



Melody of Vengeance

Michael A. Black

Tim Faurote, Illustrator

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Comic books, graphic novels, and pulp fiction have experienced a true resurgence in the last few decades. This novel is a quintessential example of the force behind this genre.

The Wraith, a masked vigilante who kills with cold-blooded justice, is becoming evil himself. For two years the self-appointed guardian of justice has been mowing down criminals, leaving behind the bloody bodies and his calling card: a simple white tag stamped with an oversized question mark.

Doctor Michael Atlas, (“Doc”) is a wealthy man who has dedicated his life, as well as his vast fortune, to fighting crime. Possessing a stalwart, determined demeanor and all the scientific, cutting-edge crime detecting gear money can buy, Doc is upright and righteous, a bit prim in the Dudley-Do-Right fashion, but with the power of the Hulk.

With his gang of three—Penny, his news reporter girlfriend; Ace, the attorney; and Mad Dog, the muscle—Doc turns his efforts to capturing the Wraith. When the quest for the Wraith and Doc’s other case (the kidnapping of a prominent newspaper baron’s daughter) become one and the same, the FBI and an eccentric mystic are thrown into the already bubbling mix. The colorful secondary characters keep the lively level of entertainment ratcheted up within the gritty noir world so distinctly composed. The illustrator, a commercial artist, has generously sprinkled line drawings throughout the book, bolstering its graphic novel feel.

The author holds a Master’s of Fine Arts degree in Fiction Writing from Columbia College and has been a police officer in Chicago’s suburbs for twenty-eight years. His other novels include *A Killing Frost*, *Windy City Knights*, *A Final Judgment*, *The Heist*, and *Freeze Me, Tender*.

Set at the very end of World War II, the life-altering conflict is referred to with appropriate frequency, giving a realistic glimpse into the after-effects of the cataclysmic event: “Now that all the parades have finished, my fellow Americans, and as we start to get back to the business of getting this great nation of ours back to normal, I have to ask you, did Johnny come marching home just to stand in the unemployment line?”

Black successfully brings the reader back to the 1940s and this bygone genre not only with the quick-starting, never-ending pace but also with the authentic, amusing and time-appropriate use of dialogue. “As far as I’m concerned,” the Wraith said, “you’re just another two-bit hood in a three-piece suit. Right now, the only thing you are is a step away from singing soprano.”

Melody of Vengeance may be a step back to a style of yesteryear, but it is certainly a step up in entertainment value.

DONNA RUSSO MORIN (February 8, 2007)

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