



## The Wrenchies

*Farel Dalrymple*

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## **The Wrenchies** Farel Dalrymple

Meet the Wrenchies.

They're strong, powerful, and if you cross them, things will quickly go very badly for you. Only one thing scares them—growing up. Because in the world of the Wrenchies, it's only kids who are safe... anyone who survives to be an adult lives in constant fear of the Shadowsman. All the teenagers who come into contact with them turn into twisted, nightmarish monsters whose minds are lost forever.

When Hollis, an unhappy and alienated boy, stumbles across a totem that gives him access to the parallel world of the Wrenchies, he finally finds a place where he belongs. But he soon discovers that the feverish, post-apocalyptic world of the Wrenchies isn't staying put... it's bleeding into Hollis's normal, real life. Things are getting very scary, very fast.

Farel Dalrymple brings all his significant literary and artistic powers to bear in his magnum opus—a sprawling, intense science fiction tale that has at its heart the uncertainty and loneliness of growing up.

## **The Wrenchies Details**

Date : Published July 15th 2014 by First Second

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Author : Farel Dalrymple

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## From Reader Review The Wrenchies for online ebook

### Licha says

This book was painful to read. It was boring, confusing, and I couldn't have cared less about any of these characters. I'm almost two thirds of the way through this and I still haven't quite figured out what exactly this is about. It has been such an exasperating read, to say the least.

**Plot:** Confusing, messy, unclear. Set in some kind of apocalyptic world, I was never able to figure out what the goal of the story was.

**Characters:** Could never really figure out who the main character was. There were way too many characters and I could never be brought to care for any of them.

**Artwork:** At times, very good artwork. Great use of color. But on the bad side, there were panels where there was just too much going on and because of it, it looked as if the artist got lazy trying to fill in as much as he could into one panel.

**Dialogue:** Confusing. Random. Overcluttered. Hard to read at times. So many characters were speaking at the same time that it was hard to make sense of it all and it was hard to tell the sequence of conversation. Some was conversation in crowds that didn't seem to have a place within the story.

**Would I recommend this to anyone?** Nope. Had to DNF this at page 190/303, ch. 5., The Quest.

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### Sam says

The premise of this story is really good and quite intriguing but I found the execution a little confusing and overly complicated, I was rather lost by the time I was halfway through and found myself having to go back to check that I hadn't missed anything vital. There are moments where this is really engrossing and whisks you along at speed, but then there are bits that just don't seem to fit and seem to come out of nowhere. Because of this I found I couldn't really get to grips with the characters and found them lacking a bit of depth. This could just be me missing something really obvious or not getting the point but it really did spoil it for me. The artwork however was superb, embracing the gritty dystopian world the Dalrymple has created and taking the reader right into the heart of it. Worth a try but may need a few re-reads before the full potential is realised.

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### First Second Books says

I think this book is great!

One of the most interesting parts of Farel Dalrymple's THE WRENCHIES, for me, is how it deals with the violence of the post-apocalypse.

This book is full of characters who are children and teenagers, and they're dealing with the end of the world and magic! zombies wandering around everywhere who are trying to eat them. Because THE WRENCHIES is a graphic novel, it's difficult for the end of the world not to be in your face at every minute you're reading -- you can never forget while the characters have a quiet emotional moment, because their surroundings continually pervade.

Farel's art in this is fantastic, and I think that the way that the setting becomes part of this story really makes it something extraordinary.

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### **Raeleen Lemay says**

I couldn't bring myself to finish this, which makes me SO SAD. There was so much potential here, because the premise, the art, and the coloring (OH MY GOD THE COLORING) were phenomenal. However, the execution wasn't great in my opinion, and I was confused/irritated/bored the entire time.

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### **Jan Philipzig says**

Dalrymple draws and paints and means well. As a story, though, I found this almost unreadable. Lifeless characters, random plot developments, heavy-handed self-reflexivity - a mess!

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### **Amy says**

I was really into this at first, loved the art and was enjoying the plot and action. But less than a third of the way in it got WAY too vague and lost all its momentum. I'm willing to 'go with it' through a lot of vague and weird things, but it has to be interesting and at least vaguely follow-able. It also fell into characters just explaining the story for really long periods, rather than anything actually happening.

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### **Vinton Bayne says**

This little gem gets me on so many levels. First and foremost, the artwork is amazing. Every page begs for your attention with colorful detail that arrests your eyes from moving on in the story.

Oh but you will move on, because the story won't let you stop for long. The narrative will exercise your understanding of reality, it will test your need for the clear and obvious. You will be wondering how to connect it all, in fact a good part of the story will play out in your own mind as you fight for cohesion.

This is what I love, something that works out my imagination, that won't let me slip by comfortably. A story that implants itself in your subconscious as you try to work it all out for days after you thought you finished it.

