Undeniably intense and unsettling, the follow-up issue of HELLRAISER #2 (BOOM! Studios) is a must-read. Bleaker and bloodier, “Pursuit Of The Flesh” grabs its reader’s attention and never lets go. Back in the right hands of its original creator, Clive Barker continues to tell a thrilling new chapter to the franchise’s mythology. The narrative is exceptionally well-written, and the artwork sets the perfect mood for a horror comic.

Previously established in the first issue, a violent war is slowly brewing in the outside world. The Meddler and her group have destroyed another puzzle box, sending two more Cenobites directly into the abyss. These so-called meddlers are steering closer toward Pinhead’s box, specifically for him. Even though he pretends not to care and has grown weary, hell’s priestly servant eagerly awaits this inevitable confrontation. Readers finally find out who are these meddlers responsible for the Cenobites’ demise.

This issue officially marks the long-awaited return of Kirsty Cotton, the series’ heroine. Kirsty still has her fighting spirit intact, as she intends to go up against Pinhead and his demonic minions. Now even stronger and deadlier, she is the commander of her own group of Hell’s Harrowers. In the never-ending battle against evil, Kirsty will take down each puzzle box, one by one, and slay the entire Cenobite race.

What’s interesting is that the Cenobites know more about Kirsty than she knows of them. Kirsty has gone to hell and returned with her soul unharmed, but she will never be forgotten by Pinhead. Never far from hell, she met the devil and made him fall in love. A heavy price falls on Kirsty, as she fights to save an innocent family from the Cenobites.

Barker and co-writer Christopher Monfette (SEDUTH 3D) provide elegantly eerie prose that will stay in your mind long after you’ve finished reading. Kirsty is rightfully at the center of this issue. This is not a reimagination of the protagonist; instead, it is an evolution. What the authors have allowed is let their character to grow, especially in today’s modern times. Because of their previous confrontations, does Kirsty have to think more like Pinhead in order to defeat him?

There is no way you can complain about the artwork by HELLBAZER’s Leonardo Manco. In the opening pages, Manco slowly builds suspense with a series of tight close-ups. Manco’s illustrations succeed at bringing disturbing terror, which are just bizarre and stylishly artistic at the same time. Enhanced by the gritty colors of Charlie Kirchoff and Jordie Bellaire, you will undoubtedly cringe at some of the nightmarish sights found here.

Presented with such ambition and epic effort, Barker buffs just cannot say no to HELLRAISER #2. Page by page, readers will find an endless supply of terrifying imagery. Like a calculating chess player, Pinhead has made his first move against Kirsty Cotton. Readers, whether they are long-time followers or new fans just starting, will be anxiously waiting for the next issue!