



The Unwritten: Tommy Taylor and the Ship That Sank Twice

Mike Carey , Peter Gross (Illustrations) , Yuko Shimizu (Illustrator)

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This exciting, original graphic novel explores the world of the Tommy Taylor novels in a visceral and direct way and is a great entry point for new readers.

Twenty-five years ago Tom's father, Wilson Taylor, devised his subversive literary masterpiece. Now the blueprint of how a father gave his son vast power in order to accomplish a greater scheme is revealed. Partly told through Wilson's own journal entries, juxtaposed with Tommy's swashbuckling deep sea adventures with his trusty companions Peter and Sue, the story is at once a prequel and a parallel story to the ongoing series.

The Unwritten: Tommy Taylor and the Ship That Sank Twice Details

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Author : Mike Carey , Peter Gross (Illustrations) , Yuko Shimizu (Illustrator)

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Devann says

Why on earth is THIS the side story, but that stupid Fables crap made it into the 'main' storyline somehow???

Anyway, this was pretty interesting, actually more interesting than a lot of the later volumes of the main series, but whatever it's not like I'm bitter or anything --; The stuff from Tom's early life and Wilson's journals was really great and WOULD HAVE BEEN GREAT IN THE MAIN SERIES. [ahem] Sorry. The part that was Tommy's origin story was interesting but honestly I could have done with a little bit less of that and a bit more of the 'real' world. But it was still a very interesting read and actually filled in a few things that they never got to in the main series so I'm glad I ended up reading it.

Eoghann Irving says

This is a difficult story to review. Like the comic book series that it has spun off from, Tommy Taylor and the Ship That Sank Twice is in part about the acts of writing and creating. In this stand alone tale we get to know the origins of both Tom Taylor and Tommy Taylor. Biological origins in one case and literary origins in the other.

And I'm guessing that those of you who haven't read any of The Unwritten really won't have the faintest idea what I'm talking about by this stage.

Suffice to say there are two intertwined stories in this book. One is a Harry Potteresque story of a young Tommy Taylor and his earliest years. The other is the story of an author's carefully planned and staged campaign to write the book and release it on the day his son Tom Taylor is born. And the reason for doing this cannot really be understood without having read the comics that proceed this graphic novel. Though I think it's safe to say that if you went on from reading this to the first volume of the comics everything would fall into place nicely.

The author and artist team from the comics handle graphic novel so it's very much a continuation and expansion of what they have already created. Visually its wonderfully done with two different styles presenting the two stories and their radically different tones.

While Tommy Taylor's story is quite openly a pastiche of Harry Potter and similar works, it also has enough depth to it to stand on its own as an enjoyable tale the second story of the creation of that tale gives even greater richness to the whole thing.

I'd call this one a must read. The only question is whether you should read volume 1 of The Unwritten first.

Megan says

2.5? Meh? I've been excited about this series for a while. The artwork is really pretty, and I like the idea that it's based on HP kind of, but for me it was like a strange extra-magicky rip-off of HP ideas. I'll try another

one in the series since this was a “prologue” story.

Teresa says

Interesting and fun (especially in the beginning) for those reading "The Unwritten" series, as it sets out the origins of the Tommy Taylor story as Owen Taylor is writing it, his reason being that the "boy wizard character" is a powerful archetype right now -- so powerful this series never has to name its inspiration. I especially liked the references to other iconic fantasy worlds, such as Narnia and Middle-earth, as Owen tries to find his way to the beginning of his own fictional world. The fun dissipated a little bit for me near the end with the intentional too-many analogies to the Harry Potter phenomenon, but really it was fine, as that's part of the point.

The two different styles of illustration for the two stories in this volume are extremely well done.

Ahmed Jadaa says

This was really boring and I could not continue it

Eric says

The series in general, but this book especially, brings back fond memories of immersing myself in Narnia as a kid. Mike Carey is some kind of genius, and Peter Gross is quiet talented too. I'm liking this almost as much as I liked Lucifer, which is really saying something. I hope they've collaborated more so I have something to read after these next few books.

