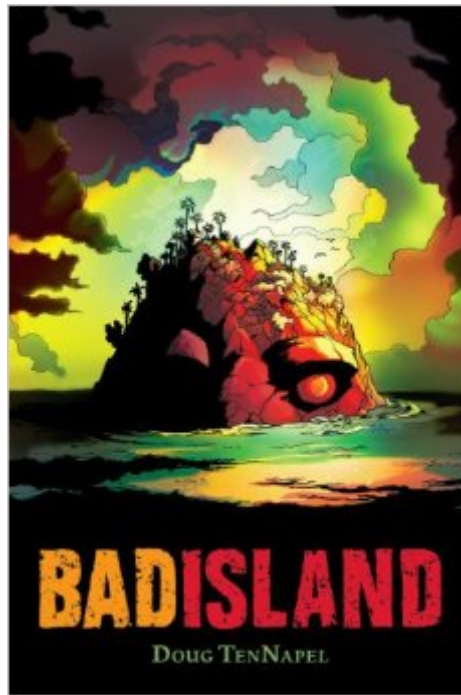


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# Bad Island



## Synopsis

Something on this island is up to no good . . .When Reese is forced to go on a boating trip with his family, the last thing he expects is to be shipwrecked on an island-especially one teeming with weird plants and animals. But what starts out as simply a bad vacation turns into a terrible one, as the castaways must find a way to escape while dodging the island's dangerous inhabitants. With few resources and a mysterious entity on the hunt, each secret unlocked could save them . . . or spell their doom. One thing Reese knows for sure: This is one Bad Island.

## Book Information

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Average Customer Review: 4.3 out of 5 stars [See all reviews](#) (70 customer reviews)

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## Customer Reviews

I'm actually much older than this book's target audience. You might be wondering why I bought it then. Well, there are two reasons. The first is that I'm a fan of the author. The other reason is a bit more complicated. If you've read the book synopsis, you're probably thinking this sounds an awful lot like the TV show, "Lost", and - to a degree - you're right. Both stories are about a group of castaways stranded on an island, both have the main narrative frequently inter-cut with flashbacks, and both contain unexplained phenomena that keep piling up. In fact, one or two of the phenomena in "Bad Island" have direct parallels in "Lost" (although TenNapel is good enough to put his own unique spin on them). It goes beyond that though. Imagine if "Lost's" storyline had been 100 % planned out from the beginning and had actually answered all the questions it raised - that every little bizarre thing was given an explanation. If this sounds appealing to you, read on. If I were a betting man, I'd wager that TenNapel found the basic premise of the show appealing, but was turned off by how it was actually handled and decided to vent this frustration by writing and drawing

his own take on the concept. Granted, since this was his own take, this means a lot more monsters and a lot less humans...it's still a Doug TenNapel comic, after all. If there is a sticking point (and sadly, there is), it's the characters; or rather, one set of characters. The story is actually two stories that intertwine at the very end: the main story and a subplot told in flashbacks. The characters from the subplot are very good, although they really don't take up much of the book. The characters from the main story, on the other hand, are a little on the...lacking side. They're very likable, don't get me wrong, but they're (for lack of a better word) sparse. For example, the main character Reese has a troubled relationship with his family, but it's never established why. What caused this tension between them? We'll never know, and the fact that we don't know makes them and their growth throughout the story that much less meaningful; we see the "after", but only get vague hints at the "before". To put it more bluntly, the flashback characters have a powerful arc; the main characters...really don't. Still, this is very much worth a buy. If you loved every single aspect about "Lost" and want to see how someone else would have used the same concept, check it out. If you're like me and became disillusioned with how "Lost" dragged things out (and with how they ended the show), check it out. If you have no knowledge of or interest in "Lost", but just want a good story with really cool monsters and visuals, well...need I repeat myself? Click that Buy button and prepare for a real treat.