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### **Get X Serious says**

This book is extremely incoherent in the worst way possible. I tried to write a review but apparently this book is so bad and confusing and stupid that it's infected my ability to write a coherent thought. I want to say something along the lines of, "It's like somebody forced me to watch a four year old on PCP act out their favorite David Lynch movie," but even that is giving it too much credit.

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### **Keith says**

Hoooooly shit, what was THAT.

I thought I'd be able to write something, but I can't. It's gonna need another reread, and a long think.

Suffice it to say you need to pick this up, and you absolutely have no idea what you're getting yourself into when you do.

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I don't know how to comment on the book any further unless I take notes while I go, which is pretty much how I use Goodreads half the time anyway. I feel a little bad about it this time around because *Wrenchies* is so new, so as much as it feels kind've silly I'll bracket off my notes as spoilers. Lame.

(Followup: by the time I finished my notes, they became an article unto themselves. Don't bother clicking the link unless you really, really want a really, really detailed play-by-play of the entire book.)

(view spoiler)

My real review follows.

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If you've ever taken a peek at Grant Morrison's *The Invisibles* (and there's no reason you need to, except if you want to know what's up when someone asks you if you've read *The Invisibles*, and anyone who asks you that is a blowhard, so fuck it), you may know that his intent with that project was to enact a magic rite that would echo across both his own works and others, "a *hypersigil* to jump-start the culture in a more positive direction." (wikipedia, natch)

And this is a terrible and patronizing idea, and *Invisibles* is a terrible and patronizing book, not least of all because its painful illusions of grandeur.

But that doesn't mean there's not something interesting about the concept behind it, both in being aware of a one's own cultural impact, and of the strange energies that come out of cross-textual worldbuilding. I would posit that if you've ever used terms like "Buffyverse" to describe Joss Whedon's body of work, or "Diniverse" to talk about superhero cartoons, or even been aware of the intentions behind Stephen King's Dark Tower series, there's something about hypersigilism that's being invoked.

Shared story universes are the bread and butter of comics, of course -- a meta-detail that is assuredly part of the equation for *The Wrenchies*, as its own narrative leaps across worlds, realms, and dimensions of time and space -- and includes characters from throughout Dalrymple's past comics. As in superhero stories, there are notes of religious concern at play here as well, wrapped up in the question of God-as-Author.

But rather than lose itself in Morrison's auteurish pomposity, Dalrymple's thought process works more honestly as a somewhat desperate search for self. Instead of basking in the aggrandizement of storybuilding, there is an attention here to the real human-being-people who make stories -- who do so in an attempt to find self-worth, to find community, to find inner peace. In *The Wrenchies*, one person might be a superhero, a secret agent, a paper pusher, and a comics artist all in a single lifetime -- but there is certain fragmentation, a trauma in all that calamity. And while there is a very real awareness of the Big Bad World outside fiction's walls, the focus of *The Wrenchies* lies in what happens when a person becomes too lost and broken to be able to even *access* that world, much less find their place in it.

Such a tragic figure exists at the literal heart of *The Wrenchies*, and also echoes throughout its supporting cast -- the post-apocalyptic child-warriors that are the book's namesake, the rudderless kid in a nameless modern city who hopes to join them, the isolated adults cast into a land of magic without a true understanding of their own agency. The questions of existential meaning that surround these characters feed the meditative concerns at the center of the book, and their mounting paranoia about the hopelessness of their futures looms as large as the fantastic monsters that pursue them across the strange landscapes in which they find themselves.

I'm not saying *The Wrenchies* is a perfect work (although I might be), and I'll concede that it demands no small amount of patience and a certain suspension of disbelief to be enjoyed in the first place. But I do believe it's an incredible testament to what can be done by one person in the field of comics -- and it's made my bookshelf a hell of an exciting place to be in 2014.

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### **Julia Sapphire says**

I liked the art style but the story was messy and bland. I enjoyed the first bit of this graphic novel but then it just went really down hill for me. I did not care for the characters and the plot was super random.

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### **David Schaafsma says**

So, the drawing and painting of this one is terrific. It's dark, in almost every sense, but I think it is still almost (not quite?) an all ages book, since, though it is pretty violent in places, it is not that violent, in my opinion. The art I love, actually, but everything is dark, visually and thematically, because it is a post apocalyptic or dystopian tale, where gangs of kids roam the blasted out world defending themselves against Shadowpeople, or Creepers, that all seem very much like Zombies, of course, though these Creepers wear suits. This gang is called--and all gangs apparently have to have a name--The Wrenchies, which to a seventies guy like me calls to memory the environmental "activist" group, The Monkeywrench Gang by Edward Abbey, a group that throws a "wrench" into the capitalist machine, but this group of kids doesn't seem to have such elevated political goals, though I have only read it once, so maybe it does. Much of what happens isn't completely clear to me on the first read, but this didn't bug me as much as the world making and character relations seemed more central than plot.

