



## Low, Vol. 1: The Delirium of Hope

*Rick Remender (Writer) , Greg Tocchini (Artist) , Dave McCaig (Colourist)*

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Millennia ago, mankind fled the earth's surface into the bottomless depths of the darkest oceans. Shielded from a merciless sun's scorching radiation, the human race tried to stave off certain extinction by sending robotic probes far into the galaxy to search for a new home among the stars. Generations later, one family is about to be torn apart in a conflict that will usher in the final race to save humanity from a world beyond hope. Dive into an aquatic fantasy like none you've ever seen before, as writer Rick Remender (*Fear Agent*, *Uncanny Avengers*) and artist Greg Tocchini (*Last Days of American Crime*) bring you a tale mankind's final hour in the cold, deathly dark of the sea.

**Collecting:** *Low* 1-6

## Low, Vol. 1: The Delirium of Hope Details

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Author : Rick Remender (Writer) , Greg Tocchini (Artist) , Dave McCaig (Colourist)

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## **From Reader Review Low, Vol. 1: The Delirium of Hope for online ebook**

### **Riley says**

This was way to confusing to follow. And I didn't like the art style.

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### **Michael Finocchiaro says**

The artwork in Low is outstanding - all watercolor - but it is a bit hard to read the text sometimes. The story is pretty original - post-apocalyptic society where humans are living under the ocean because the earth's surface became inhabitable. The spirit is rather morose as some tyrants have usurped power and created harems out of the living spaces. There are, of course, a few people that aspire to escape the oppressive atmosphere when they receive word that a satellite that was sent out to seek a habitable planet has returned. The race is on...So like I said, the premise is interesting but sometimes the over-the-top artwork makes it hard to follow the story itself.

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### **Ashley Brooks says**

I put this off for a looooong time after seeing a bunch of negative reviews, but I actually quite liked it.

There was a lot more depth (heh.) than I expected but I did have some issues. Marik's abrupt 180 in character threw me off a bit, and I just...do the women in this world just not get clothes? What's going on here?

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### **Jesse (JesseTheReader) says**

I wanted to like this so badly, but it just wasn't my cup of tea. I will say that the artwork is beautiful, but the story was lacking. I think too much was happening in the story and it was rather confusing at times. At this point, I will not be continuing on with this series.

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### **Sam Quixote says**

In his foreword (or “forward” as Marvel’s AVX would have it - I know, I know, let it go, let it goooOoOoOoO), Rick Remender talks about his years in therapy and discovering how positive thinking changed his life. Once he started having a sunnier outlook he says he became a happier person, a better husband/father, and a better, more productive writer (the latter is certainly true - SO many comics!). The power of positive thinking.

Good for him. But I would argue that he doesn’t need to write the following comic because it basically repeats everything he said in the foreword, to the letter! It informs the story far too much and should’ve been

an afterword instead.

Low is a dystopian sci-fi adventure (does Remender write any other kind of comic?) based around the inevitability of our sun eventually degrading and swallowing up the entire solar system. After tens of thousands of years, mankind has been forced to get LOW, hiding out in underwater cities as the air and environment on the surface became too toxic to sustain life. Meanwhile, probes were sent to every corner of the universe to find a suitable new world to colonise.

Stel is a married mother of three and an eternal optimist. Her city has a handful of years left before the recycled air becomes unbreathable and kills them all but she holds out hope that one of the probes will send back the vital news that a new Earth has been discovered. Then she and her husband take their two daughters out - leaving their son home to tinker with some tech - to recover a probe that might hold the key to their salvation. Wouldn'tcha knowit, a dang pirate (yup, got pirates in the future too!) kills her man and steals her two daughters!

Fast forward 10 years.

Her son's a pessimist (he's got a LOW mood) but Stel remains an optimist (she's got a HIGH mood) - together, they will save her daughters, find the probe for a new Earth, and save the world. The power of positive thinking. Is that phrase becoming repetitive? That's LOW for you!

Did you know if you thought positively, you can overcome anything? Even the end of the world? Even personal tragedies like losing your family in a day? This is the message of the book, first stated in the foreword and then repeated throughout with all the subtlety of a sledgehammer. This is the structure of the comic: Stel is optimistic, talks about the power of positive thinking, and then someone throws pessimism/cynicism/realism in her face - and she overcomes it, continuing her mantra of positive thinking. Repeat ad nauseam.