Derek says

Thoroughly, thoroughly enjoyed this. As is the case for all Tommy Taylor stories I've read. This is especially brilliant for it tells the origin stort of Tommy, both Wilson's son and the eponymous wizard boy character. What's surprisingly good about the Tommy Taylor books is there's that hint of the familiar, but it's written so expertly that you don't dwell on your own contempt. You go with he flow. For that's all there's to these books, the flow...

Ashley says

I am so unbelievably glad that this particular volume of this series exists. Like, it wasn't *necessary* that Carey and Gross write it, and you don't HAVE to read it if you're making your way through the series, but oh man, you're missing out if you don't!

So this graphic novel--which, unlike the rest of *The Unwritten*, was released as one trade paperback, no

individual issues--is two things.

First, it's the story of how Wilson Taylor came to create both his son and his first novel, *Tommy Taylor and the Ship That Sank Twice*, which you'll notice has the same title as this lovely piece of work I'm reviewing. Those two things, Tom/Tommy and the Tommy Taylor series, are inextricably related because of what Wilson Taylor did. The insight into the themes and actions of the main series is not only fun, but helpful in unraveling what's already passed there, and what's to come. This book isn't in the main chronology of the series, presumably because it's such a side trip, but if so, it's one worth taking.

And second, it's the actual full first story of Tommy Taylor, the one published in-universe in novel form. The first of fourteen books in the Tommy Taylor series. Except, we get it in graphic novel form, sandwiched in between flashbacks to Wilson Taylor's life as he's writing it, and dealing with new fatherhood.

What's genius about this is that it works on multiple levels. I'm always saying how much I love stories within stories, and often find myself wishing that in-universe fiction was available for me to actually read (i.e. the Misery books in *Misery*, the Simon Snow books from *Fangirl*). So that we actually get to do that is super awesome (the Tommy Taylor excerpts from previous issues were always highlights for me). Also, reading the story, it becomes clear how and why Wilson Taylor designed the series very purposefully to tap into certain things in the reading public's Jungian subconscious (i.e. Leviathan). The story is an extremely familiar one, very much on purpose, but originality was never the point. Events from past issues make a lot more sense in the light of this story. And finally, reading just this first story makes it clear how tightly our hero Tom is tied to his fictional counterpart, Tommy, which definitely has implications for the series going forward.

The art is gorgeous, as per the usual for this series, but they really stepped it up a notch for this one. The Tommy Taylor parts were much dreamier, and had a softer look to them, a little bit more of a duller color palette. The whole time I was reading, I was simultaneously happy to be reading, and wishing very hard that they would write the rest of the thirteen books as well, so I could read the whole story. It's very sad that this will never happen. I'll have to settle for the ending of the main series, and hope we also get clued in to Tommy's fate as well.

I can't believe I'm almost done with this series!

Lauren says

4.5

Electronic ARC provided by NetGalley.

The graphic novel falls outside of the main Unwritten storyline, filling in some of the backstory on Wilson Taylor's initial creation of Tommy, as well as the plot of the first Tommy Taylor novel. This is a standalone story, but I think that aspects of it would be difficult to understand without having read the previous volumes of *The Unwritten*. A new reader might find themselves rather lost, while fans of the comic will most likely enjoy this volume just as much as those in the normal continuity.

The writing here is wonderful as always. Carey switches back and forth between the origin stories of the fictional and the not quite as fictional Tommy Taylors, giving us a more cohesive view of how this all began.

It's also fun to finally see more of the novels that form such a central part of The Unwritten. The art in this volume is absolutely beautiful, and would make the volume well worth looking at even if the story were not as engaging. Luckily, both story and art are strong. I would recommend this book to anyone who has enjoyed The Unwritten so far.

Mary Anne says

Fun graphic novel with hints of old favourites like Harry Potter to satisfy a craving for story.

