

## Shadow Hills

**Sean Ford**

Secret Acres (Oct 10, 2023)

Softcover \$23.95 (224pp)

979-898558634-3

Sean Ford's haunting graphic novel *Shadow Hills* focuses on a fantastical environment-versus-economics conflict.

Sleepy, remote Shadow Hills, with its vast, barren landscapes, doesn't have much going for it beyond its shale reserves. Indeed, drilling is the mainstay of the local economy. When citizens start being covered by a mysterious, aggressive black liquid, the townspeople spring into action.

Even before the ooze, Shadow Hill residents led often bleak lives, though circumstances kept many from leaving town. Their intriguing backstories are shared throughout. Among them are twin sisters Anne and Dana; Dana disappeared underground with a boy years before and hasn't aged since. She discovers the origin of the black substance; this, along with weird mushrooms and Anne's questionable choice, leads the book toward its surprise conclusion.

There's a striking environmental warning herein: though fracking benefits some Shadow Hills residents, it carries serious consequences for all. The book's muted hues enhance this desolate setting, making people's desperation palpable.

In the immersive graphic novel *Shadow Hills*, small-town denizens fight against the black ooze that threatens to destroy their home.

PETER DABBENE (November / December 2023)

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