There's a lot of weird beats to the story (and some might be considered spoilers so consider yourself forewarned). Stel has the body of an 18 year old rather than a middle-aged mother of three. I'm not saying it's impossible but it's crazy how she and her teen daughter - both in very revealing bikinis, a major, ahem, "theme" in Low - look like siblings rather than mother and daughter. Not sure if that's down to future tech or underwater living or the power of positive thinking, but things seem to be good for ladies in the far future - unless you want to wear sensible clothes like the men and not pieces of tactically-positioned cloth!

Instead of cocaine, the popular drug to snort is something called cream. Not having been much of a casual drug user I can't say this with authority, but doesn't powder seem better than snorting some thick glob? And then there's the effects: besides the euphoria, it makes you think you're a Roman centurion or something - why?! What a bizarre side effect to have!

I'm not really sure why Remender keeps referring back to the ancient world throughout the book. The orgy scene with the senator and the gladiator scene at the end all reference the Romans because, I suppose, he's comparing this doomed culture to the fall of the Roman Empire? I'm not sure why this society - set tens of thousands of years in the future - is so obsessed with the Romans! It's just another peculiar detail.

Who's the dude with the Rapunzel hair floating in the white void - Stel's therapist? How does the pirate king survive being stabbed several times at once without dying or even being hurt?!

The characters are really difficult to root for because they're so poorly created and unlikeable. Stel is a

manifestation of Remender's belief in positive thinking, an irritating hippy protagonist, rather than an even semi-real character while her kids are such little shits you don't want them to be saved. Everyone else, including the pirate king, are all one-dimensional non-entities.

Greg Tocchini's art is pretty for the most part. The thick, painted pages can sometimes look a bit too marzipan-y for my taste, and he can't do faces very well at all making it difficult to distinguish characters' appearances unless they're referring to one another by name. But sometimes you'll get some pages, like when Stel and her son are swimming underwater taking in the colourful wildlife, that look simply amazing.

Ultimately I wasn't won over by Low because it's more of an expression of Remender's newfound belief in the power of positive thinking, above all else - character, story, etc. are mere afterthoughts to his near-dogmatic love of positive thinking. I didn't think much of the uninspired world he created and never found myself sucked into Stel's quest. Most of the time I was very, very bored with whatever was happening on the page. If you're hoping for the same action-pacing of Black Science, be prepared for a much-less exciting read in Low.

I give it a LOW rating, ha... ha... (head explodes from not enough positive thinking)...

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### **Steph Sinclair says**

The artwork was really pretty, but that about covers all the positives. The story had a lot of problems: gendered language, didn't care for the treatment of the female characters (why must they always be half naked while the men get clothes??), the plot relied heavily on shock value, and it just wasn't very interesting.

I found most of the characters to be annoying, especially Marik and his complete 180 personality flip at the halfway point. He goes from being a super pessimistic loner to someone who could rival Spongebob's "I'm ready!" mentality, and I just didn't buy that.

The plot was a jumble of ideas that never really found its purchase with me, floundering around in an ocean listlessly. Where did the plot want to go? Was it lost? I think so. The running theme of "keep hope alive" was cute, but became tiring as the book went on. It's almost like this story was written on the "hope" that it would be good. Sadly, that's not how writing works.

Underwhelming and unsatisfying.

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### **Liz Janet says**

Some points:

- A very good idea, but not very well developed. The earth is dying and society lives underwater, and the main female character has hopes to encounter another planet or a way to survive.
- Filled with porn, don't lie to me, if it is porn then label it porn rather than as a story with sexy times in it.
- This format seemed like the perfect little way to share the story, but it was poorly executed, one can barely tell what is going on because the art is way too messy.
- Weird theme of Roman Empire here, the drug (cream, yes that is the name) makes you think you are a centurion. Then we get orgy scenes depicted as if in Roman times. I do not know if he was comparing this

doomed society of the future to the doom of the old empire, but it simply made no sense, the connections were seriously lacking, as I am quite sure the same reasons that ended the empire are nothing like those ending our earth.

-To quote Hermione Granger, the characters in this story have "the emotional range of a teaspoon."

