

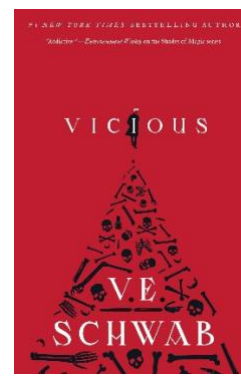
Vicious

By V.E. Schwab

Reviewed by: Puneet Gill, 17

Star Book Reviewer of Be the Star You Are! Charity

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Inside the gritty, dark tale of two former colleagues: Victor Vale and Eli Cardale, they undergo an experiment that tests their hypothesis on whether EO's (ExtraOrdinary individuals) exist. After a near-death experience of overdosing and drowning, it goes wrong. Eli inherits the ability to regenerate any flesh that came ruptured, but Victor can manipulate pain in both himself and others. Victor's abilities accidentally kill Eli's girlfriend, leading him in prison. Ten years later, Eli turns into Eli "Ever" and Victor escapes jail with the help of Sydney and Mitch. Eli proclaims to kill every other EO in existence with Victor and the others on his tail. The line between good and evil blur as the battle between resentment and self-righteousness collide in the final confrontation between the former friends.

Schwab's writing style evokes a unique perspective on the superhero genre as she conducts the lengths each character goes to get what they want. Victor's side of the story screams anti-hero as he has his morals to prevent Eli from murdering any EO's, yet manipulates the situation to get his way. On the other hand, Eli's goal resembles him as the true villain with motives on a crusade against his own kind. His fanaticism to initiate the deed as a call from God correlate to his arrogant persuasion of control. Additionally, Sydney, a girl that can raise the dead, contrasts with Victor as a person resonating hope, yet carries innocence to the situation at hand. These varying personalities built from the ground up praises the author's use of plot and character dynamics.

One concern about the book is that it could remain standalone without a sequel: Vengeful. Its provocative ending gave a resolution to how power corrupts humanity if taken advantage of, especially the case of Eli. The cliffhanger showed more than it told, notifying the message to the readers that hope continues in the rummage of chaos. Even with a direct connotation without any hidden riddles, Schwab intentionally puts this to engage all readers without exclusion.

This book may be restricted to ages 16 and up for mature themes, included but not limited to: violence, strong language, and darker portrayals of power and vengeance. This comic-book style of reading and deep dive into the minds of anti-heroes and villains expose the readers into an immersive thought process behind the justifications of each character's actions. Comic-book and/or superhero fans alike may indulge into the darker aspects of the supernatural and thought-provoking allegories. It can be a great library gift for a dear friend or family member that enjoys reading dark fiction and intense narratives.

Recommended Titles:

A Darker Shade of Magic, by V.E. Schwab

Vengeful, by V.E. Schwab

Steelheart, by Brandon Sanderson

American Gods, by Neil Gaiman

Hench, by Natalie Zina Walschots