It's enough to make you want to take up brain surgery. I read some comics for kids and I can hardly move through the recycled tropes and old overdone ideas cluttering up the pages. Then I read a book by Doug TenNapel. When the man's Ghostopolis came out last year I was delighted. Sure, we've all seen the idea of the afterlife as a city done before (May Bird, Billy Bones, etc.) but TenNapel's storytelling managed to incorporate this odd and unique internal logic that I'd never seen anywhere before. Now I've picked up his next Graphix GN Bad Island and while I wish I could just compare it to something I've seen before I cannot. What currently operates in the brain of this man baffles me. His books read like fever dreams that make sense (and if rumors about his next cardboard-related comic are to be believed he's not exactly going mainstream anytime soon). Sometime a kid wants a stand alone graphic novel that also happens to be "epic". And if it's epic you seek, epic you will find in this strange near-indescribable little piece. Okay. Here comes the tough part of the review. The part where I try to summarize the plot. Bear with me now. Two planets. Two rebellious sons. In a distant universe a battle wages. Giant creatures have secured the freedom of a relatively tiny species that they allow to live on their very skin. The giants rely on these people to operate their battle armor and other internal mechanics, which is a good thing since the

tiny people's previous hosts have returned to reclaim their slaves. The son of the king of the giants is determined to fight as well, but his efforts lead only to his capture at the hands of the enemy and banishment to a far away world. Meanwhile, centuries later here on earth, teenaged Reese is trying desperately to figure out how to get out of the lame family vacation his dad has planned. No one seems thrilled to be taking a boat ride, not Reese or his mom or his snake-obsessed little sister Janie. And that's before the family gets caught up in a freak storm and shipwrecks on a strange deserted island. There they find creatures the like of which they've never seen, a strange artifact that appears to be leading them somewhere, and a malevolent presence that wants something that they have and is willing to do anything it can to get it back.

I recently had a conversation with a children's author about whether or not kids vs. teens prefer series books with cliffhanger endings. We both agreed that in our experience kids are actually less delighted by series than their older counterparts. A child between the ages of 9-12 is more interested in a bit of smart storytelling. Sometimes seeing a "1" on the spine just frustrates them. One of TenNapel's more remarkable qualities is the fact that he creates perfect little worlds that have no need of sequels. None at all. Now the danger of creating your own mythology is that no one else is going to buy it. And the best way to make them buy into it is to make it horrendously long or the first in a series. That TenNapel consistently packs whole worlds into his books without making them (A) 500 pages long or (B) The first of a 10-book series or (C) incoherent isn't just rare in this day and age. It's near impossible to find in any other GN author for kids. Thank god he actually has the chutzpah to pull it off.

Myth making is all well and good, but what sets this book apart from the usual heroic narrative pack is the family element. At the heart of this story is a tale about getting to know (and care about) your siblings and parents in the midst of true danger. As such, the book fleshes out a family that not only rings true on the page but that you want to know more about. I think the moment when I was completely on board with them was when Janie insisted on lugging her dead snake with her wherever the family went. The gentle macabre nature of this just struck me as oddly real. Then there's the change that comes over Reese's dad, from bumbling to capable. I was also fairly pleased that the mom could hold her own and didn't need any of the typical rescuing moms tend to lend themselves to in books of this sort. I was also pleased to see that there's more than a jot of humor to this story. There are overt physical gags, like the dad getting bitten by the snake and (my personal favorite) managing to light all the matches in the matchbox on fire at once. But there are subtler spoken gags as well, and a real family camaraderie and back and forth that makes you believe in these people. Interestingly, I found the sections with the humans far more interesting than the ones with the giants. As it should be.

And for the art? TenNapel has a distinctive style that

reveals itself in sharp jaw lines and akimbo elbows. At the same time he knows how to keep a page interesting. Shadows and scenes seen from different angles appear alongside variegated panel sizes and consistently interesting layouts. There's a controlled messiness to TenNapel's style that serves him here. With this book he can use his style to bring forth the dirt and grime of the outdoors. Indeed I think he'd have a harder time if he ever set one of his stories in a pristine, clean, robotic world. His is an art of well-ordered chaos, on the edge of going entirely insane. Nothing bad really happens to our heroes in this book, but you are never in any doubt that it would take surprisingly little to change that fact. The lure of TenNapel's art is that it verges on the insane. Actually, the book that this would pair the best with might be Don Wood's own island-related graphic novel *Into the Volcano*. In both cases you have reluctant boy protagonists coming into their own to save their family members. Both also have a strange reluctance to trust an island. Wood, because they can always blow up or emit poison gas or try to kill you some other way. TenNapel because they might one day just up and leave with you still on them. On its own, however, *Bad Island* provides the mix of storytelling and action, heart and excitement, which many a graphic novel strives for and few actually attain. There's substance to this puppy. Something that sticks long after you've read it. And for many a kid, that'll be enough. Definitely check it out. For ages 9-12.

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