- Exploitation of females, sort of, it is there but I don't want to go in depth.

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### **Kristen says**

I ended up enjoying this more than I thought I would. The rating for this graphic novel isn't very high, and many of the reviews aren't glowing, which is why I'm kind of surprised that I'm giving it a 4. The artwork was pretty cool and I liked the coloring. The storyline seemed quite original, if a tad dark (which I tend to lean towards - so I guess no complaints there). My biggest annoyance, as I stated in an update, is that the mother's optimism seems forced due to how often it is mentioned. It is excessive, and kind of annoying. I think I can connect the dots without it needing to be spelled out every few pages. Overall, I liked this enough to want to read the second, so that's what I'm gonna do. B-)

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### **?????? ???? says**

The last Rick Remender graphic novel I read had been actually scheduled as the last X-Men series I read earlier this year for my X-Men comics diet. Suffice to say, I wasn't charmed by it so I only got to finish the first volume because I lost interest easily in the way the story was told. It just didn't click for me, is all.

Now that was back in April or so, and now here I am just a few months later reading another work of his. As soon as I finished this, I have to say that this is comparably an improvement from *Uncanny Avengers*. That comparison would be unfair though, since they are of different genres, and I could tell (given the Afterword for every issue of this series) that Remender is quite passionate and proud about this work. I do think he should be.

**LOW** is a sci-fi comic book story set in an underwater world. It's also billions of years into the future, where our sun in the solar system has expanded to a toxic level of radiation, so it is more or less about to wipe out the world. The human race and other creatures migrated to the deep levels of the ocean and have made their homes there. One such place is Salus, and this is where the protagonist family of the story lives. Low is more or less about the mother Stel and her unabashedly stubborn positive way of thinking no matter the dreariness of her circumstances. Bundled into six issues, the series' first volume *The Delirium of Hope* is a thematic examination of what it's like to be an optimist in an often nightmarish landscape filled with despair. Over the course of said issues, Stel lost her husband, had her two daughters abducted, and her only son estranged to her because he resents her for being so inconceivably 'hopeful'. The conflict is more or less about Stel overcoming difficulties with the power of positive thinking. In a sense, I have to admire the tenacity of her self-belief.

Stel is a mother who never loses hope which in a hopeless world should be a commendable thing. Or is it? I think that's the challenge being presented for *Low*'s narrative. Should a person always choose to believe in

the adage that one is responsible for his or her own attitude when it comes to dealing with the universe, and that attitude will certainly shape the course of their destiny? Or is the universe truly a place without order and more leaning towards chaos, so however the person feels he or she has any control over how they would react, the universe finds a way to take them by surprise or overwhelm them anyway?

Based from this volume so far, the universe is not only winning, but is also being a dick about it. Although Stel has faith that her endeavors to rescue her daughter would not be for naught, and that her efforts will not be wasted so long as she keeps up her positive attitude, certain situations tend to disprove it otherwise. I actually do like this kind of story Remender has weaved because it feels very personal and heartfelt in a lot of ways. I enjoyed this for what it is in spite of not sharing the writer or his lead character's way of living their lives. I'm more of a pragmatist myself, right in that sweet spot between optimism and pessimism. There are advantages to forcefully clinging onto positivity because hope does spring eternal, but being too fixed about this perspective is just as damaging as being nihilistic and negative. Too much of anything is always a bad thing after all.

In addition, Stel reminds me a lot of Catelyn Stark from the first three books of *A Song of Ice and Fire* series. Much like Catelyn, Stel is a mother struggling to unite her family, only to find that her will and efforts are constantly tested. I suppose I would read the next volume after this just to see how Remender handles the next arc of the series because once again another blockage is impeding Stel's way and I know there are possibly more to come, and I want to see how she would move past them with her power of positive thinking which Remender apparently is determined to campaign and drive home to the readers. I don't find it annoying because touchy-feely things okay for me since they have little impact on my own perspective anyway as a pragmatic. Besides there are quotable moments I did agree with. Like this:

