



## **Sandman Mystery Theatre, Vol. 2: The Face and the Brute**

*Matt Wagner, John Watkiss (Illustrator), R.G. Taylor (Illustrator)*

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SANDMAN MYSTERY THEATRE: THE FACE AND THE BRUTE finds the Sandman of 1939, Wesley Dodds, and his possible paramour Dian Belmont, involved in a series of grisly murders in New York's Chinatown--murders that threaten to reignite the terrifying former days of the Tong Wars, a time when blood ran in the streets like water. Following this drama of The Brute, Wesley and Dian are confronted with corruption at the other end of the social scale in The Face as they track down the trail of misery left by a man whose gross appetite for violence is rivaled only by his wealth.

## **Sandman Mystery Theatre, Vol. 2: The Face and the Brute Details**

Date : Published November 1st 2004 by Vertigo

ISBN : 9781401203450

Author : Matt Wagner , John Watkiss (Illustrator) , R.G. Taylor (Illustrator)

Format : Paperback 208 pages

Genre : Sequential Art, Comics, Graphic Novels, Mystery, Crime, Fiction, Pulp



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## From Reader Review Sandman Mystery Theatre, Vol. 2: The Face and the Brute for online ebook

### Hannah says

This was the first book I read hiding under the bedsheets this summer, and it was a perfect way to start my blanket-fort reading list. My only complaint is that we didn't get to hear more about the villains. I felt like The Face didn't get the background he deserved. I wanted to hear more about him and his madness.

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### Nate says

More pitch-black goodness from Wagner. Both stories were great and the protagonists were creepy as fuck, which always earns points from me. I still loved hanging out with Wesley and his ever-awesome girlfriend Dian, who as always refuses to fall into ditzy damsel-in-distress cliche. I did like the art a bit less than the first volume but it was still original and pleasing to look at, without ever being overcrowded, confusing or obnoxious.

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### Jeff says

Double feature! Double the tales! Double the fun?

Not really.

Both stories (The Face and The Brute) take a nosedive in quality from volume one - Sandman Mystery Theatre, Vol. 1: The Tarantula. Never a fan of Guy Davis' art work in the first volume, John Watkiss and R. G. Taylor are even less skillful in trying to capture Matt Wagner's vision. But here, Matt Wagner lets *himself* down, especially in the first tale.

#### The Face

Dian Belmont, daughter of the New York City district attorney, believes in pushing the envelope on the role of women in society. She's not content to take a back seat to any man when it comes to crime-solving, partying and relationships. (Read: gat toting, meddling tramp who irks almost everybody) She usually takes the second-banana role in these stories, but for some reason Wagner made this a socialite-crime solver tale and gave the Sandman a back seat in his own book.

The concept of interracial dating and by extension bigotry and racism get the spotlight as Dian's old boyfriend of Chinese descent gets caught up in a revival of the Tong Wars in Chinatown. The mover and shaker behind the feud is a guy called The Face: he wears disguises.

Where's the Sandman?

He's stalking NYC and fooshing and stuff.

Remember: His schtick is the gas (of the truth and knockout varieties), gas mask and some kung fu moves.

The take away message for the kids:

### The Brute

Wagner brings back the pulpy noirish vibe from volume one here and continues to explore the gawd awful things people do to one another.

Did he have some sort of checklist of reprehensible things he wanted to build stories around?

Sandman's in charge as he continues to mysteriously creep people out by being creepy and mysterious...

(That's Mr. Sandman to you, Bub.)

...stomps the crap out of some thugs...

...does the ninja stalkerish stuff as he rhapsodizes about weird stuff...

(Peek-a-boo!)

...and does some fooshing. With style.

His relationship with Dian grows chummier, but she's back to playing second fiddle.

**Bottom line:** If you dig hard-boiled comics with some less-than-stellar art or like Ed Brubaker's work in this genre, than go for it. The Face is a by-the-numbers story; the Brute is better at evoking the pulpy atmosphere in a cringe-worthy way. I have volumes 3 and 4 at home, so I'm not done with the series quite yet.

The cover art of the individual issues is usually evocative and compelling.

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### **Dominic says**

Some of the encounters were rushed with what was supposed to be an evening out taking only 6-8 panels and no real indication of time passing. Beyond that, it is a thoroughly engrossing study of abusive behavior on many levels.

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### **Ravenhats says**

The stories of The Face and The Brute address two very interesting and controversial subjects of the 1930's. The first the Face story investigates race relations as Dian meets a old handsome Chinese friend in Chinatown involved with the Chinese Tong's. In it a Lon Cheney like killer is trying create conflict among the Chinese communities and gangs through manipulative murders. The art for this tory has some heavy line work and at times is stiff, but is generally colourful and interesting to look at.

The second story is a story about abusive parenting and class inequality as a desperate boxer Ramsey seeks to escape from wealthy illegal fight promoter with his daughter who has tuberculosis. He is pushed to his limit, while the promoter tries to make deals with Dobb's and a local heroin pusher. This story is really a tragic one with a shocking conclusion and reads less like a superhero comic, and more like a dark noire story much to its credit. I slightly prefer the art style of this story which has a lot line work and noire shadows, but isn't so brightly coloured, pulpy or heavily drawn.

