



# Mae, Vol. 1

*Gene Ha*

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When she was just a girl, Abbie discovered a portal to fantasy world and for the last couple of years has been having great adventures there: defeating horrible monsters, power-mad scientists, and evil nobles. But by the time she turned twenty-one it all came apart and she decided to return home. Her sister, Mae, has had no idea what happened to Abbie after all this time. Her tales are too hard to believe--that is, until the monsters and other terrible creatures start to cross over to our world...

Collects the first six issues of the fantastical all-ages series, in the 6" x 9" format!

Praise for the first issue of *Mae*

"I highly recommend checking this out, as it is not only fantastical but also... Fantastic, Five out of Five Stars."

-*Comic Crusaders*

## Mae, Vol. 1 Details

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Author : Gene Ha

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Genre : Fantasy, Sequential Art, Graphic Novels, Comics, Young Adult, Fiction, Adventure, Graphic Novels Comics

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## From Reader Review Mae, Vol. 1 for online ebook

### Anya says

I grabbed this randomly from the library shelf, as I do with any graphic novels that show up where the art appeals to me and looks like it is vaguely speculative.

Liked:

- This is a story about what happens after a girl discovers a passage into a secret world and spends her childhood there becoming queen. Who did she leave behind and what happens when she tries to come back to our world? Definitely a wonderful premise
- The art is pretty good. It's not quite my favorite style, but it appeals to me more than average.
- Sisterly bonds are great to see in any fantasy story.

Didn't like:

- There is something about the shading of the art that just doesn't quite work for me, though I'm not knowledgeable enough about these things to say exactly what!
  - All the villains so far are dark-skinned.... I'm pretty sure that will improve since apparently everyone in this magical world is dark-skinned pretty much, but for now it makes me uncomfortable given the white heroes.
  - There is a whole lot introduced in this first volume that I have questions about, and obviously they will get answered in later volumes, but I am not satisfied with what we know so far. Abbie has super fighting skillz including super strength and Mae never questions that? This is a story that I think I would have liked better in written rather than graphical form so that these details could be better addressed.
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### Etienne says

It started so good!! But in the end it was slowly fading into a more girlish/funny fantasy. At the beginning it was darker, more «serious» action/battle and the universe captivated me from the beginning. The illustration style was also really beautiful, but in the end, it fade too. It really look like it was a complete different writer/illustrator that did the last part of it... strange. It was going to be a five stars but, again because of the ending, I got to go with four!

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### Kirsty Hanson says

I do love a good graphic novel. I've always loved comic books and graphic novels, so I'm always on the lookout for new stories to immerse myself into. I think one of the things that really draw myself into graphic novels is the artwork; I love poring over the illustrations.

*Mae's beloved older sister, Abbie, has been missing for years. Mae has her theories about where Abbie might be. But nowhere in her wildest imagination do those theories encompass a fantasy world full of terrifying monsters, power-hungry nobles, and nefarious scientists. That is until Abbie suddenly reappears in Mae's world. And not alone.*

I didn't really enjoy reading this. I thought that the first little bit of the story was so enticing. We're with Mae as her sister goes missing, and then we fast forward a bunch of years to when Mae is an adult. It did seem quite suspenseful, and then when Abbie suddenly appears... I don't know... The graphic novel just went

downhill.

I'll admit, I did find the premise of the graphic novel interesting (otherwise I wouldn't have requested it off of Netgalley), but it just didn't capture my attention at all, and there were points throughout where I wanted to DNF it. We don't find anything out about the world where Abbie was Queen so things just don't connect with each other.

Another thing that I wasn't so keen on was the artwork. It was kind of creepy. It was quite realistic, but then it was cartoony... So it just became weird and creepy.

Normally, I love portal fantasy. Give me a good portal fantasy storyline any day, and I'm 90% sure that I'll love it. But not this story. It just seemed SO random. So I think that when volume two comes out, I won't be reading it. I think part of me is intrigued to see where Gene Ha goes with this story and whether she provides more background to the characters and the world, but unfortunately, this graphic novel wasn't for me.

