



The Books of Magic, Volume 4: Transformations

John Ney Rieber , Peter Gross (Illustrator)

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Tim Hunter, teenaged sorcerer in training, turns 14, becomes a cat, finds himself transformed back to normal (with the addition of a magical tattoo) and encounters Death of the Endless in this latest Books of Magic collection.

The Books of Magic, Volume 4: Transformations Details

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From Reader Review The Books of Magic, Volume 4: Transformations for online ebook

Kirsten says

This is a good installment in the series. I do really love Molly, Tim's sort-of-girlfriend; she's so much more adult than Tim is! I would read a series about her just as happily. One thing that consistently throws me about this series, though, is the feeling that I've missed issues. Do the collections skip issues, or something? I still haven't figured out where Gwendolyn (the woman who takes care of Tim while his dad's in the hospital) came from. It's really confusing.

Ian Forsyth says

It's getting better. Goodbye barbatos, I don't really like that character, he reminds me too much of the invisibles in a bad trashy nineties way. This book was much more Sandman influenced, thus making it more cohesive and interesting.

Freya says

Review to come :)

M.i. says

The charm and the fact this reads like a Gaiman novel is what keeps me coming back to this series. Much credit goes to John Ney Rieber for the way he has told this story of a boy with so much potential that often struggles with that fact.

Moth Pfunk says

Slower paced collection than previous books, but welcome. The characters continue to grow, even Death from Gaiman's Sandman series came across quite charming and I normally dislike her.

Ravie13 says

I read book one a while back and found it interesting so this time at the library when I found Book 4 I thought "eh... why not". Obviously there's a lot I've missed but it's good that I just read the Sandman: Preludes and Nocturnes followed by Death: The High Cost of Living because I had some introductions to

John Constantine, Death, Dream and the universe in which they reside. Of them all - The Books of Magic is the best and most interesting though still hard to follow. (Maybe that has something to do with Books 3 & 4 that I skipped.)

Still ... who existed first? Timothy Hunter or Harry Potter? I didn't look at the publishing date but I'm guessing Timothy Hunter existed first and by god... what an eerie visual similarity. Were lawsuits involved?

Chris Westin says

A tiny bit disappointed by this collection because it started a whole batch of new story lines, but didn't finish any of them. The previous collections tended to have complete arcs in them. Oh, well, on to volume 5....

C. says

What I like most about THE BOOKS OF MAGIC Book 4: "Transformations", is the beginning. In a lot of instances, you'd expect the aftermath of being kidnapped and taken to Hell to be minimal. The hero and his best girl escape the monsters and go on to live happy lives and when we see them next, it's business as usual.

But writer John Ney Rieber didn't fall into that trap. The next time we see our 13-year-old hero and his equally young girlfriend, she's grounded and Tim isn't allowed to see her. I think it was this detail more than any other that drove home for me how serious Rieber was taking the story and the characters, because it would have been so easy to forget the fact they're only in the 8th grade and adopt the attitude that, well, Tim's the hero of the story, real life consequences don't apply to him.

Except they do.

As the story opens, Tim wants to see Molly, but can't. So he changes himself into a cat and goes in through the pet door around back. But when we get up to her room, he finds Molly has already snuck out, possibly to look for him. He tracks her down to a field where he finds her hanging out with Marya and talking about what the dragon told her at the end of "Reckonings"; that he was the adult Tim and that he would grow up to hurt Molly, but that he'd always regret it. However, the adult Tim/dragon told her, her Tim Hunter doesn't HAVE to grow up to be that person. Before Tim can say anything to Molly, however, he's captured by a mysterious woman who seems to know an awful lot about him.

She takes Tim back to her tattoo shop where she decides to look inside his heart and, finding the animal inside him, extract it so Tim grows up to be a good person. But when she looks into him, she sees there is no animal in him. He's not a bad person. So she turns him back into a boy and lets him go. But before heading home, Tim has one request.

"Could you have...done something to me? To make sure I'd never hurt Molly?"

"Any number of things."

"Then do it. I consent."

The woman's answer is to tattoo a scorpion and a moth onto Tim's chest, and any time he reacts out of anger, the scorpion stabs him in the chest.

