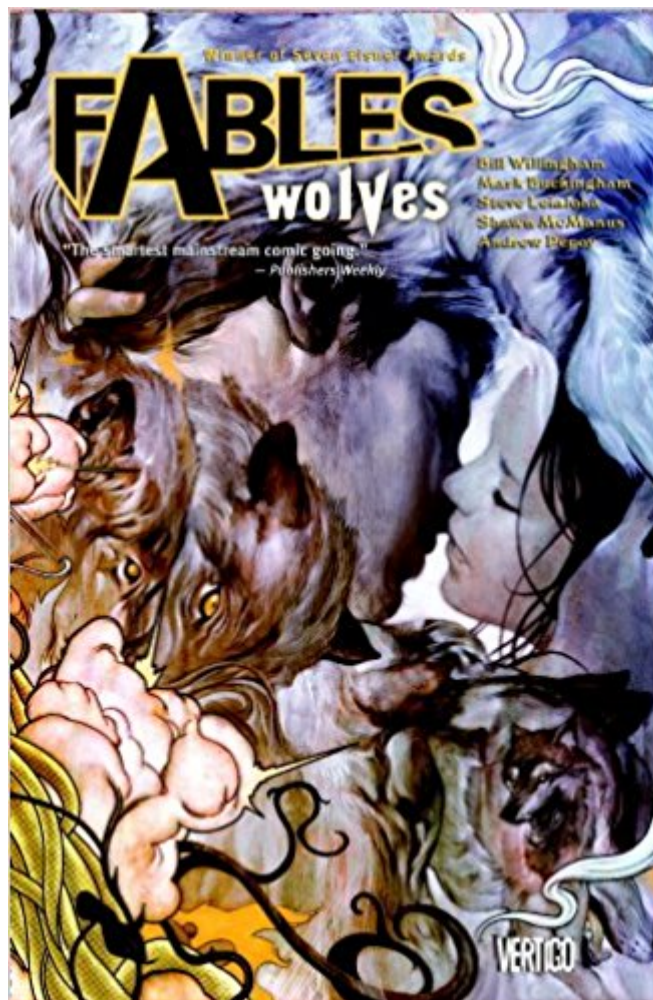


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Fables Vol. 8: Wolves



Synopsis

Collecting issues #48-51 of writer and creator Bill Willingham's award-winning Vertigo series, **WOLVES** also includes newly-created maps of Fabletown and the Homelands illustrated by Willingham and, as a special bonus, Willingham's complete script to the double-sized issue #50.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Fabletown's ex-sheriff Bigby Wolf and ex-deputy mayor (and power behind King Cole's former mayoral throne) Snow White finally tie the knot in this arc from the series about the fairy-tale characters who walk among us (or, at least, New Yorkers). That can't happen before Mowgli finds missing, moping Bigby and the latter undertakes a reprisal mission against the Adversary. Those exploits give Mark Buckingham a lot to draw with the energetic elegance that has become a Fables hallmark and that Shawn McManus does his best to match in the related but freestanding short story, "Big and Small." Ray Olson

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I'm a big fan of the series so far and this installment didn't disappoint - except in one instance when the writer forced yet again his simple-minded political opinions. I wish he'd just stop trying to make these types of naive political statements on the real world. Arabs. Israel and its foreign politics. Willingham's black and white view of complex conflicts and casual racism in some instances have no place here, and shouldn't be shoved down the throats of characters we grew to love and admire. But I'm open-minded, I understand that humans are flawed, and that no one is forcing me to read these books, so I'm willing to sidestep these issues for the sake of the bigger picture. And yes, there

are flaws, but overall, it's an excellent story, with a refreshing take on fables we grew up reading and getting enchanted by.

I find myself growing increasingly impatient with the slow pace and heavy handed traditionalism of this series. When it began, it seemed as if Willingham had a clear idea of where the story was going. However, after the battle of Fabletown, the momentum seemed to come to a halt and it feels almost as if the series is attempting to kill time until someone gets an idea. A story that seemed fresh and innovative has, likewise, become stuck in ham-handed political analogies from the *Ærreal world* and curiously moribund gender politics. There are parts of this book that were very enjoyable (Mogli's struggle with the wolf pack, for instance), but I just don't have the patience to wade through an entire book for a handful of story.