**Disclaimer: this book was sent to me by the publisher in exchange for an honest review**

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## **Lilyn G. | Sci-Fi & Scary says**

The cover for Mae was nice enough to get me to look at the back. The blurb didn't precisely excite me, but it had been a while since I'd reviewed an adult graphic novel on the site, so I decided to give it a chance.

The color palette is pleasing. I like the heavy use of purple. It took a while for the illustration style to grow on me, but it's very easy on the eyes. When it switched to more traditional illustration for the last two stories included in the volume (a backstory from when Abbie was first in the new land, and then one on how Dahlia and Mae became friends), I was disappointed.

The Doctor Who reference had me grinning. It was perfect. Mae's sister, Abby, definitely looks like she could be The Doctor herself. There were other pop-culture references that had me giggling, but I'll leave them to you to discover yourself. On top of the sass, there was a ton of action in Mae, Vol 1. The fact it was girls kicking butt just made it even better (and sometimes doing it by using their brains – even more so).

I wasn't really a fan of the fact that we got a couple awesome, nicely illustrated issues, and then there was a bunch of filler in the form of artwork pages, and some backstory comics. I'm sure other people will love it, though. So I'm not really counting it against Mae too harshly. I know I'm not exactly your typical comic book reader.

The evolution of the characters that was included at the end was pretty interesting. I definitely prefer the version that they ended up going with. It feels more real, and more fun. The fact that this volume was apparently brought to life via Kickstarter was neat as well.

Overall, the first few issues were well-done, engaging, and made me want to read more. The rest of Mae, vol 1 I could take or leave. Definitely think fans of Doctor Who should check it out. It's got that Tenth Doctor wibbly-wobbly feel to it.

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## **Chad says**

Mae's sister has been missing for the last 7 years. Now she's returned and claims she's been in an Oz type dimension. When people from the dimension show up Mae and Abbie must return to her fantasy world to save her father.

I love the concept and the character designs. Ha has created a really nifty looking world. His art is fantastic. His coloring however leaves something to be desired. There are too many shiny spots. It gives the art a 90's computer animated cartoon look. The storytelling could be better as well. We don't find out anything about this world from when Abbie was queen here. The opening scene of the book takes place when Abbie went missing when she was 11 and introduces these otherworldly little characters who are never seen again. I often felt like there were some panels missing. Things just didn't quite connect.

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## **Devann says**

*I received an ARC copy of this book from NetGalley*

This could have been a pretty decent story but overall I felt like it lacked depth. I love portal fantasy and the idea that this girl's sister has been missing for years and then pops back into town 'talking nonsense' and whisks her away back to another world is a really fun one. But the actual story line seemed to just jump from scene to scene with little explanation and only for the purpose of throwing in as many tired nerdy references as possible. People who like 'reference humor' will probably enjoy this, but I would have a little bit more substance to my stories than just going 'oh, I understood that reference!' every other minute.

I also didn't really like the art style. I'm sure there's a specific name for it that I'm not aware of but I would compare it to 3D animation for movies and I definitely prefer the more 'classic' styles. There were a few backstory issues at the end that looked like that, but by that point I had lost all interest so unfortunately I couldn't really enjoy them. There were some cool things in here - like that the fantasy world they go to has a majority black population and there's some panels about fantasy worlds always being ridiculously white - but unfortunately even these good parts are delivered with such a drive-by style that I couldn't actually enjoy them.

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## **Jason says**

While I liked the fantasy element, how it gelled with the real-world aspect left me feeling mixed. Also, I wasn't so into the human character design/penciling and colors. (e-galley from NetGalley)

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## **Jen/The Tolkien Gal/?????? says**

3.8 stars

Review to come (like the 12 others that need to be written)

This was a pretty fascinating urban fantasy - a bit of a mix of Treasure Planet, Dungeons and Dragons and Saga.

## Midnight Voss says

Mae is a super entertaining little quest in which the titular character's sister Abbie reappears after years of being missing, and in the span of a day, ropes Mae into a quest to save their father. They go into a wondrous alternate world, where Abbie proceeds to try to find their father mostly through blunt force, and Mae finds that her skills aren't entirely useless here, either.

Vol 1 ends after a few failed attempts, so keep an eye out for volume 2, which won't drop until January 2019.