Meanwhile, back in the Hunter house, Tim's father, having recovered remarkably well from being burned alive, has met a woman and is getting pretty serious. But the woman's son, Cyril, is very jealous of Tim Hunter and the attention his mother is showing to Mr. Hunter, and he runs off, only to be met by an evil creature called the Margrave, that wants to pin a special button to Cyril's chest that will make him explode, killing everyone in the vicinity: namely Tim Hunter. Tim intervenes and saves Cyril and himself, dispatching the Margrave, but also making a bold choice for such a young boy.

"I'm sick of you things mucking about with my family and my friends, so I've decided not to have either. Now if you don't mind, I'm tired and I've packing to do."

And with that, Tim Hunter turns his back on his life, his family, his friends, his home, and magic.

As the book continues, we catch up with Molly who, a few weeks after Tim's departure, is staying with her grandmother in Ireland. One day a letter arrives from Gwen, detailing what's happened to Tim and how he's left home. Gwen doesn't want anything from Molly, it's just a letter to keep her up to date and to say hello, but Molly decides this just won't do, so she enlists the help of the fairy Amadan, jester to the Queen of the Fairies, Titania, who challenges her. Prove that Molly is the bigger fool, more fool than Amadan, and she'll have her heart's desire (to be reunited with Tim).

Meanwhile, in the last chapter, we catch up with Tim once more, who has been gone from home for a while now, and is just kicking around the oceanside at an old amusement park he'd gone to as a kid. He's considering finding John Constantine, his mentor in magic, and asking for his help in understanding his powers when he meets up once again with Death who helps Tim understand that magic isn't always about spells and flashes of light and sometimes you can WORK magic without USING magic.

"Transformations" is a very quick read, spanning only five issues (21-25), but it's by far the most complete story arc so far, really encompassing the many interpretations of the title: physical, mental, emotional. Tim truly does some serious growing up in this arc and it's good to see him taking charge, even if he's not entirely sure what it is he's taking charge of.

Rieber said from the beginning that his intention was to place Tim Hunter firmly in a world we're all familiar with, "adolescence", and I believe with this arc, he's finally done just that.

Peter Gross served as artist for the entire arc, and for me it was back and forth, mostly. He had some really stellar panels that shone with brilliance and class, but then he'd turn a corner and several pages in a row would be sloppy and amateurish. I don't know if it was because he was inking his own pencils or maybe he wasn't used to the load of carrying the entire arc, who's to say. Whatever the problem, a little consistency would have been nice, because for me every time the quality of the art changed, I kept going back to the title page and seeing if I'd missed the "guest artist" credit. I swear I kept seeing hints of Chris Wozniak in there, sometimes Sal Buscema (and just going by Buscema's work on THE SPECTACULAR SPIDER-MAN in the 80s and 90s, that's not a compliment).

Inconsistent art aside, though, "Transformations" was a very good book, the most solid of the series so far. I have a feeling that from this point on, things are going to get very different, most likely even more complicated, for Tim Hunter, as there's a definite change coming in the air. I'm just hoping it's a good change, and not a silly one that takes the story down paths it's not meant to travel, because so far I like THE BOOKS OF MAGIC. Too drastic a change in the status quo at this point could ruin things. But I guess there's no way to find out but to keep reading, right?

Derek says

After the whole being kidnapped and going to hell thing, Tim and Molly get grounded by their parents who think they tried to run away. Being apart proves too burdensome for Tim and he decides to shapeshift into a cat and go see Molly. Only, when he gets to Molly's, she's not in, she's snuck out and gone to the Hyde Park to meet Marya, they're later joined by a mysterious lady in red. Tim, flies over to the park, and is captured and shapebound by this mysterious woman in red. who turns out to be a Body Artist. She is frightened of Tim coz of the stuff Molly said he'd become and tries to purge Tim of his dark self. which leads to Tim getting a big winged scorpion tattoo on his chest. Oh, and having no more magic. On Tim's birthday, he finds out that Gwendolyn's leaving, and Mr. Hunter is kinda dating again. Tim decides to leave home.

VERDICT: Not as strong as Volume 3. But it still worth the read, I mean, I'd not for anything else read it coz Peter Gross is inking the whole volume.
