

“HACK/SLASH: ME WITHOUT YOU” (Comic Review)

Written by Jorge Sollis

Saturday, 22 January 2011 15:05



The one-shot special HACK/SLASH: ME WITHOUT YOU (Image Comics) is an action-packed issue about femme fatales, mobsters and assassins. Just as he did with Cassie Hack (previously in HACK/SLASH: MY FIRST MANIAC), creator Tim Seeley explores the origins of Vlad, the gentle giant. Before he became Hack’s sidekick, Vlad was just a lonely recluse walking the crime-ridden streets of Chicago.

After being abandoned by his mother, a disfigured baby is left lying inside a trashcan. A local butcher unexpectedly finds the unwanted infant and decides to raise the hideous child as his own. He named the orphan Vlad, in honor of Dracula. Vlad grew up over the years never really knowing where he truly came from.

The butcher did his best to raise his son, while keeping him hidden from the rest of the world. Unfortunately, time catches up with everyone, leaving Vlad alone to survive. The unsightly giant never stepped outside the butcher shop before and only knows how to use meat cleavers. Afraid of what the air will do to him, Vlad wears a gas mask as he finally strays from his comfort zone.

As Vlad buries his father at the cemetery, he stumbles upon an attractive stranger named Mari. After rescuing her from a stalker, Mari decides to keep Vlad around as her loyal bodyguard. While protecting Mari from danger as the Meat Man, Vlad is learning more about the outside world. After being alone for so many years, Vlad comfortably feels at home with her.



Unfortunately for Mari and Vlad, two highly trained assassins have been following them over the past few months. All of a sudden, the assassins have taken more of an interest in the bodyguard than their target. The past finally catches up with Vlad, who is the long-lost relative of an infamous mob boss.

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In an inventive twist, writer Seeley combines mobster movies with the horror genre. Vlad belongs to a Mafia family, who just happen to be monsters. Seeley structures an emotionally-driven plotline, providing insight and depth through Vlad's lyrical narration. The heart-wrenching conclusion leaves room to build the eventual confrontation between Cassie Hack and Vlad.

The striking artwork by Daniel Leister excels at creating noir-ish type of panels, full of shadows and low-key lighting. The gangster underbelly is illustrated with dark alleys, never-ending rain and trash littered streets. Leister vividly displays two sides of Vlad's personality. In action, the Meat Man is a ferocious beast, but when alone, Vlad sees the outside world with innocent, childlike wonder.

HACK/SLASH: ME WITHOUT YOU provides equal amounts of answers and questions to Vlad's ambiguous origin. If you are an avid fan, the series continues to be engaging. If you are new to this series, this issue suggests Seeley clearly has further plans to expand the HACK/SLASH origins.

For more about the HACK/SLASH series, go [here](#) .



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