories in this volume, a story taking liberal cues from Hans Christian Anderson's *The Little Mermaid*, and one that focuses predominantly on the origin of Hellboy's "right hand of doom," the world-burning ancient dragon Ogdru Jahad, and, weirdly (though perhaps fittingly), the universe itself.

The first story is "The Third Wish," and, as stated, takes liberal cues from *The Little Mermaid*. Hellboy is wandering Africa, basically seeing where the winds take him, until he is taken in by a wise and very, very old witch-doctor, who soon ushers him into the sea, where he is kidnapped by a trio of mermaids and taken in by the Bog Roosh - a powerful sea witch, who plans to torture Hellboy, before cutting him asunder, and spreading his pieces over the globe, finally dissolving his right hand from existence, thus avoiding the predicted end of all things. Hellboy, trapped and helpless, is, of course, pretty grumpy about it.

The key narrative focus of this piece is between the Bog Roosh and one of the three mermaids who assists in Hellboy's capture. She, as her sisters, makes a wish of the Bog Roosh in return for Hellboy, and she wishes for a blade that once belonged to her father, so she may honour his death. His father scolds her (as a phantasm, cos he's dead), deriding her decision to honour him, as he is dead, while Hellboy himself is alive - for Hellboy's life, she has chosen to "honour" the dead, and this is no honour. Hellboy is basically incapacitated and swears the entire story, being told his inevitable fate as he grumbles a bunch, so the story is carried by the mermaid, as she struggles with the choice of what to do - save Hellboy, redeeming herself in the eyes of her father? Don't save Hellboy, and risk bringing forth the destruction of earth? She does, of course, opt to save Hellboy, but anyone who's read a Mignola story will understand that the tragic, sacrificial nature of her conclusion is all but foregone.

The art is absolutely stunning, but, while this really doesn't have to be mentioned in regards to Mignola, there is an interesting visual hook which sets this story apart from even the most beautiful of those before it. The majority of the story takes place completely underwater, and the colours and shadows are so masterfully applied to empty, swirling vortexes of nothingness - it certainly creates a crushing atmosphere that is all at once claustrophobic and infinite in scope. And the Bog Roosh herself is stunningly portrayed, a creature of beauty and horror, one with absolute power and yet, in the face of Hellboy, hardly any at all - fearful and vengeful. She is so assured of her devotion to preventing damnation, Hellboy's escape is almost bittersweet, and it seems even Hellboy doubts whether he deserves release. It's a uniquely powerful take on a classic, dark fairytale, and I think it will be intimately familiar in tone to those who have followed Hellboy for this long.

The next story is called *The Island*. Seemingly created in reaction to the Hellboy film, which was filming at the time this story was written (and features the Ogdru Jahad as a key monster), it focuses more intimately on Hellboy's role in the apocalypse - in particular the origins of the power that would see it through. Hellboy is drinking on a mysterious island, with a couple of newfound chums, as he recalls his close escape from *The Third Wish*. Soon, however, he is visited by the ghoulish presence of Hecate, the Queen of Witches, who beckons Hellboy to usher forth the End, as is his destiny. He refuses, of course. Oh, and it is revealed that he had been drinking with skeletons the whole time, which, naturally, pisses him off (though that doesn't stop

him from skulling down another bottle of rum).

This is a dense story; it has a lot of reveals, and it wraps up a lot of prior plot threads while opening up doors to new ones. Hellboy lore is heavy, but so much of it is based in actual mythology and folklore, and existing pulp literature, that it all seems to be almost expected and common knowledge by this point. The origins of Hellboy's seemingly inescapable fate are detailed, in excruciating detail, in that specifically poetic prose of which Mignola is the modern master of; against his art's muted details and powerful blacks, the story is not so much grandiose as it is intimate. Add to that some bizarre and powerful imagery, such as the specter of a long dead priest reformed from Hellboy's own leaking blood, to the visage of the terrible dragon Ogdrun Jahad itself, a hideous and fabulous beast which is rendered in all the magnificent and unholy horror the story implies of it. Questions are answered and asked equally, with the story ending, aptly, with a "The End...?" Considering it, on balance, is one of the least *eventful* Hellboy stories, its impact is spectacular - and its implications for our fearless hero are endless.

