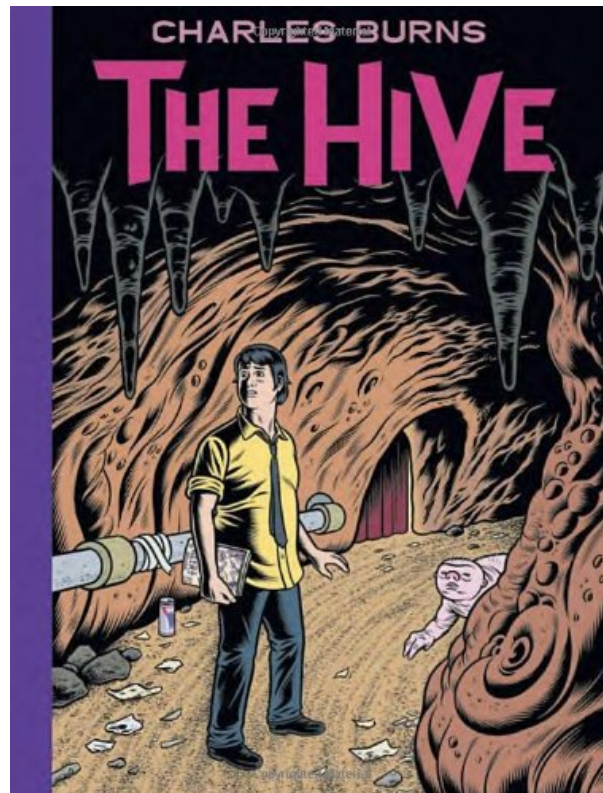
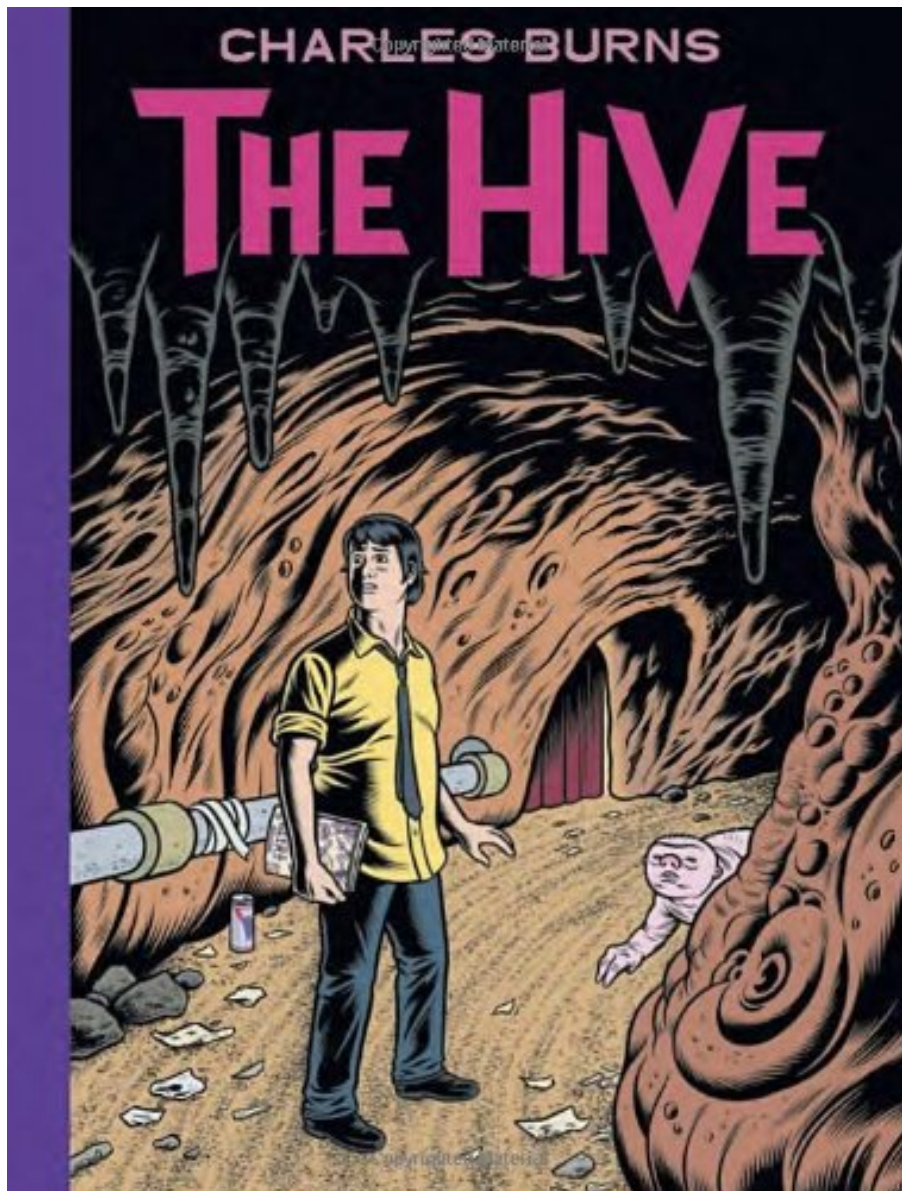


