

Mage and the Endless Unknown

SJ Miller

Iron Circus Comics (Jun 20, 2023)

Hardcover \$15.00 (160pp)

978-1-63899-119-9

A young mage battles horrific monsters in the graphic novel *Mage and the Endless Unknown*.

In an idyllic scene, a child wakes and uses their magic to grow flowers. But a monster comes from the sky and swallows them—the first of many trials they'll face. There are friends to be found, however, and working with them, Mage manages to overcome an array of challenges and better the world—at a cost.

Told over a series of single-panel pages, the story is wordless except for a few key moments. This puts a heavy responsibility on the art, which generates excitement with its flair and a pervading sense of danger. From Mage's first encounter with magic, which costs them an arm, it's clear that the stakes are high; the cartoon style in which the main characters are rendered is not indicative of the book's tone. Mage's realm is beautiful, but on their adventures, they encounters corpses suspended on hooks, bird-wizards who remove a heart from someone's chest, and other gory terrors; the extreme contrasts heighten the tension of the story.

Each foe is some combination of fantastic, scary, and disgusting, but they are also imaginative visual treats, as are the book's landscapes and settings. Although the story at first seems to be a simple good versus evil scenario, its turns are unpredictable.

Unusual and unforgettable, *Mage and the Endless Unknown* is an immersive graphic novel covering a child's magical adventures.

PETER DABBENE (July / August 2023)

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