One of the kids got the idea for the gang from a comic book called The Wrenchies, a copy of which surfaces in the trash for some reason and gets passed around, so the uses of comics is a theme that gets thrown in here too. The group of kids is interesting, with unique and though all quite similar in some ways, they all that seem to talk realistically together. I confess I am still a bit confused what the plot leads to, what it is about, as I said, but the art work and characters I liked a lot... maybe if I reread it I will think less of it--maybe it really does not make much sense, which seems possible; there's other creatures than the Creepers, and both good and bad magic and ghosts are also thrown in--but the central images in it were appealing to me and I suspect, would also appeal to teens.

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### **Josh says**

I honestly can not figure out what the plot line was. This book was just surreal. And not in a good way. Perhaps if I was under the influence of some hallucinogens, I might be able to make sense of it. But I'm not, nor will I be. So it shall remain one of the graphic novels that I just shelve.

And now that I have let my mind rest an entire night's sleep on this novel, I am still completely baffled by what I just read. There are so many interweaving story lines, with tertiary characters that aren't developed, and bizarre plot twists that only kind of reach resolution in the four epilogues, and rampant drug use that simply exists that I am completely flabbergasted. This is one graphic novel that I wouldn't bring to the table for consideration for anything. It's like one bizarre stream of consciousness emitted by a psychiatric patient who is suffering dementia. The constant switches between time periods and realities are completely disruptive of any real plots that could have been developed or fleshed out.

Don't spend your money on this one. It's not worth it, unless you want to try to decipher a hallucinogenic rambling that doesn't even give a good background.

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## Mike says

Magical? Mind-expanding? Evocative. All that just from chapter one.

Or maybe it's just distracted. Tangential. Unfocused.

I keep hearing Keith's review (<https://www.goodreads.com/review/show...>) in my head, and it keeps haunting me with the promise of some mind-bending insanity. But the more I read, the faster I skim, as I get more and more impatient for something to surprise and delight (or at least unsettle) me.

These loosely-connected tales of these kids don't entirely line up in time - is this a post-apocalyptic world, or just a bunch of kids with more imagination and less interesting lives?

Have you ever heard Louis CK's bit on the tomato story? (Here is 12 minutes of pure joy for you - you're welcome: [http://m.youtube.com/watch?v=X0IV\\_ZB9CDs](http://m.youtube.com/watch?v=X0IV_ZB9CDs)) This feels like the meandering storytelling approach - and I don't have the patience to wait for Dalyrumple to come back around to the point.

I've got a lot of other comics to read - books I'm looking forward to a lot more than this. Sorry Keith, I swear I'll try another someday.

I am a Shallow Comics Reader. Hear my attention span pop.

Here's one great page from that book though:

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## Jessica says

### Actual Rating: 2.5

I felt sort of "meh" about this work.

Let's start off with its appeal factors:

**Visualization.** Wrenchies has this distinct drawing style, that you will either love or hate, added with the underlying grotesque layer. It is not a pretty world (growing up never is) and the ambiguous themes that are presented throughout the book matches the drawing style.

**Themes.** There's a lot going on in the world of the Wrenchies. There always is on the edge of adulthood and adolescence, especially knowing that you will go crazy if you grow up would not sit well with anyone. There's also the issues of fitting in, expressing yourself, and ultimately, how some people never find that

element of “i was meant for something more intangible” and can become self-destructive, setting off a chain of events that could potentially effect people outside of just “I.” There are friendships, relationships, other-worldly beings that could represent a myriad of psychological or philosophical discussions. This graphic novel had the potential to read a wide audience. The result:

Let's delve into why it did not work:

The book was a labyrinth.

No. I didn't! Reading this book was FRUSTRATING. I do not mind flashbacks, I do not mind sitting through a book going 'I'm so lost' a bazillion times, to be mind blown when it comes together. I appreciate an author who throws in a 'plot twist' or has us in suspense and reveals a storyline out of our wildest imagination. This book's set up---was misleading, and frankly a chore---because it was a mish-mash of a premise, world-building, character-building, that somehow “sorts itself out” through Hollis's final choice.

I do not mind beginning flashbacks, set-ups, etc. Yet, I do mind when there seemed to be no organized link to when this ‘all happened’ or a murky explanation about how this world exists and why it is spilling out ‘into reality.’ It was a mind-bend but definitely not in a good way. I don't mind working for a book, I do not mind furiously searching to see, if I'm the odd duck, and I'm just not getting it. I'm just telling myself:

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**Jesse (JesseTheReader) says**

(more of a 2.5)

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