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From the creator of *Black Hole* ("The best graphic novel of the year." —Time; "Burns's masterwork." —The New York Times Book Review), the second part of a new epic masterpiece of graphic horror in brilliant, vivid color.

Much has happened since we last saw Doug, the Tintin-like hero from *X'ed Out*. Confessing his past to an unidentified woman, Doug struggles to recall the mysterious incident that left his life shattered, an incident that may have involved his disturbed and now-absent girlfriend, Sarah, and her menacing ex-boyfriend.

Doug warily seeks answers in a nightmarish alternate world that is a distorted mirror of our own, where he is a lowly employee that carts supplies around the Hive. The second part of Charles Burns's riveting trilogy, this graphic narrative will delight and surpass the expectations of his fans.

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- Published on: 2012-10-09
- Released on: 2012-10-09
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 11.90" h x .56" w x 9.10" l, 1.34 pounds
- Binding: Hardcover
- 56 pages

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Most helpful customer reviews

19 of 19 people found the following review helpful.

Amazing. Worthy successor.

By Ka5par Hau53r

This is the 2nd part of a trilogy that begins with 2010's *X'ed Out*, so you'll want to read that as well. The narrative is fragmentary enough that I suppose you could read this first if you wanted to.

I don't think I should describe the "story" for you, even if I could. Some very obvious themes, carried over from *X'ed Out*, are: alternate/parallel worlds, relationships, (body) horror, memory, image, father and son, pregnancy, opiates, and art. This work resonates with all kinds of other comics and movies and literature and art, but this is a powerful cohesive work unto itself.

Burns has been telling non-linear narratives since before *Black Hole*, but this is shaping up to be by far the most advanced yet. It would take a while to map out even the explicitly distinct time/reality frames that the story takes place across so far, and to trace all the resonant images and text that link multiple strands together in various more and less mysterious ways would take much longer.

This fragmentary approach might have something to do with Burns presenting this as a serialized trilogy... also, we're constantly shown comics within comics, comics within dream sequences?, photos (not actual photos) within comics, etc... Overall, just amazing use of images that you can't get out of your head, in a way that curls back and comments on itself many times over. As with *Black Hole*, Burns shows himself to be a master of the comics medium, and this trilogy looks to be in every way a worthy successor to *Black Hole*. That said, this is "super weird" and not for everybody. Highest recommendation to those interested in a surreal body horror, non-linear narrative, thoroughly postmodern, beautifully designed, hardcover comic book.

The only complaint I can imagine is (as with the first volume) the length of this book, at 56 pages. Not an issue for me, because this is the way Burns wanted to tell his story, and it freaking works. This is a work to revisit many times.

6 of 6 people found the following review helpful.