To be honest, I thought Hellboy striking it out on his own for a whole volume would be dull, or perhaps outright boring. I should not have doubted Mike Mignola. The man remains to be one of the greatest living artists today, with clearly self-indulgent explorations of the elements of classical literature somehow coming together to make a *new* classic, a unique, if bleak, tale of a single man fighting against his future seemingly already written. Mignola always assures entertaining, humorous pulp roots and stylish, bombastic comic action cross paths with the prose of the 19th century masters, and this isn't a formula that has lost any of its steam yet - and probably won't for some time.

Also, Hellboy tells of the time he ate "a banana from a haunted banana tree" and a ghost "hurled garbage" at him. Which, while an actual Cambodian folk tale, is made so very amusing from the fittingly dry and deadpan reaction it elicits from Hellboy. "Oh, geez," indeed.

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## **Kevin says**

### *GRAPHIC NOVEL REVIEW*

#### **ILLUSTRATION AND DIALOGUE:**

At first I was not sure whether I find the art very appealing to the eyes, but as I read through Hellboy's amazing adventure, I found the illustrations to be creepy yet fascinating, And the "pillow panels" were what was going to capture your attention. There was not much dialogue in the graphic novel, but I believe that was what make the graphic novel very beautiful. This novel has such creepiness that captivates me.

#### **CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT:**

I can't really say how the character development is in this novel, because this is my first time reading Hellboy, so there is not a lot I can say here, but I can say I fell in love with Hellboy.

#### **PACE:**

This novel is made of very quick storyline.

#### **PLOT:**

The mythology of this world is very easy to learn since it borrows from the already famous myth. But if there are some characters that you are not familiar with, don't worry, because you'll learn who they are.

#### **MY VERDICT:**

I never thought I'd like a graphic novel like this, but I am very surprised.

*RATING BREAKDOWN*

**ILLUSTRATION AND DIALOGUE:** +1 STAR(S)

**CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT:** +1 STAR(S)

**PACE:** +1 STAR(S)

**PLOT:** +1 STAR(S)

**MY VERDICT:** +1 STAR(S)

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**J.G. Keely says**

What's the best way to kill off a quirky, mysterious, unsettling world? How about explaining it all in a neat, tidy manner through an extremely long and convenient bit of exposition from a previously unknown character?

Mignola's art is still great and the first story ('The Third Wish') is solid, if not as focused and uncanny as the short tales in 'The Chained Coffin and Other Stories'.

But why does Mignola suddenly feel the need to wrap up his expansive, eccentric, esoteric cosmology in one unheralded spurt of Blavatskian gnostic pap? There are a few reasons, and both Mignola and his introducer, Gary Gianni, suggest them in the TPB extras.

For Gianni, Mignola's "literary references . . . acknowledge his influences without being pedantic or ostentatious", which is usually true. However, our author must strike a careful balance between this and the fact that he "never met a Pulp idea he didn't like".

His willingness to pull in many different sources is often a strength; it gives his stories a certain learned depth that is moody and enticing. The problem is that, though he continues to draw on various sources here, he now seems infected with a desire to explain them, to connect them, and to make them sensible.

While providing the reader with a readily explicable world is often desirable, this is less useful in horror and mystery, both of which present characters out of their elements. The greatest failing of the collective authors who took up Lovecraft's mythos was that they tried to make his world comprehensible, which betrays everything that made his stories remarkable and unsettling in the first place.

More than that, these kinds of all-encompassing explanations are entirely artificial. Myths may try to explicate the world, but in the end the answers they gave are more puzzling than the original questions. In the cracks between the various espoused truths lies the incomprehensible world of the Fey, the Demons, the ancient Gods.