Some minor SPOILERS, for Volume 8 and especially if you haven't so far read the preceding FABLES trades (and what's wrong with you that you haven't yet?). Fans of FABLES and, more pointedly, of Snow White and Bigby Wolf are in for some fine reading. Since Snow and Bigby happen to be two of my most favorite characters in this series, the issues collected here in FABLES Vol. 8: WOLVES were something I'd particularly looked forward to. And for those who'd been on pins and needles regarding what's up with Snow and Bigby and their love story and their cute but impossible kids, well, the title of the 50th issue, "Happily Ever After," whispers a clue. For those new to this remarkable, sometimes subversive comic book: Bill Willingham's modern-day twist is that the characters in all those classic fairy tales and stories from folklore and literature are alive and well and, having been driven out from their Homelands by the Adversary, are now hiding out in New York. Most of them live on a little residential street called Bullfinch (heh!), but those in the know call this community Fabletown. Those who can't pass for humans live on the Farm, Fabletown's isolated annex located in upstate New York. Some catching up: Back in *Fables Vol. 4: March of the Wooden Soldiers*, Fabletown managed to fend off an attempted invasion by the Adversary's army of wooden soldiers. This naturally still doesn't sit too well with Fabletown's new mayor, Prince Charming. Charming hungers for retaliation, and his plans involve a secret mission in the heart of the Adversary's Empire. Except that the only one qualified to pull off this special ops, Bigby Wolf, has vanished. Why Bigby took off is explained in *Fables Vol. 5: The Mean Seasons*. In this, Snow White, having given painful birth to seven cubs, is forced to relocate to the Farm, there to stay until the children learn to control their shapeshifting. What sucks is that their father, Bigby Wolf, is banned from ever setting foot on the Farm (Bigby was and is the Big Bad Wolf, so a lot of the

Farm's sentient animals are rightfully wary of him). Bigby, in a tiff, skedaddles for parts unknown. His kids have never seen him. So cut now to FABLES Vol. 8: WOLVES, this volume. Reprinting only issues #48-51, this is one of the shortest FABLES trades out there, but since it marks the return of Bigby Wolf, consider me assuaged. Issues #48 & 49 mostly intersperse Mowgli's sometimes harrowing year-long search for Bigby with goings-on at the Farm, and specifically with how the cubs are faring. All that is a set up for the big 50th issue, which treats us to Bigby's perilous mission in the Homelands, then a homecoming and a reunion. And the kids get to meet their dad for the first time, and there's a resolution to the whole Bigby-Wolf-shan't-be-in-the-Farm-like-ever! quandary. Finally, issue #51 focuses on Cinderella, one of Fabletown's most capable Tourists (Tourists, by the way, are Fabletown's agents sent out to the mundane world to keep tabs on fables living abroad). Cinderella undertakes a diplomatic assignment up the giant beanstalk and in the cloud kingdoms. Cinderella, who prefers a dash of skullduggery in her missions, really doesn't have a good time with this one. But the reader might. So I'm done talking up Bill Willingham (mostly 'cause it's getting hard coming up with new ways to praise the dude). I'll settle this time for saying only that the man can write like the dickens, and that his cast of fables makes up some of the most involving, three-dimensional characters I've ever read in comics. And that artists Mark Buckingham and Steve Leialoha continue to really bring Willingham's stories to life. And we all know that James Jean's covers are wicked cool. For the completist in you, this trade also offers a map of Fabletown and of the Farm, as well as the entire script to issue #50. And, oh, did the invisible seventh child ever find his dad? Well, yes.

This volume will please most fans of the series, being a gratifying read. Here we finally learn what happened with Bigby, and reach an acceptable conclusion to the long-running storyline of his and Snow White's love story. That being said, this is one of the shorter TBPs of the Fables line, and doesn't contain very many exciting or surprising elements (with the notable exception of Bigby's mission into the Homelands, which is actually one of the best sequences of the entire series). Neither Mowgli's quest to track down the ex-sheriff or Cinderella's work in the Cloud Kingdoms did much for me, just sort of dragging on, and containing only brief moments of glory. However, one good aspect of this volume is learning more about the development of Snow White's cubs. This is a group of characters that are just starting to capture individual traits and that should provide a great source of material in future stories. While the overlying feeling of this book is one of an interlude, with the primary focus being on wrapping up Snow and Bigby's tale, this volume does set the direction for the future of the series. With Fabletown, under the leadership of Prince Charming, gearing up for

the inevitable conflict with the Adversary, solidifying alliances and making preemptive strikes, the direction of the series promises to be one of grand conflict, and I can't wait to read it. As usual, the art contained within this volume is top-notch, especially the beautifully detailed inserts of the original cover art for the individual issues. Overall, while this isn't the best of the series, it's still great, and certainly cannot be missed.

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