I think Greg Tocchini is worth crediting alongside Remender (if not more so) because as the artist of this series, he has made the reading experience an exceedingly amazing one because of his lush sceneries of the aquatic disquiet present in the panels and specific scenes. I truly loved looking at the breadth of his illustrations and I believe that if another artist had drawn for *Low*, it would have changed the way I looked at this series altogether, and I may not be more forgiving of its story's flaws and its writer's ultimate bias about his heroine's personality and personal beliefs. His art style is just gorgeous:

In a nutshell, Rick Remender's *Low* is a commendable work I wouldn't mind speaking good things about, but Greg Tocchini's visual contribution is the one thing I would probably give more praise. Whatever opinions I may have that contrast Stel's, I still think she was a character I can find myself caring about, and I'm interested to see how well she would fare, or how much she might change as the story progresses. I'll pick this series again soon enough.

**RECOMMENDED: 8/10**

**READ MY REVIEWS AT:**

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## **Samantha says**

Rick Remender is a pretty popular creator in the graphic novel community, so I thought I'd try out *Low: The Delirium of Hope* to see how I felt about it and if I wanted to try out anything else by him. Unfortunately, it wasn't for me, and I knew that within a few pages. I maybe made it through one issue before deciding to DNF. In the first few pages, there is so much gratuitous female nudity, with no male nudity to match it. So it felt very "male gaze" to me. Also, I did not like the art style. Couple that with the fact that the series is over the top disturbing for the sake of being gross, and I wanted nothing to do with it. This is not the series for me, and after hearing more about Remender's other series, I don't think I'll be trying out anything else by him either. This review was originally posted on *Thoughts on Tomes*

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## **Whitney Atkinson says**

I'm a sucker for books about characters who are unflinching optimists, but this book was far too confusing to follow and weighed down by sci-fi jargon. the art and world was just too hectic, i gave up after 2 issues.

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## **David Schaafsma says**

I read this because a guy in one of my area comic stores said he was his fave comics guy. This is my first encounter with Remender, I think, and I was underwhelmed. Good concept, in a way. Where do we go as earth's resources peter out? New planets? Not likely, but how about undersea, deep undersea, while we explore the universe. . . I thought of Mat Kindt's *Dept H*, where a group of scientists have given up on space exploration and are investigating the deep sea as a place for possible living. Remender's intro makes it clear that he is influenced in this project by therapy that has helped him through some dark issues, and by his optimistic wife, so Stel, the main character, is modeled after her. But unfortunately I am not convinced that we all should be singing "Sunshine, Lollipops and Roses."

It's a time in the future when the sun will most likely burn up the earth, and in this dystopian time, it's seems we need positive thinking, not despair, and Stel is our Norman Vincent Peale (look it up, kids) here, but the problem is that we have no real reason to believe her. She has lost her family and has no basis for hope it seems beyond just keepin' on keepin' on. It may be the recent election and reading Bill McKibben that has me in the dumps on this hopey changey thang, but give me some specifics, Rick.

In the meantime, things look dystopianly grim in Remender's world of the future, but to pass the time there's a lot of gratuitous sex and nudity and bad dialogue to keep you going. And okay, good art from Tocchini but if the story is just okay, who cares about how things look? Does this get better after the grim first volume? I am not encouraged. Maybe 2.5 for the story so far, bumped up to 3 for the art?

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## **Erica says**

This one, it wasn't for me.

It gave me a headache, quite literally.

I didn't like the art because it fades off into itself and I'm a more solid-lines type of viewer.

I didn't like the storyline because it's every fantasy storyline ever mashed up together (ok, not really, but everything is super recognizable if you watch or read even a modicum of Sci-Fi/Fantasy)

I didn't like the writing because it kept pushing me out of the story either via confusion or my own inability to suspend disbelief.

What did I like? The cover. The cover is phenomenal. Just don't open it.

I only actually *read* the first and last quarters, skimming through the rest because it was all too difficult for me to concentrate on. I still got the gist of the story (what story there is), though: Hopeful Mom Stel, married to the guy who captains the undersea town/ship/thing, believes their lives are not about to end from suffocation and is making plans to rescue humanity from its watery, de-oxygenated demise. Things don't go as planned when her husband and two girls get pirated and only her wishy washy son is left. Politics happen. Crazyass undersea creatures happen. Sex happens. Big fight scenes happen. Skimpy costumes for enslaved women happen. Death, unification, reunification, it all happens. Despite the main character being a "strong woman" type, this is very much a boy's comic, full of all the wish-fulfillment you could want as well as the power of positivity! Yay, happy thoughts!