Hive mind

By Sam Quixote

Re-reading series books in an actual series rather than as they come out over the years is worth it - at least for the good ones, which happily includes this title. I never noticed before but the cover shows Doug older and fatter, looking like he's got some kind of office job, in contrast to the Doug that we left in the last book where he was wandering about as a younger man in his dad's dressing gown in a haze with a bandaged head.

Well, shall we? Deeper and deeper into the rabbit hole we go...

Doug is still deeply troubled that the love of his life Sarah is no longer with him, though we still don't know what happened to her. Time has moved on and his life has changed but he's been unable to move on. He talks to a new woman - a therapist, a friend? - about Sarah and his dying father, and it looks like he's become dependent upon booze and pills to cope. Elsewhere in the fantasy world, he's still the young Tintin lookalike Nitnit but he's now working in the Hive alongside the lizardmen to supply the breeders with romance comics.

Images, scenes, phrases noticeably begin repeating immediately. The Japanese romance comic that opens the book re-tells the story of how Doug met Sarah in the first book, and then later we discover Sarah loved to read old romance comics that Doug bought her at a flea market. In each version of the stories Doug is telling, romance comics play a part, and, mirroring this series and his own life, there are issues missing in between the comics Sarah is reading so she's not getting the whole story. The comics seem to be the key to Doug's story AND comics are how we'll find out Doug's full story. Layer upon layer of meta detail!

The pig foetus reappears though this time it's coming out of Sarah's stomach in a self-inflicted C-section, and the Tintin-esque eggs make another appearance. Small clues like the disembodied voice of Sarah's psychotic ex threatening to murder them both and the buzzer through which he's speaking gushing blood hints that perhaps Sarah was killed by him. Or maybe he killed Doug and all of this is purgatory where Doug's soul is trying to come to peace with his strange life before moving on - is that what this fantasy world is? Charles Burns refuses to give us solid answers and keeps us guessing.

For the most part this book is a bit more straightforward than the first though an uneasy sense of despair continues to hang over proceedings. We see the highs of Doug and Sarah's relationship and his performance art as his stage persona Nitnit is becoming well-received. Burns spends more time with Doug and his dying father, exploring his father's past and how he became such a beaten man. It's odd how we haven't seen Doug's mother yet and that Burns seems to be moulding Doug into his father's image ever so slowly.

The Hive itself has biological-looking walls, fleshy sides that produce eggs, so maybe this is Doug's subconscious hinting still further at the mystery at the centre of this all: Sarah and a baby they were going to have? There's a scene earlier when Sarah took some photos of Doug that he hated because he wasn't wearing his Nitnit mask (his protection or real self?) - will we finally understand what's happening to Doug when he discards the Nitnit persona that "he created" in order to hide from reality?

This really is a very rewarding comic to revisit now that it's complete. With the way so much of the story repeats on itself throughout The Hive, it feels like it's building up momentum and the truth is about to come out. It's an entrancing mystery told expertly by Burns and drawn in an utterly beautiful way - a masterclass in experimental fiction, challenging comics, and imaginative storytelling. Will Doug find the missing issues he needs to make sense of it all - and what part does the Sugar Skull play? Enough questions - onto the final book and (hopefully) the answers!

5 of 5 people found the following review helpful.

Book 2 of the X'ed Out series

By Yakov Hadash

Charles Burns is probably best known for his Black Hole series which remains the best starting point for exploring his works. Since then he has started a new trilogy which starts with X'ed Out and continues with this book (book 2 in the series). Supposedly, there will be only one more entry in the series. Burns has spent his career perfecting his artwork and this book presents the best example of his composition, linework, and inking abilities, combined with a coloring technique that is first being presented in this series (his previous work was in black and white). The story content is focused on an exaggerated version of teenage misery, combined with a strange and creepy fantasy life that seems to be leaking out into the real world. In that sense it is very much of a piece with Black Hole. Many questions are asked, few are answered; and I wouldn't expect everything to be sewn up neatly in the conclusion, either. The binding, paper, and printing are extraordinary in this series, displaying Burns's superb attention to detail in every aspect of this series. Highly recommended.

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