



Unremarkable

Geoff Habiger Coy Kisse

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Unremarkable is a thrilling gangland drama that reveals unexpected supernatural depths.

Unremarkable, a thriller written by Tangent Games cofounders Geoff Habiger and Coy Kisse, blends genres to tell an enthralling story about an ordinary man who gets in over his head in an increasingly perilous underworld.

Opening with the powerful and intriguing line “Al Capone murdered me tonight,” this gangland noir novel follows 1920s Chicago postal worker Saul Imbierowicz, whose mistress Moira gets seemingly randomly shot during the infamous St. Valentine’s Day Massacre. Saul gets mixed up in a citywide feud between Al Capone, Bugs Moran, and the feds. Though grounded in a convincing historical accuracy, the book takes a supernatural turn, and vampires soon bare their fangs.

Compelling writing depicts action such as police raids with tension and intrigue. Gunfights are captivating, dramatized but not romanticized; they show the human toll. *Unremarkable* makes its threats feel real, as when Capone angrily beats up Saul, pulling no punches.

Saul gets an in-depth characterization. He’s unsparingly self-deprecating when taking Moira out to a speakeasy, writing himself off as a skinny average Joe who’s “not very tall.” His arc is well-plotted and satisfying. Other characters do not get as much shade or nuance, in some cases serving as straightforward antagonists with little inner life of their own.

Dialogue motors the story forward and often seems realistic, though long stretches of expanded quotations come to seem like a crutch. Even so, the dialogue advances the narrative and comes across as appropriate to the historical era.

Unremarkable feels a little unsure about its Chicago backdrop, throwing out the Uptown neighborhood’s Green Mill Cocktail Lounge as a setting perhaps one too many times. The ironic characterization of the Chicago River as, in quotes, “picturesque” strikes an anachronistic chord—it was not then; it is very much so now. Though generally well-crafted, settings lean on stereotypes, as when one of the ubiquitous mobsters threatens a character with becoming “just one more unremarkable victim of our city’s violent culture.” Such knocks on the otherwise vivid setting are common.

Native Chicagoans will find much to nitpick, though the book is obviously well researched. For other audiences, *Unremarkable* shines. It is an entertaining story that isn’t confined by the shackles of stale genre conventions. Its interesting forays into the criminal underworld and vampiric intrigues captivate, and it takes a notably clever approach to what could easily have become a tired tale.

Unremarkable is, in fact, remarkable. It is a thrilling gangland drama that reveals unexpected supernatural depths.

JOSEPH S. PETE (January 3, 2018)

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