Plot/Characters: 7/10

Although the general plots of finding a new world, or going on a quest to save a friend or family member, aren't new in themselves, this story is incredibly entertaining. I think that's because the world-building is so dazzling that we're sort of tumbling down the rabbit hole along with Mae. I especially appreciate the concept that an alternate world might be populated with humans not Western European and American. I don't know that the author has fully utilized that conceit yet, but I'm going to be patient. I will be reading the second volume, for certain.

When it comes to character, Mae is better fleshed out of the two sisters. She's a fan of Anime, Dr. Who, Battlestar Galactica, and anything else. This nerdiness, combined with a stability that comes from having been the sister left behind, who had to look after their father, makes her relatable and very easy to grasp as a character. Ani/Abbie is... less developed. I'm sensing we might get more from her; in fact, I'm hoping that occurs in the next volume. We know that she's a queen.. and she kicks ass. And at the end we're teased regarding her relationship with Petra. But beyond that, it's kind of superficial.

Maybe it has to be that way. So far the sisters' conflicts with each other haven't gone into much depth either. It all has to do with their mission, and not to do with their history. You'd think after disappearing for years, Abbie would be facing a little more anger from Mae, but not yet. It's all in their approach to finding their father.

Art: 6/10

I'll be honest: The art is a little shaky in the beginning chapters. Over the course of the comic, the style seems to settle into a more comfortable, blended presentation of the human and nonhuman characters. At first, though, a lot of the expressions and poses are stiff to the point of being unrealistic. Occasionally, I stop to stare at a face Mae is making and cringe. I even went back to the beginning to see if I hadn't just gotten used to the style, and no, that's not the case. Thankfully, after a little bit, it does get better. And once it does, the style highlights the feeling of fantasy very well.

I need to read the second volume before I can really get into themes, but for now, I'm going to go with "Sisterhood" because the relationship between Mae and Abbie is center stage.

Long story short: I'm definitely going to be looking into the second volume. I think the world-building hooked me more than anything else, and anything with a significant sister bond to explore is worth my time.

I received a review copy from Netgalley in exchange for an honest review.

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## Kota Jones says

Mae's sister, Abbie, reappears after a seven-year disappearance only to tell stories of another dimension where she was a queen. Mae obviously does not believe her until she sees the monsters for herself and they venture into the other world together after their father is kidnapped. The artwork of Mae was good and the story did seem interesting, but there was too much happening too quickly. It was cool that Mae's sister was also her own main character in her own story while most books just focus on the one main character and forget that everyone is technically main character material. Abbie has had her adventures and fame, so having her sister be the focus of the story was an interesting decision, but I think that its important to establish the most important character. The graphic novel is called Mae, but Mae and Abbie seem to be equal protagonists which distracts from the plot.

The plot itself was fast-paced, but I found myself not really invested in what was happening because the situation kept changing every page. The story would have definitely been slowed down and still enjoyed and I also believe that there should have been a clearer goal established since its the first volume. Yes, they are trying to save their father, but no background on the world was given and it's hard to decipher the greater scheme at work here which I think would have been helpful to know in the context. Even a hint of a scheme would have been helpful or at least a clearer depiction of it. Overall, it was an interesting idea, but the execution could have been better. I will have to think about whether or not I will read Volume 2.

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## **Dani - Perspective of a Writer says**

*Check out more [manga and graphic novel reviews @ Perspective of a Writer...](#)*

When Abbie reappears in Mae's life she never expected she'd be followed by otherworldly beings willing to kidnap their father to get to her sister. Cutting their reunion short they head back to the world Abbie grew up in, a fantasy world full of terrifying monsters, power-hungry nobles, and nefarious scientists.

I knew from the cover that I wasn't sure about the art... but I LOVE portal fantasy and hoped that I could get into the story in any case. Well in the beginning I TOTALLY regretted picking this up... I HATED how the characters seemed outlined and the backgrounds were overly simple or quite dull. Then we hit the fantasy world and the art came together must better. Don't get me wrong the black outlined look is never going to be my favorite but it did work better with the fantasy races and the more detailed backgrounds.