There's an orgy scene in here that reminded me of an orgy scene in *Saga* (there's a lot in here that felt like it was riffing from *Saga*, actually) In *Saga*, orgy scenes are interesting because they display so many facets of humanity (and alienancy?) and very few of those facets are sexy. Some are sad, some are hilarious, some are horrid, some are ridiculous, some are desperate. The orgy scene in this book supposed to show revelry as a byproduct of despair and it looks more like something sketched out for *Penthouse Forum* (is that still a thing?) The actual desperation to exist fully before dying out isn't there, it's just titillation and, apparently, not even that for Mom Stel, purveyor of hope and determination and a fierce drive to put her family back together and flee to safety, who just walks through the room ignoring everything. My eyes, they rolled. This is how most of the story entered my brain, through rolling eyes.

Others may enjoy this one but I am not among them.

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## **Donovan says**

### **"Consciousness determines the design of the universe."**

Low is several things: a little steampunk, post-apocalyptic, futuristic, otherworld, sci-fi, drama. Actually reminds me of *Saga* a bit. But what it really feels like is a metaphor for therapy. Say what?

Remender says in his introduction that he started going to therapy for his soul-crushing pessimism and nihilism. He talks about how his wife was the eternal optimist who held his family together. He also realized he'd never written an optimistic character. This is all highly relevant, because most of the characters are pessimistic nihilists, except for Stel, the wife and mother. Interesting, right? Other than Remender's work, I don't know if I've ever read a story so allegorical for an author's philosophical life. It's brilliant. And it makes for brilliant reading.

Allegory and biography aside, the story is actually pretty cool and has several twists and turns I didn't

anticipate. Like all of his stuff, it's a very dark story with some very sad things, but that's Remender for you.

I've read quite a few post-apoc comics and I'm pretty happy with Remender's designs. It's not every day you see underwater rigs that hold millions of people. Samurai pirates. You can never have too many of those. I also really enjoyed the bohemian nihilism also present in Tokyo Ghost. I see that as probable behavior and it makes for very visually "stimulating" and dynamic backgrounds.

Funny enough, I kept thinking of Tokyo Ghost while reading this. Like that, this is dark, nihilistic, violent, apocalyptic, but there's one shining ray of hope, just enough to hold onto, which is nice. It's sometimes unusually funny with the occasional offhand or background joke. And the prolific sex and crude language is just absurd. Cunt this, cunt that. Just like Tokyo Ghost.

I have only two minor complaints. On my reread the dialog can be somewhat strained, like the pulp melodrama feel of Mad Max or Water World. It tends to be what you'd expect characters in a story like this to say, while working within the narrative. It's well written, just predictable and not overly realistic.

Greg Tocchini's illustrations and colors (with color assistance by Marianne Gusmao) are generally incredible and have a deep painterly quality. The machinery, cities, submarines, nudity, characters and their expressions, twisted and tentacular-like subterranean world. The blues and greens and reds and oranges. It's very elemental. However, sometimes there isn't enough color or depth variation and details wash together like paint. Like there need to be bolder outlines or more color subtlety. I don't know, I'm not a visual artist, but it didn't work 100% of the time. I found myself thinking that Tocchini was illustrating similar to Sean Murphy (with Matt Hollingsworth's colors), but I didn't enjoy the artwork as much as theirs.

So this doesn't quite reach that transcendental level like Tokyo Ghost or Deadly Class, but it's nice to look at, has solidly good dialog, and most of all an exciting story that keeps you guessing. If you're a fan of Remender, sci-fi or otherworld stories, this is worth checking out.

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### **Sanaa says**

[4 Stars] I enjoyed this one more than I was expecting to after all of the mixed reviews. I'll start off by saying yes this is a tad confusing at first, but after you get into the story everything begins to fall together a bit at a time. That is probably my only qualm though, the confusion. I also wish we had a touch more detail in the artwork. Apart from those things I enjoyed the writing, the colorful pages, and the themes. I particularly enjoyed how this actually made me feel for the characters. That being said, this could definitely have been better which is why it didn't get higher than 3.5 stars.

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