

# Nightmares Can Come True

By Robert Butterfield

Ligotti, Thomas. *The Nightmare Factory*. New York: HarperCollins-Fox Atomic Comics, 2007. Comic strip 1 v. (unpaged).

In the 1990s, a sizeable portion of Clive Barker's early short fiction came out in graphic novel format. A series of well-executed volumes entitled *Tapping the Vein* was a treat for Barker fans, and it made his work available to those who were previously unfamiliar with his writing. Now, Fox Atomic Comics has published a similarly-themed tome featuring four of the works of virtuoso horror writer Thomas Ligotti. This illustrated work bears the name of one of Ligotti's most popular short fiction collections, *The Nightmare Factory*.

*The Nightmare Factory* opens with one of Ligotti's more popular stories, "The Last Feast of Harlequin." Instead of trying to encapsulate the plot of the tale in my own inadequate manner, I would like to allow Mr. Ligotti to summarize the tale, by utilizing a brief excerpt from his introduction:

In many ways, "The Last Feast of Harlequin" has all the earmarks of a pastiche of H.P. Lovecraft...a protagonist who is a man of science, an architecturally bizarre town that is off the beaten track, a cult that practices cryptic rituals, and supremely, a monster... But a deviation from the Lovecraftian creeps into "The Last Feast of Harlequin" in its focus on the narrator's psychology.

Those who are afraid of clowns be forewarned. This is a classic horror tale (with a twist), and the art of Colleen Doran blends with the text adaptation by Stuart Moore to bring the tale to life. I am familiar with Ligotti's prose original, and I must admit that the way I pictured the story in my mind's eye was not quite what I saw on the page here, but in the end I found their rendering of the tale quite satisfying. And this is just the first adaptation in the series. Another hugely popular Ligotti tale, "Dr. Locrian's Asylum," a tale melding insanity and supernatural horror is also featured here, along with fan favorites "Teatro Grottesco" and "Dream of a Mannikin." Of the former, Ligotti states in his introduction that at the heart of this tale lies anxiety, while of the latter he expresses that he has a particular fondness for marionettes and manikins.

The artwork throughout the book—by Doran, Ben Templesmith, Ted McKeever and Michael Gaydos—as well as the text adaptations by Moore and Joe Harris, are first-rate, although with such a variance of styles, some readers may appreciate some artistic approaches to Ligotti's work more than others. The cover art by Ashley Wood is also very fine.

All in all, this is an exceptional attempt to graphically interpret the literary work of one of the most revered horror authors on the planet, and a treat for both current Ligotti enthusiasts and those as yet unfamiliar with his work.

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