Just like the art, I HATED the story in the beginning as we sat around with a random friend of Mae's to shoot the breeze. Even when Abbie appeared I wasn't impressed and thought about DNFing the story. Once we got to the fantasy world though I became more intrigued as we ran into pirates and animal races and mad scientists. I wish we'd started here with maybe a couple panels or a page back in Indiana to set up coming here. The story is still totally random but at least we could have gotten to the creative part faster.

I don't really care for their dad at all... I was more interested in the mad scientist that Mae met while Abbie was doing Abbie stuff. What this means is there was no tension... I was just along for the ride to check out this world that made the incredibly unique Abbie. I think this was just the totally wrong way to come at this story... I do understand that it started from Kickstarter and grew to be a sensation... And it is creative, but the story is a mess!

While I love the fantasy world that I've seen so far... nothing much makes sense! Abbie coming home and Mae going back with her... The other beings coming through after Abbie... Even the majority of humans being Czech was odd. It's weird that it was mentioned that most fantasy worlds are all white when there are two white chicks as protagonists! Like I mentioned above these two sisters weren't the right way to approach

this story.

While I found Mae vol 1 an incredibly frustrating start I am intrigued by the world. I think reading further we may leave some of these initial problems behind and get to the creative and juicy part of the story. The art doesn't win you over at first but I got used to it and find it to be it's own style... it works in a way with the odd mix that makes up the world. Give this a go when you have Mae vol 2 standing by to read right after...

?? ?? Authenticity

?? ?? Tension

?? ??? Plot

?? ??? Art

*Thanks to Edelweiss and the publisher for providing me with a copy in exchange for an honest review. It has not influenced my opinions.*

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You can find this review and many others on my book blog @ Perspective of a Writer. See my manga and graphic novel reviews in a special feature called Saturday Morning Cartoons...

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### **[Shai] Bibliophage says**

The first volume of the graphic novel, *Mae*, has a good start. However, I find that I slowly lost interest in the latter part of the story. Nevertheless, I still appreciate the illustrations, and that I like how the story and relationship of Mae and Abbie as sisters was strongly emphasized. This graphic novel is good but not considerable to recommend to my fellow comic book enthusiast.

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### **Christoph says**

Die Voraussetzungen waren nahezu optimal, das von mir sehr geliebte Subgenre „Portal Fantasy“, in Kombination mit dem ebenso liebgewonnen grafischen Stil von Gene Ha und das Ganze eingebettet in ein Indie Comic. Ausgabe Nummer 1 war auch sehr vielversprechend, es berichtete - etwas ungewohnt - zu Beginn von jenen Familienmitgliedern, welche von der fantastischen Heldin auf Reisen zu Hause zurückgelassen wurden. Hier war nur meine Befürchtung, dass dies in „unserer“ Realität weitergehen wird - dies wurde rasch zerstreut und Gene Ha entführte uns in seine Welt! Gut so ...

... jedoch ist Gene Ha ein noch ungeübter eigenständiger Geschichtenerzähler. Die Welt wirkt gut durchdacht und man spürt das Bemühen alles etwas anders anzulegen. Das scheitert auch an keiner Stelle, überzeugt aber auch nicht vollständig; eher unterhaltsam leichtfüßig fließt die Geschichte dahin, wechselt angenehm die Szenerie wo's paßt ... und und ...!

Letztendlich blieb ein schaler Nachgeschmack übrig und das Interesse die Serie weiter zu verfolgen ist gesunken.

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## Wendi Lee says

Mae's older sister, Abby, disappeared years ago. She returns with a strange tale of a fantasy world, not unlike Oz, where she's had adventures galore. Mae is skeptical, until this fantasy world and its creatures start seeping into regular old Indiana. After targeting the girls' father, Mae and Abby embark on their own epic journey to save him.

I have some mixed feelings about this graphic novel. I love the character of Mae, and her references to Doctor Who and Harry Potter. I also appreciated some of the details of the fantasy world, like the scene where Abby and Mae barter for silver.

The illustrations didn't resonate with me, sadly. I sometimes felt that this was trying to emulate Lumberjanes or Rat Queens, but not quite succeeding. I also found the choice of bold words in the bubbles random. This is a small thing, but it was enough to take me out of the reading experience.

Thank you to Netgalley and the publisher for an arc.

