



The Case of Charles Dexter Ward

I.N.J. Culbard, H.P. Lovecraft, CDW (Editor)

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Providence, Rhode Island, 1928. A dangerous inmate disappears from a private hospital for the insane, his method of escape baffling the authorities. Only the patient's final visitor, family physician Dr. Marinus Bicknell Willett holds the key to unlocking the case of Charles Dexter Ward.

The Case of Charles Dexter Ward Details

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From Reader Review The Case of Charles Dexter Ward for online ebook

Julia Pillard says

This book was recommended to me by my husband who, in general, reads more graphic novels than I do. It is a beautifully done adaptation of the Lovecraft story into graphic novel form. The tale has its twists and turns, and the ending certainly took me by surprise. I loved the way the artist chose to frame much of the story as flashes of memory and characters telling stories to each other. The result is that you never have all the pieces: each character knows different things, but rarely shares the information with others. Dr. Willett, the character who you follow through most of the story, is sympathetic and smart. (view spoiler) All around a very enjoyable read.

Fishface says

A fun graphic-novel version of one of the HPL stories I keep not getting around to. There were more than a few jarring anachronisms in the dialogue -- "alright" instead of "all right," "till" instead of "til," no awareness of the subjunctive -- but otherwise the story was vintage HPL.

S.M.M. Lindström says

Opening at a mental hospital, we are presented an empty room full of strange blue liquid and a window ajar. The room's occupant, a young man by the name of Charles Dexter Ward, is missing. His last visitor - the family doctor - might know what happened to him, but doesn't seem to want to talk too much. As the doctor is being interrogated we, the readers, are treated to the true story of what happened to Charles Dexter Ward; a sad tale of obsession and dark magic.

Once more, I. N. J. Culbard let's the art do most of the talking, and that is great! I've always enjoyed the mystery of Charles Dexter Ward's story, and I feel the mystery and the characters' emotions about said mystery come across excellently with the added artwork. The only downside was that the binding of this book came apart after only one reading, which lost it one star.

Nicholas Whyte says

<https://nwhyte.livejournal.com/3008853.html>

I got this having hugely enjoyed Culbard's graphic novel version of At the Mountains of Madness a few years ago. I'm sorry to say that this didn't work for me so well; it's not as visual a story, and the central characters (Charles Dexter Ward, the narrator Willett and the ancient necromancer Curwen) are not especially interesting characters. It's interesting that Lovecraft himself thought this was not one of his best efforts, and the original story remained unpublished until 1941, several years after he had died.

Keith says

Precisely as described on the tin. Culbard, as in the rest of the Lovecraft series, does a solid job illustrating while staying true (as far as I can remember) to the original. At the same time, there's nothing really special or outstanding about this one, nor are there any chapter breaks or big set-piece layout pages: the story just chugs along to its inevitable conclusion—though perhaps it counts as a twist to those who are not as thoroughly versed in the Mythos. So, good, solid, enjoyable (if you like this sort of thing), but neither brilliant nor particularly horrifying. Which, admittedly, is a high bar at present.

Octavi says

Buena adaptación!

Alex Panagiotopoulos says

The story is good old quality lovecraftian horror, i didn't expect anything else. But the design by Culbard doesn't live up to it, its poorly made for a strong and vicious supernatural script and too cartoony.

2/5 stars only becuase it involves the master of horror.

Frédéric says

Adapting a novel in comic book form is a hard task indeed. Adapting a Lovecraft novel is probably even more difficult. Especially "Dexter Ward" where talking heads would use half of the space available. Lovecraft's style is all about *suggestion*. Hard to show in full light what's hinted at in a terrified whisper... Culbard's adaptation of "At the mountain of madness" was enjoyable if not as terrifying as it should have been. The vast antarctic landscapes were apparently more suited for his simple/clear style (that is not a negative critic) than New England, even if I think it rather missed the development of an ominous atmosphere. In "Dexter Ward" I don't even think he was at its best. Talking heads after talking heads, simplistic (here, that is negative) backgrounds and slow pacing just don't convey the threatening settings that should be at the very heart of any Lovecraft adaptation.

Raúl San Martín Rodríguez says

No sé en qué fecha se habrá escrito este cuento, pero sin duda tiene claras vinculaciones con el vampirismo y los zombis (un adelanto increíble de época). En todo caso, me recordó mucho a las Montañas de la Locura, especialmente por la vinculación que existe entre los portales que llevan a esos universos desconocidos y la locura de los protagonistas.

Ahora, tengo una duda: cuando Lovecraft se refiere a las esferas, lo hace emulando otros universos? Creo

que sí.

Stephen King recoge todo esto en la torre oscura, en especialmente en el vacío (negro) que hay entre los mundos (universos) y que en IT puede llamarse fuegos fatuos, o bien, lo que “hay” en el extratransito; pero su creador, no fue otro que PHL.

Excelente.

Como anécdota, creo que el monstruo que aparece en la casa, sería el mismo que sigue al Ka Tet disuelto bajo el castillo del Rey Carmesí, dibujo que por lo demás está bien detallado en la ultima edición de la Torre Oscura VII.

The_Mad_Swede says

As I mention in my review from last autumn of I. N. J. Culbard's adaptation of H. P. Lovecraft's *Shadow Out of Time*, his interpretations of Lovecraft into comics are not my first ones, but I am willing to argue that his visual subtlety, which I find is exquisitely suited to the material, places him at the top of the line. This adaptation of Lovecraft's *The Case of Charles Dexter Ward* (which is one of my favourite Lovecraft stories thus far) definitely serves as further proof of this.

I certainly hope to track down a copy of Culbard's adaptation of *At the Mountain of Madness* at some point in the future, because what I have seen up until now makes me really want to see his interpretation of that story.