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### **Gavin says**

I felt somewhat let down by this version after the first volume. I think it was the artwork to some degree...also it wasn't so much mystery at all anymore. There's far more time and effort spent on Dian Belmont, the love interest, and she is about as white, rich, privileged as one can expect. Unfortunately, the best they can do with her is have her be a bit of a whore, dating some shady Asian guy who's tied in with the Tongs (Triads). Her father more or less calls her out on this. The racism is rampant, and I know it's a period piece so that's one way to look at it...

The entire first story (4 of the 8 issues) is all about Chinatown and the racism against the Asians. I didn't care for it at all, it didn't seem like anything that the Sandman would be involved with, it felt forced.

The second story was a little odder, about poverty and child abuse. Here again it seems like Dian and Wesley are just sitting around saying 'gee it sure is crummy that there's all these poor folk who don't feed their kids' and 'boy that's too much hitting of the kiddies'. I don't know what it was that just turned me right off of this one, I think maybe I expected more from 'the Sandman' and this just seemed like a step backwards from the first 4 issues...

I have hope for it to pick up again in Vol. 3!

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### **Karli Tucker says**

This series is like an old noir movie. I like the feel of it.

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### **Randolph says**

Two fairly mundane mysteries don't really add much to the development of the series which is something I've come to expect in sophomore efforts. There is way too much gratuitous bigotry displayed in an effort to establish the era and the "hard boiled" nature of the stories, and in an attempt to emphasize the enlightened attitude of the good guys: Dodds et. al. I felt the pedophilic rape was unnecessary to the plot and am not sure why it was inserted. Anyway don't leave this one around for the kiddies to find. I do like the fact that no matter how dire the situation the Sandman NEVER kills.

Artwork is fairly uninspiring typical comic fare and seemed to make the protagonists as unattractive as possible in another effort at realism.

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### **Michael says**

I wanted to like this more than I did. The art didn't do the story any favors. I want Guy Davis back!

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### **Linnea Gelland says**

It's difficult for one artist to follow another and be judged fairly. After Volume 1, I was hooked on the look of it all, and that was bound to make me disappointed when opening this volume.

The Face: They had a colouring problem in the first issues, that made every Asian character look bright yellow. Something that was a bit ironic, since the story itself focused on racism and stereotypes in 30's New York. The theme worked well though, and the colouring was corrected later on. The story was intriguing, but still felt a bit weak after reading The Tarantula.

The Brute: Same thing goes for the second story in this collection. I found it picked up the pace quite a bit towards the end, but still it didn't live up to Tarantula. That will be a hard one to beat, though. One thing i like is that it takes all the way (SPOILER) to here for Dodds and Dian to actually kiss. For once it's a gradual thing, rather than an instant jump into bed.

The subject matter brought up in all these stories are also very bold, and handled pretty well, I think. Incest, racism and rape aren't easy things to write about, but I don't think they come off as being exploitation stories.

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### **Moth Pfunk says**

Even better than the first, the film noir beat is set to the gritty backdrop of the 1930s and it's the dark underbelly of it's streets. The dream sequences of Wesley Dodds are particularly affective, and we are treated to a glimpse into his own sense of inadequacies as he takes on Morpheus' helm. Wish fulfilment perhaps. Definitely an intriguing character.

**Paul says**

Originaly bought as single-issues, I have the complete collection.

Somehow, Matt Wagner and Guy Davis were the perfect team to bring the original Sandman back. Where most writers would have updated the character to bring him into the 21st century, Matt Wagner goes way back to his original roots set in the 1940s and gives us a bare bones version of the character. This isn't a super-hero, he doesn't jump from rooftops, he's fallible, he's a well-rounded, caring human being, heck he's not even muscle-bound, he could probably even lose a bit of weight. You actually get the impression that he has to make an effort to do the things he does. Add to that the more than believable love interest of Dian and you have the setting for some great stories.

These stories should be re-collected into Absolute or Deluxe editions... even if I might be the only one buying them :-)

**Aleksandar Nikolov says**

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**Marissa says**

I did not like Volume 2 of this series nearly as well as Volume 1. Both Dian Belmont and the Sandman himself start to just come off as these ultra privileged bored people with no social intelligence. While I appreciate that these works were an attempt to try to take a realistic, blunt approach to racism, poverty, and child abuse, they got to be so over the top in parts that it almost began to feel like almost a fetishization of these things instead of a confrontation with them. The poverty subplot in *The Brute* was especially irritating since our heroes are incredibly wealthy and in theory could have intervened before things got as messed up as they did for the hapless father and daughter here. The writing also takes a serious dive in this volume, sliding away from noir into just incredibly hammy territory.

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**Brent says**

Finally reading original issues purchased almost 25 years ago! Good stuff.

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