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## Travis says

I saw this at the library and it triggered a memory of seeing the kickstarter for the book. The pitch had sounded sort of interesting, if not quite my cup of tea, so I decided to check it out. Sadly not that great of a work in my opinion.

First off, I don't really like the art. The characters tend to have weirdly bold outlines that pop them out of the background, but there is also something about the coloring or shading that seems off. Another critical review that I saw compares the characters to Sims people, and that seems about right; they look sort of like computer renderings that don't quite fit in the illustration. Sometimes this isn't as noticeable, especially in action scenes or wider compositions, but it is very prominent in panels with closeup shots, compounded by a tendency to give the characters these weird, gape-mouthed expressions. I do like a lot of the creature design and setting detail, but the particulars of the art are all too often unattractive to me.

A common charge leveled against fantasy stories is that they are full of unpronounceable names. I feel like the author decided to just embrace that problem and run with it. In theory, it is kind of cool to highlight a relatively overlooked language like Czech, but man, I have no idea what to make of most of the names here. And I just traveled to Prague this past summer and tried to pick up a bit of the sound of the language, but it still felt like mental tongue-twisters getting through this. And I swear that some of those accents are applied in ways that aren't supported by the language. Even worse, it doesn't seem like the words are either justified. For one, the alternate world, Cimrteren, is full of non-human intelligent beings, though since some notes at the end reveal that it was settled by mad scientists, it is possible all the non-humans are just creations and not natives. But then there is the specific example of Krunyrvs being founded by African Americans -- so why does it have a Czech-ish name, and not something derived from different linguistic roots?! (and that fact is related in a somewhat cringe-worthy scene where the characters comment on how silly it is that most fantasy is "lily white", ignoring the fact that they are two white main characters in a story where every black character is an unnamed extra, except two villains (at least I think they have African ancestry; they look a bit more green honestly, but I think that is lighting and/or cosmetics) and an ally/secondary character introduced on literally the last page of the main story in this volume; those in glass houses and all that)

There are also weird continuity breaks. Like the first scene we have Abbie and Mae's father talking to a police officer off-screen, and he is perfectly fluent, but when he shows up later in the story he speaks weirdly

broken English. And sometimes the action jumps forward awkwardly, like the author just couldn't figure out how to do a scene transition. The worst example is in Abbie's fight with Rytir Kazisvet, where in one panel there is an explosion, mainly showing the two characters and some torn up pavement, and in literally the next panel there is a smashed apartment building, a cop pulling up, and a bunch of dead henchmen; that level of destruction and the time needed for a cop to respond to the issue are not adequately communicated in the art.

Finally, Abbie comes off as a complete idiot at times, and the people around her as only slightly smarter. I'm not sure if this is intentional or just poor plotting, but it doesn't really fit with the image of her as a great warrior queen. Though maybe she just got lucky? But I think it may actually be a consequence of an over-extension of the original story. The kickstarter was originally meant to be a single graphic novel, but it was so successful it became a series. But the title and the elevator pitch for it both suggest that the original intention was probably to focus more on the real world and how Mae dealt with her sister returning to mundanity after her fantastical adventures, and I think the making-of sketches and materials in the end of this volume support that idea. But maybe Abbie's stupidity makes sense. She never completed school, but rather ran off to live in this other world, which she probably understood through the lens of stories like Narnia; she had found her way there because she was a savior or hero, and so she never realized the true political complexity of the other world. Also, where did Abbie get her super-strength from? I suppose she could be concealing a secret, lest her power could be betrayed or stolen, but it is sufficiently notable that it is strange Mae doesn't ask about it.

Finally, I am left wondering why the portal stone gate is activated by an I Ching hexagram, and how making that arrangement counts as a puzzle and not random meddling (the meaning of the hexagram is roughly "opposition," which seems appropriate enough). Though I was disappointed by this work, I don't absolutely hate it. As I said, I like the visual design in many places, like all of the cat-ogres, mole-goblins and dunkleosteus-headed guards. And the girl in blue in the foreground of the cover page to chapter 3: I love her design and wish she was a main character (which would also help the whole racial inclusion issue). And Kvido is adorable. But overall, not impressed, and not inclined to read any more.

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