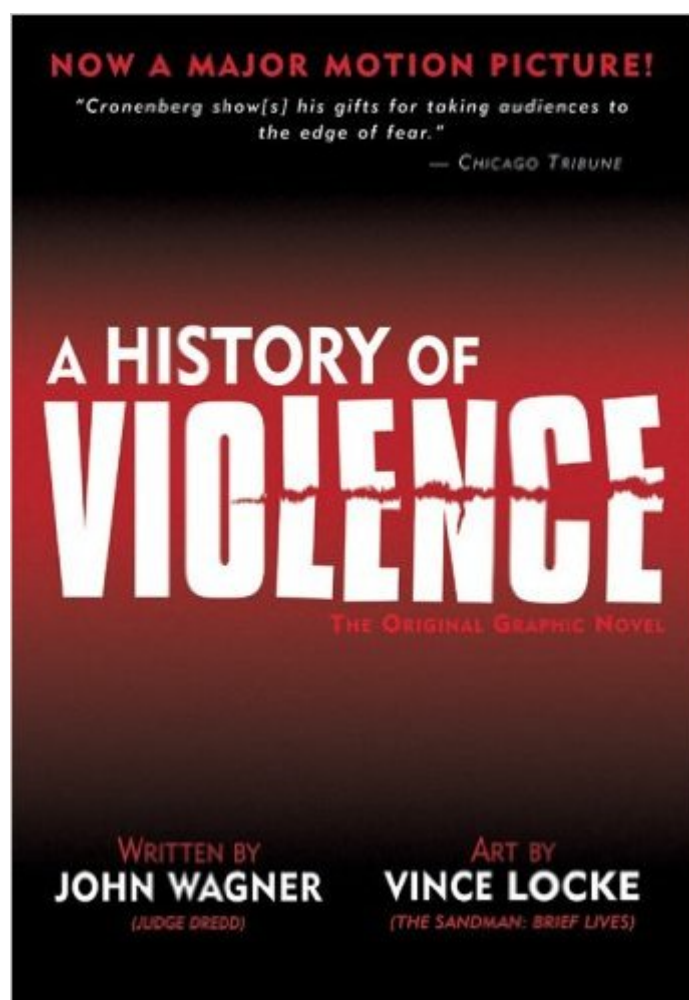


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A History Of Violence



Synopsis

A new edition of the hard-hitting graphic novel that inspired the Academy Award-nominated 2005 motion picture starring Viggo Mortensen, Ed Harris and William Hurt. In this suspenseful crime story, Tom McKenna is a family man who becomes an instant media celebrity when he thwarts a robbery at his own diner — a robbery attempted by wanted murderers. McKenna's newfound fame draws the attention of a group of merciless mobsters who have been looking to settle a score with him for over 20 years. Now, as the killers descend upon his small town in Middle America, the Brooklyn native must face the actions of his youth and relive his past history of violence as he attempts to salvage the life he has built and keep his family out of harm's way.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Looking ever so forward to the David Cronenberg-directed adaptation of A History of Violence to arrive at my local theater, I found it of the utmost exigency to buy the 1997 graphic novel that inspired it. And let me tell you, it does not disappoint one bit. AHoV tells of a small-town Michigan diner owner named Tom McKenna. McKenna is a nice guy with a loving wife, an adorable preschool daughter, and a quirky but still likable teenage son. Life is just one uneventful day after another — just as Tom likes it. Until one day that should have been like every other, two thugs with robbery and murder on their minds enter Tom's diner for the first (and last) time. The hoodlums decide to push their luck until Tom is forced to kill one and badly injure the other. The press catches wind of the incident of course. While Tom is hailed as a hero by his friends and neighbors, he does whatever he can to downplay his newfound fame. It doesn't work. Shortly after the failed robbery attempt, three

mobsters from New York City come to the diner. All three of them have rap sheets with just about everything on them except broadcasting without the expressed written consent of Major League Baseball. Johnny Torrino, the leader of the three, is an aging assassin with failing eyesight looking for someone named "Joey", whom he needs to settle a score with. Torrino wears a necklace with a Joey's severed finger as a pendant. McKenna, curiously enough, is missing one of his little fingers. Soon, it becomes evident that McKenna lived another life before settling down to small-town family life. What makes AHoV stand out from all the "edgy" graphic novels on the shelves is how it reads more like a great crime novel than just another graphic novel.

As other reviewers have noted, David Cronenberg's movie adaptation of "A History of Violence" will be released at the end of the year. This is the primary reason I picked up this graphic novel that I passed on when it was first published. I'm glad I did pick it up, because John Wagner and Vincent Locke have crafted a gut-wrenching story of violence and revenge that transcends its lurid subject matter. Wagner's premise is simple. Tom McKenna, husband and father of two, is closing up his diner when a couple of killers attempt to rob and murder him. Tom foils them, killing one in the process. Naturally, he receives a great deal of publicity, which he seeks to avoid. In short order, some very tough looking types come around looking a guy named Joey, a guy, it seems, who resembles Tom, right down to missing a finger. What follows is a hard-boiled tale in the best tradition of Ross MacDonald or Jim Thompson, as Tom finds his past catching up to him, and trying to eat him and his family alive, while Tom does everything in his power to beat that monster back (including killing a few people). John Wagner is a British comic book writer, most remembered as a co-creator of Judge Dredd. That early work shows to some extent. "A History of Violence" is, well, violent, often appallingly so, as Tom is witness to, and himself inflicts, all manner of cruelty upon human beings. However, Wagner imbues his work with a soul. Tom and his wife, Edie, are good people, and Wagner makes it clear that whatever Tom has done, he has paid his dues. He deserves his happiness. That is underscored by the appalling antagonists Tom fights. Wagner further makes it plain that for Tom to win the final showdown, he still has to pay one last due.

I'm glad I got the book, which is actually a very graphic comic book that goes far beyond the film version which is "based" on the book. This book is far superior to the film, in my view, although it is so graphic that I was wincing at parts of it. Imagine whatever weapon you want - chainsaws, drills, guns, knives...and you'll find them being used in this story. The drawings are very...detailed...and my tolerance wasn't as high as it should have been to handle all that blood and gore, at least not in

illustrations. I prefer to read about stuff like that. Visuals can be too intense for me. Still, don't let me scare you off. This book was not only believable but had integrity and heart, in its own violent, grisly way. I have to admit there were times I wished I was simply reading words on a page instead of having the images thrust in my face (this may also be the reason why the film sometimes seems "watered down" compared to the book, which is so graphic that it might have turned off film audiences). You won't find any superheroes like Batman or Superman in this book. It is the type of comic that represents real life, starting with a guy, Tom, who seems to have a pretty low key life in a very small town. He runs the diner. He's barely on anyone's radar screen, apart from the people he knows in town and his wife and kids. He has a reputation for being a decent guy, even a better than average guy with a generous heart...but he's not particularly ambitious and he certainly isn't out to make waves. In fact, he PREFERS being out of the limelight - for reasons even his own family wouldn't suspect. Everything changes when a couple of lowlifes come to town and try to rob him. He's forced to protect himself and those in the diner and he does so with amazing skill.

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