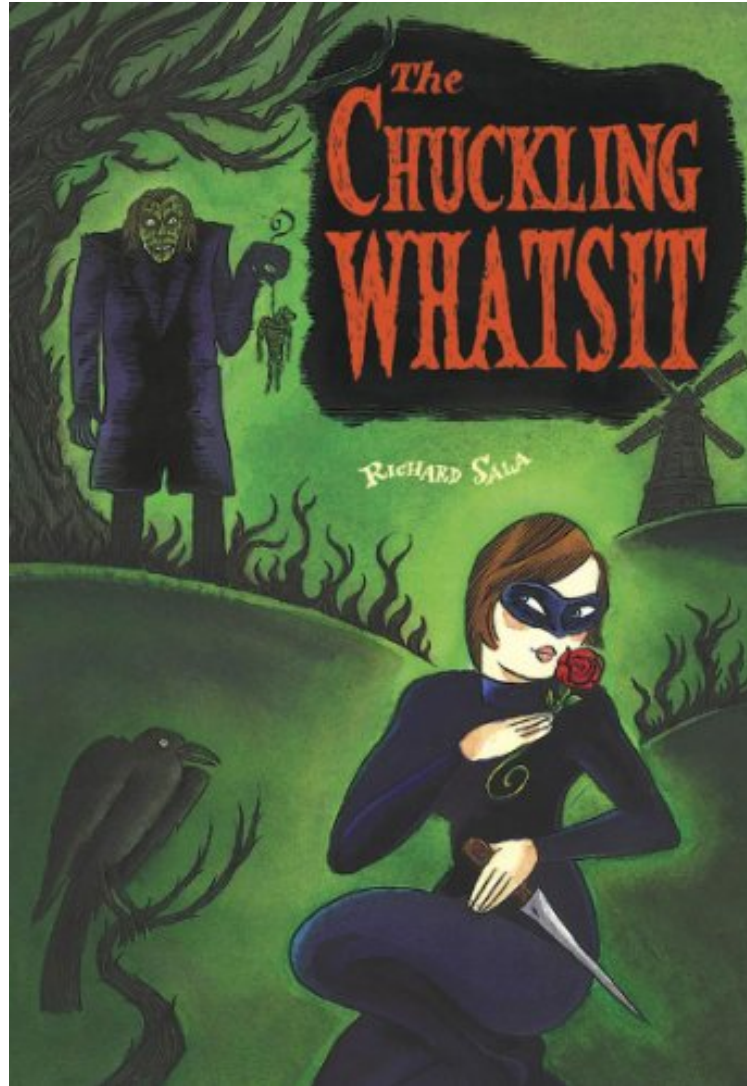


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Chuckling Whatsit

Richard Sala

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#1217510 in Books 1998-10-28 Original language: English PDF # 1 .56 x 7.07 x 10.271, .99 #File Name: 1560972815200 pages | File size: 16.Mb

Richard Sala : Chuckling Whatsit before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Chuckling Whatsit:

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Mystery, Horror and Hilarity By TrixxiPixie With my propensity for horror and noir I'm not sure how it took me so long to find Richard Sala. From the awesome team at nearby Fantagraphics I expect a lot and once again they deliver. It's a genre-bending story that doesn't take itself too seriously. The black and white heavy ink style is reminiscent of Charles Burns and Edward Gorey. Part macabre thriller, part noir mystery. It's a dark story in which a young reporter ends up in the middle of a twisted web of killers and collectors as he tries to uncover the mysteries of the life and death of an "outsider artist". The sheer volume of murders makes

this a dark comedy and that irreverence keeps it fresh. As with many graphic novel mysteries I wish there was a little more to it. It could stand another 50 pages and another good twist. The multitude of characters can get a little confusing, especially since most of them have a very short page life. Definitely worth the read, *The Chuckling Whatsit* is just the right amount of grim and clever. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Laughter in the dark By Sam Quixote Years after a series of gruesome murders happened, the murderer seems to have resurfaced and begun killing again - this time, his target is inexplicably astrologers. Meanwhile, creepy dolls made of human skin appear, a mysterious masked assassin prowls the shadows, a secret society of murder appreciators aren't who they seem, and an avant garde artiste who hung himself holds the key to the killings down in the bowels of an old abandoned windmill... Chilling stuff no? Richard Sala does a brilliant job of bringing together many gothic elements so memorably into a mystery story. Sala's noir drawings are excellent and it's this that make the comic book stand out from others in the indie comics world. I found the mystery story well written but, as sometimes happens when you try to outfox the reader, a bit convoluted. I appreciate that it's hard to keep the tension up in stories like this but the trouble is that it can sometimes all be explained in a rushed, overly verbose manner in the end, which happens here. I enjoyed "The Chuckling Whatsit", and Sala is definitely carving out a style of his own while paying homage to a number of artists and works, and in this sense he ought to be celebrated for being an original. But as a standalone comic book? Not perfect, but an interesting enough read. 2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. A labyrinthian tale of murder and mystery By Ben Arthur *The Chuckling Whatsit* is one of Richard Sala's best works. His amazing ability to create a world filled with danger and mystery, filled with colorful characters. Where else will you have a strange person who's carried around in a sack, ordering his Frankenstein-like servant to complete a mysterious quest? Or the powerful Mr. Ixnay who may or may not have returned from the grave? Or even a sadistic group of killers and saboteurs that call themselves G.A.S.H. These are just some of the many players in this graphic novel. Sala is able to take this complex mystery plot and keep it from becoming too convoluted, His art is superb, he has created a spine-tingling world that is uniquely his own, one that I always enjoy visiting.