Likewise, every answer Science gives us opens up more unknowns, forcing us to come to terms with the fact that we weren't even asking the right questions in the first place. The universe is far too strange for a holistic view. Though many scientists have sought the 'holy grail' of a unified theory, the idea of a unified theory is itself a flawed hypothesis: if every discovery we make has caused science to diverge into yet more fields, yet more seemingly incompatible specialties, why should we assume that this trend won't simply continue, ad infinitum?

By providing not only answers but a sort of 'Grand Purpose', Mignola takes a step away from a mythological presentation of human foibles and towards an allegorical symbology of morality.

Hellboy himself seems out of place in the story. Usually, his sardonic quips make a humorous contrast to the

traditional modes and palpable strangeness in the stories. In 'The Island', they just make him seem stupid.

The grand explanation he dismisses is so overpowering that he seems to be denying the story itself. Writers sometimes say that characters have a life of their own, so perhaps Hellboy was simply expressing his disgust at this grandly overwrought piece of exposition. Anyone who gives you a simple explanation is trying to sell you something, and Hellboy is too canny to fall for his author's 'big reveal'.

If the explanation were simply the half-formed obsession of a zealot, then it wouldn't be incongruous. Mignola has shown an able hand at subversion before, and myths often present these sorts of stories--these explanations of creation and purpose--but their simplicity cannot survive the world unscathed.

Unfortunately, Mignola doesn't write it as a 'puzzle piece': a possible aspect of the world. Neither Hellboy nor the world can poke a hole in it. It's not a study of myth or a satire, it's just a convenient 'magic plot point'.

In the epilogue, Mignola tells us that the stories went through many drafts, and that he found himself unable to complete them satisfactorily. He was also fresh from working on the film adaptation, and it shows. This is the story that most resembles the style of the film, in that it lays down a rather simple track for a plot and then marks off the intervals with visuals that, while interesting, prove thematically irrelevant.

The starkness of 'The Island' was often surprisingly breathtaking, but conflicted with the constant barrage of dialogues, soliloquy, and flashbacks required to tell such a vast story in such a small space. This often shows in abrupt and confusing panel transitions. I've never known Mignola's stories to slip off-track like that before, but it isn't surprising that such a suddenly grand piece of exposition would trouble even his skilled draughtsmanship.

In the epilogue, Mignola tells us why he suddenly felt the need to tell this demystifying story: with the movie coming out soon, depicting a simplified world where mythical elements peppered an action plot, Mignola felt a need to explain those elements fully before they became film fodder.

He wanted to pre-empt the movie's explanation with his own, which is a natural urge for an artist who wants control of his intellectual property, but instead of maintaining a world of depth to shore up the film's brief treatment, he created a little story bible to wrap up the loose ends.

Mignola also mentions that these stories represent his return to Hellboy after a long break, which explains their tone. Mignola himself is trying to return to Hellboy's world, one he is no longer ensconced in, but is seeking to understand and inhabit again.

When returning to such a grand and complex project, it is tempting to try to encapsulate it in shorthand. Hellboy thus becomes something of a caricature of himself: his quips no longer stubborn and insightful but annoyed and contrary. The world also becomes caricatured: no longer a varied collection of stories and myths but a specific, grounded setting.

Some readers find comfort in that kind of closure. The monomyth remains a perennial favorite, but Hellboy's story had often been a refutation, a satire, and a subversion of that kind of moralizing heroism. The closer Mignola plays it, the more it simply becomes another morality play: no longer strange, no longer a mystery, no longer horrifying or unsettling. In short, it is without magic.

Mignola's world becomes more sympathetic, more of a fantasy; another comic book tale of power and the ethics of power. As the character becomes more of a symbol, he becomes less of a person, and as the world becomes a stage, the story becomes a romance. This will appeal to readers looking for something digestible, but will disenfranchise readers who enjoy the book because its winding, layered nature causes them to pause and think.

What is gained by turning an elusive, fanciful world into another power fantasy? (besides money). The opening story is perfectly good, and the collection is still strong--a good comic, the art a pleasure to behold, and mostly entertaining--but is this Hellboy?

