

Media Information

Title

Extremity

Creator

Daniel Warren Johnson (creator and illustrator), Mike Spicer (colorist), and Rus Wooton (letterer)

Format

Physical Copies and Ebooks

Version

E-Books copies provided by publisher



Publication Date

September 12, 2017 (Trade Paperback #1)

May 8, 2018 (Trade Paperback #2)

October 22, 2024 (Deluxe Edition)

Length

136 Pages (Trade Paperback #1)

144 Pages (Trade Paperback #2)

312 Pages (Deluxe Edition)

Audience

General Adult (16+)

Summary

Thea, an artist whose right hand was forcibly removed after conflict, seeks revenge for the destruction of her home and family life. However, her resolve wavers as the quest for vengeance takes her down a dark path.

Reviewer Information

Sierra Schuman

Arizona State University

Editorial Information

Peer reviewed by Julia Brennan, copy edited by Jessica Schomberg

Reviewing For

Missing limb, trauma, depression, grief

Critical Review

Extremity is a 12-issue comic series by creator and illustrator Daniel Warren Johnson, who teams up with colorist Mike Spicer and letterer Rus Wooton to deliver an emotional narrative about loss and vengeance. *Extremity* follows remnants of Clan Roto after the rival Paznina Clan attacks their home. One casualty is Thea, a young artist who loses her mother and has her right hand forcibly removed by Nim, queen of the Paznina. Thea and her brother Rollo join their father Jerome's quest for vengeance, but Thea's loyalty wavers as Jerome's motivations and actions grow darker.

While common philosophies of revenge and "war is hell" exist, *Extremity* stands out by using visual storytelling and writing to focus on the physical and emotional losses that persist after conflict. Mental trauma is conveyed through writing, with some visual cues included. For instance, Thea loses her dominant drawing hand, and by extension, her "artist" identity. She uses a prosthetic device for everyday tasks and passes time by drawing with her left hand, but she grieves over her lost limb, lost skill, and lost happiness. Thea suffers from depression and PTSD, trapped in a cycle of violence and anguish. She regularly recounts the night she lost her mother and her hand, and she expresses more negative emotions than positive ones.

Yet Thea is not the only casualty of this cycle: other characters face mental trauma, too. The deaths of his wife and fellow Roto, compounded by their home's destruction and Thea's missing limb, cloud Jerome's mind, moving him away from protecting his family and towards revenge and bloodshed, no matter the risks. Rollo, a

pacifist at heart, feels isolated as his father and sister pursue violence, finding solace in a robotic friend.

These traumas also affect the Paznina clan: Nim's daughter Annora, who suffered severe facial disfigurement from a Roto attack, seeks acceptance from her war-hungry mother, becoming a hardened soldier and setting her purpose to kill any Roto. Disability is both a consequence of conflict and a stark personal identifier. Thea feels defined by her disability and trauma, enough so that she no longer sees herself as an artist and questions her self-worth. The removal of Thea's hand is justified as vengeance, the price for Annora's disfigurement, as her prior beauty had made her well-regarded. This portrayal does succeed in pushing the "war is hell" narrative, but it doesn't quite celebrate disability. Disability is seen as a detriment, but also as a catalyst for re-evaluating one's role in the world, especially in light of conflict.

Speaking of conflict, *Extremity* is hyperviolence at its finest. Johnson does not shy away from showing blood, guts, vomit, disfigurement, pulled teeth, and missing limbs. Paired with Spicer's vibrant colors and Wooton's edgy letters, all the action scenes highlight the revenge the clans seek for the damage done to them. Even apart from the hyperviolence, *Extremity* is full of appealing visual references. Several adventure styles blend together, from the *Mad Max* desert wasteland to the *Akira* cyberpunk aspects. The setting reminds me of Hayao Miyazaki's *Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind*, with floating islands and fantastical creatures. Even Thea's prosthetic hand references something: just as Ash Williams dons a chainsaw to destroy Deadites in the *Evil Dead* franchise, Thea changes her hand into a weapon multiple times to suit her fighting needs, whether slicing through foes or blasting away dire threats.

I would say that *Extremity* is not for the faint of heart with its hyperviolence, but if stomachached, it tells a sensible story about letting go of the past and discovering what really defines a person.

In Sum, This Book Is
Recommended

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