A genre-defining masterpiece of graphic noir comes back into print. In *The Chuckling Whatsit*, Sala weaves the gothic cartooning traditions of Edward Gorey and Charles Addams with a densely constructed, melodramatic murder mystery involving astrology, ghouls, academia and outsider art. Part noir, part horror and part comedy, this labyrinthian tale of intrigue follows an unemployed writer named Broom who becomes unwittingly ensnared in a complex plot involving mysterious outsider artist Emile Jarnac, the shadowy machinations of the Ghoul Appreciation Society Headquarters (GASH), and the enigmatic Mr. Ixnay. Sala's deadpan delivery makes this ingeniously layered narrative a roller-coaster ride of darkly pure comic suspense. Sala's drawing style, while most often compared to Edward Gorey, also reveals the influence of everything from Hollywood monster movies and Dick Tracy to German expressionism and Grimm's fairy tales. It's a style that's perfectly suited to the narrative, constantly flirting with Sala's fascination for the grotesque and lending palpable tension to the gruesome riddle of *The Chuckling Whatsit*. Sala's eclectic career includes contributions to Art Spiegelman's RAW magazine, MTV's Liquid Television, The New York Times, Playboy and his ongoing Evil Eye comic book series from Fantagraphics, though *The Chuckling Whatsit* remains his most popular work.

.com Broom, hack writer turned detective by necessity, is having a heck of a time figuring out why astrology columnists are turning up dead, seemingly at the hand of the Gull Street Ghoul, a killer from the city's past. The solution to the crimes involves a strange organization named G.A.S.H., a shadowy masked man named Mister Ixnay, and tiny outsider-art dolls called "whatsits." Your Flesh magazine says that *The Chuckling Whatsit* "smacks of the sweet aroma of a venus flytrap. This is film noir in comics form: dark stormy nights, twisted cities, long shadows, a knife in the back, all seen through a fish-eye lens of madness." Richard Sala weaves a mystery that turns and twists and leaves you guessing, wanting more. From Publishers Weekly Pulp fiction lives (or at least lurches about entertainingly) in this lurid melodrama that features a swarm of characters in manic pursuit of the eponymous Whatsit, a leather doll that laughs when shaken and may be made from flayed human skin. Unlike *The Maltese Falcon*, there's no smart, unsentimental Sam Spade on hand to sort things out. Instead, intrepid but rather dense reporter Broom wanders through a tangled plot, bumping repeatedly into assassins, femme fatales, dangerous servants, obsessed doll collectors and a lunatic, leather-masked serial killer. Even though almost everyone dies along the way, the mystery persists through the final bloodbath. The considerable fun is in watching the action slosh further and further over the top. Sala's black and white art is appropriately grotesque, looking like a comics version of *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari*: buildings tilt ominously around misshapen characters whose noses point in multiple directions and whose feet only sometimes touch the ground. The wildly imaginative storytelling and sly pastiche of lurid pulp material make an appealing mix. Copyright Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. From Library Journal Sala, whose work has been seen in the New York Times, Esquire, and Playboy, here offers a novel first serialized in *Zero, Zero*. This mildly chilling black-and-white work concerns the hunt for the "Chuckling Whatsit," a doll rumored to be made from the skin and hair of victims of a serial killer supposedly dead. Protagonist Broom, a

daily horoscope writer, quickly falls into dangerous company because he allegedly has information about the murderer. Instead of running, Broom joins the hunt, believing that if he identifies the killer he will be paid handsomely. Sala's style nicely mixes the humorous and the horrific as he appropriately distances himself from his protagonist and other supporting characters. In a story that leaves no survivors, readers are nevertheless more amused than terrified. For larger public libraries. Stephen Weiner, Maynard P.L., Mass. Copyright 1998 Reed Business Information, Inc.