Randolph says

Pretty much a straight forward telling of The Case of Charles Dexter Ward which is refreshing since everyone else seems to believe they can improve things by messing with or updating Lovecraft's stories for their graphic novels. Nice artwork to go with the story and no padding. The GN actually makes the story easier to follow than the Lovecraft original since the transition of Ward/Curwen is kind of sketchy in the story when you read it for the first time.

If you like this one I can also recommend At the Mountains of Madness: A Graphic Novel.

Baal Of says

Atmospheric, with the usual coyness around the exact nature of events and beings, this story has some very nice touches, especially the creatures trapped in the underground cells, discovered by Willet. Has an early example of the standard horror trope of the protagonist losing his light source, in this case directly into the maw of one of the aforementioned creatures. This one is slow-moving at some points, but has a good creepiness factor. Downside is that it is marred by some noxiously racist sentiments in the first couple chapters.

Corinna Bechko says

Really nice and spooky adaptation of the wonderful Lovecraft tale. Translating Lovecraft into images as well

as words is no easy task, but I.N.J. Culbard does a stellar job allowing the art to carry what could become an overly wordy re-telling in less capable hands.

Sara says

The jury is still out on whether I will one day count myself among H.P. Lovecraft's legion of fans. I'm certainly intrigued with his whole ancient secrets and monsters rising from the dawn of time to devour the earth thing. I'm less sure that I'm on board with the whole "oh my god it's a giant lizard monster! the horror!!"

I've tried Lovecraft before on audio book and it was definitely fun. There's an overdramatic feel to his stories like you can almost hear him saying "isn't this scary!! ohhhhhh we're in a dark tunnel!!! ohhhh monsterrrrssss!" while you read. It's a little corny is I guess what I'm getting at, but there's something kind of fun in that. Like going through an old fashioned carnival haunted house.

But I can't help but be intrigued by his love of ancient, dark magic and evil beings from beyond the dawn of time, lost cities that were lost for a reason and never meant to be found, stories of men who meddle with deep, dark magic that doesn't just corrupt the soul, it takes it over. That's some dark stuff and the man does know how to set a mood when he wants to.

So this time around I went the graphic novel route after running across *The Case of Charles Dexter Ward: A Graphic Novel* randomly in the stacks one day. I figured maybe if I could more easily visualize what I was reading it might have more of an impact.

Well yes and no.

We are introduced to the titular Charles Dexter Ward through family friend and doctor, Dr. Willet, who has been called upon by Charles' parents to help deal with the strange mood that has befallen their son. He has lost all ambition and desire for anything in life except for a strange project that has to do with a ill reputed ancestor of dubious history who was rumored to deal in witchcraft and other nefarious things not of this world. Charles has become obsessed with the dead man's work and determined to discover his secrets.

Willet does his best but is unable to determine what is driving Charles to his increasingly strange behavior and he is increasingly troubled by a series of strange letters Charles exchanges and the sudden appearance of a stranger who seems to have a particular hold of Charles.

Eventually Willet, who finally abandons practical investigation and embraces the darker secret world Charles has plunged into, is able to work out what is going on but will it be enough to free Charles in time?

Its a solid story built on a frightening and dark take of ancient, evil magic and mythology. Its kind of impossible not to get goosebumps particularly when Willet stumbles into the secret laboratory where Charles has been conducting obscene, ungodly experiments.

The artwork isn't terrific which I'm sure contributes to the problems I was having. I get the sense that these "literary" graphic novels kind of get churned out en masse in an effort to "get teens to read books!" It does have its moments, particularly when Willet starts to stumble upon the dark deeds being committed in Charles' secret laboratory. The artist does a pretty good job of visualizing these very ancient magic spells and

the creatures they produce. But there's a tendency for many of the characters to bear such a strikingly resemblance to each other that I spent more time working out who was who then I did understanding the plot. I'll admit that similarities in appearance are kind of the point here but there were points when enough was enough and I just needed to know who was talking!

The story itself meanders a bit. Again probably because we're dealing with a relatively large cast of players, some in flashback, so it's hard to work out who's the real center of the story. It takes the supporting players a loooonnnnnngggg time to work out what Charles is up to and I get it, this is supposed to be a mystery to some degree but it's not so much a tension builder as it is boring filler till the climax finally arrives.

In terms of drama it's worth noting this is an old story that doesn't hold up as well as some other books of its time. We're all a little jaded about the whole "creatures from the dawn of time" stuff and really the story is strongest when it alludes to the dark and forbidden magic that Charles and his friends dabble in. Lovecraft really nails the spell craft and the malevolence of the people using it.

All in all this was worth my time even if it didn't really get me any closer to deciding if I'm a Lovecraft fangirl.

Andrew says

I have always enjoyed reading H P Lovecraft although I will admit at times it can be a bit dry and a bit of a challenge. So when I stumbled across this graphic novel I jumped at it - plus thanks to Page45 in Nottingham I now have a signed copy of it.

Anyway the graphics are rather stylised - but to be honest considering the style of the writing (it does try to keep as faithful to the original text as possible) the artwork lends the right air to it.

The so what can I say - well it's really the story in image format - ok I will explain - some graphic novels you can tell the story has been writing for the image - it maximises the impact of the events, it is very physical and it's very obvious - however this was certainly not the case (the story was 1927 which the graphic novel was 2012) so the images have been tailored around the text and it really shows what careful and considerate work has been put in to it.

The book to me is a compliment to the original story which although is not the most famous is certainly well known (the idea as well as the incantations have been used in the works of others such as those of Brian Lumley) and I feel if you enjoyed the original this just heightens the experience.