Morgan says

I wasn't really impressed with this one. I get why the story had to be told, but I thought it would have worked better as a one-shot issue rather than a short graphic novel. I wasn't a fan of the art changes either. Some times the art was okay, but other times (most at the end) it felt sloppy. I do like the fact this let us explore the Harry Potter copycat world, yet I know it's all intentional, the plot was too much like Harry Potter nothing seemed to surprise or wow me. Overall I felt like this GN wasn't need, but I did enjoy it somewhat.

matt says

Excellent storytelling with a deft handling of reality merging with a fantasy world. This is the first book I've read of the series, and I plan to read more - but I sincerely hope the other volumes have more confident artists. The art here looks half formed and sloppy, it's a shame that it does not match the strength of the writing.

Anne says

I almost didn't read this.

Because who cares about the *origin story* of a fictious character another fictious character is named after, right?

Ok, but that's *not* what this is. I mean, it *is*, but there's waaaay more to it!

This is Tom's origin story, told alongside the story of the boy wizard Tommy that Wilson Taylor was writing at the time.

AND IT IS SO FREAKING COOL!

Wilson is working his voodoo, spinning his web tighter around Tom while he's still in Sue's womb so that by the time he's born the lines between fantasy and reality are irrevocably blurred. Wilson's diary entries don't endear him to the reader, but I can't help wondering if he's not as horrible as it appears on the surface. Yes,

he's undoubtedly a narcissistic douchebag, but there's this underlying feeling that he truly thinks he's doing this for some Greater Good.

Honestly, I was only reading it to find out how Wilson *'created'* Tom, but I ended up getting totally sucked into Tommy Taylor's story, as well. It was actually a pretty fantastic tale that I secretly wish was a real book so I could pretend to check it out for my kids. Just sayin'...

If you're thinking about skipping this and going straight to volume 8, you can absolutely do that. It's not strictly a necessity.

But.

This is a really cool story that I wouldn't recommend you pass up.

Sesana says

Basically two stories in one. On one hand, Wilson Taylor's process as he started the process of molding his son into a fictional character. And while it's interesting to see his actual thought processes, and see that he really was every bit as cold as he had seemed, it isn't really new information. The Wilson Taylor scenes alternate with what's basically a compressed version of the first Tommy Taylor book. Which is a really fun read, actually. This would be a really good children's fantasy, and it was nice to finally get some background on the characters that have had such an impact on the readers.

Cat Bascle says

To what extent does fiction influence reality? In the world of the graphic novel series *The Unwritten*, created by Mike Carey and Peter Gross, the magic of fiction is quite real, and there are people determined to tap into it. *Tommy Taylor and the Ship That Sank Twice* is a prequel to the main series, which has been on my list of series to get around to for years. As such, I only know the basic premise; Tom Taylor is the adult son of an author who based his most famous work on young Tom. This has somehow given Tom the ability to travel to fictional worlds. This volume explores the lengths that Wilson Taylor went to in order to set up these events.

The story of the volume is told in journal entries written by Wilson during Tom's gestation and the first year of his life interspersed with scenes from the first book of the Tommy Taylor series that will make both Wilson and Tom household names. The two narratives are readily distinguished from each other by the differences in the coloring and inking style, which both helps readers shift between the two interweaving stories with ease and communicates the differences in tone between the two beautifully. The Tommy Taylor scenes will feel achingly familiar to fantasy fans, which is, of course, the point. Wilson is trying to create something that will hook into current cultural trends and draw power from them. The journals are the real story. As a newcomer to *The Unwritten*, I don't know what Wilson's goal is in creating a real child and a fictional character at the same time and welding the identities of the two so closely together, but it is fascinating to witness the obsessive attention to detail it requires, as well as the cold-heartedness. The question of "Why?" hangs over everything. Readers of the main series may already know the answer, but

newcomers are pulled forward by it.

Presumably, the volume had two goals: to answer questions fans of the series had about Wilson Taylor and to act as an entry-point for people who are on the fence about picking up the main series. Reporting from the latter camp, I can say that *The Unwritten: Tommy Taylor and the Ship That Sank Twice* has certainly intrigued me to find out more while still being a satisfying read all on its own. I would recommend it to anyone interested in the nature of fiction or fantasy fans willing to try out a self-aware examination of the genre.