Mignola ought to learn from the poor examples set by George Lucas or Grant Morrison: when something weird happens, don't try to explain it, let it stand on its own. When Lucas invented 'midichlorians' (tiny bacteria that lived in your cells and determined how much 'force power' you have) he was roundly ridiculed.

Likewise, no one wanted to hear when one Superman author tried to explain that the Man of Steel could pick up buildings with one hand without piercing them because he had 'tactile telekinesis'.

Grant Morrison's magnum opus 'The Invisibles' is just one long, indulgent attempt to combine and explain every myth and conspiracy theory he could lay his hands on, like 'The Illuminatus! Trilogy', but without a sense of humor.

Readers can find meanings in stories without being led by the nose; some of us even enjoy it. I'll probably finish Hellboy either way, but it will be disappointing if this thoughtful, moody book fails to recover from the retcon bombshell Mignola has dropped. If nothing else, this has given me a lasting lesson on how not to procure a satisfying ending for a story.

It's not fair to pull it all over your reader in the latter act, and even if it is neat and tidy, it will destroy the tone and thematic motifs you've spent so much time and energy developing. That's not a tradeoff I would be willing to make, though from Battlestar Galactica to Harry Potter, it's proven a popular route.

### **My Suggested Reading In Comics**

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#### **Bradley says**

I think this is quite good but its strength is all in the reveals about Hellboy's real creation all the way back through time as a vision quest.

If you don't mind just having him question his motives or reaffirm his chosen destiny versus being the bringer of the apocalypse, this volume is just fine. The art's interesting and the twists aren't unexpected, but it's still very satisfying.

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#### **David Leslie says**

I had collected all of the Hellboy tradepaper backs & am collecting them all again in the superlative library editions(especially since the Hellboy TPBs are infamous for pages coming loose after a while)since there thee greatest modern comic & maybe the greatest line of comics ever & this trade gets 5stars just like all the other red fella books I've read.ps-for anybody just starting to collect Hellboy books GO WITH THE LIBRARY EDITIONS,the oversized artwork is superb & the quality of the books in general are just as good,price wise superior to the DC ABSOLUTE editions!

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## Ross Alon says

3.5 stars

This is still a great series, but this story felt more of the same

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## Artemy says

A quieter, more serene volume compared to the previous one. Strange Places collects two stories, *The Third Wish* and *The Island*. The first one is just a really good story all around, with a very solid structure and great payoff. *The Island*, on the other hand, could have been handled better. Mignola himself admits that he had a lot of trouble with this story, completely redrawing and rewriting the entire thing three times before ending up with the final result. And it shows — what started as a pretty cool adventure turned out to be a boring exposition dump that basically discloses the entire mythos of the Hellboy universe. As a result, the story itself is hard to follow, especially near the middle, where I couldn't even understand what was going on half the time. Fortunately, *The Island* wraps up well enough and sets up the next big story arc, which I remember to be the best in the entire series: *Darkness Calls/The Wild Hunt*. I can't wait to delve into that epic event once again and see how it holds up!

*First read: October 26, 2015*

*Rating: ★★★★★?*

*Second read: October 5, 2017*

*Rating: ★★★★★?*

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## Jared Millet says

### 2017 Re-Read:

Okay, so it took me a while to get back to my Hellboy re-read, but that's only appropriate since it took Mike Mignola several years at this point to get back to Hellboy himself. (The intervening period filled by other creators on *Hellboy: Weird Tales*.) This book represents Hellboy's "lost in the wilderness" years after leaving the BPRD and discovering that he still can't escape the weirdness that follows him around like a dog. In "The Third Wish" Hellboy finds himself a pawn in a dark, underwater fairy tale, and in "The Island" he gets the mother of all infodumps re: the origin of his Red Right Hand - information he'd rather not have been bothered with, thank you very much.

This volume is Mignola at his Kirby-est and plays to all of his strengths - except that of producing new content on a timely basis. I love this book, but I'm also glad that after these stories Mignola turned the art chores over to others for a while, leading to a period of seriously increased Hellboy output.

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