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Tony Guarino grew up in the hard world of the bar and the poolroom, where every gangster was a hero and every cop an enemy. Only the tough made it. When he was just eighteen, he killed Al Spingola, gang boss and ruthless slayer, and was catapulted into notoriety and fame, but that was to be just the beginning of his rise to dominance.

Scarface Details

Date : Published 2005 by Bloomsbury (first published 1929)

ISBN : 9780747578611

Author : Armitage Trail , Maurice Coons

Format : Paperback 186 pages

Genre : Fiction, Mystery, Crime, Thriller, Noir

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From Reader Review Scarface for online ebook

Kashish Mehta says

Some of the old books are so much better than the new . Good quick read

Ramzi says

A fast paced book that is definitely gripping with timely dramatic events in the gang world, revolving around 'Tony' the main character. the author exploits the anti-hero sentiment with Tony, which would've been a new concept in storytelling during the 1920's era. I really enjoyed the book for it's context rather than the actual story-line.

Badly Drawn Girl says

It's important to go in knowing that this book inspired the movie but it isn't a recap of the movie. Scarface takes place during Prohibition. Tony Guarino is a young tough who falls in love (from a distance) with the girlfriend of a notorious mob leader. When he approaches her for a date she quickly dismisses him saying "Whenever you get a flock o'dough, kid, an' a big car, why come around and then maybe I'll date you." Tony rents an expensive car, wraps a hundred dollar bill around a wad of ones, and shows up the next night to make good on his promise to Vyvyan, the dangerous gangster Al Spingola's moll. Of course this doesn't go over well with big Al, and what follows quickly shows Tony's potential as a future mob leader.

This is a short book that documents the rise of "Scarface Tony", a name he receives after getting a long scar on his face in the war. He quickly pulls away from the pack of other gangsters and soon finds himself heading his own gang following the retirement of the former leader. While there is some gun play and violence, it's nothing like the movie. And there is no mention of drugs, the biggest money maker is alcohol.

The book is enjoyable, and fairly well written. But I fear most people will be disappointed if they pick it up thinking it will be a written version of the film. The copy of the book that I have actually has Al Pacino on the cover. The film is so loosely based on this story that it barely deserves the comparison. It should be seen for what it is, an entertaining story of the early mob in Chicago.

Katie Grainger says

Having not seen the film Scarface I can judge this novel on the story alone. I have to say I enjoyed Scarface, it is a gritty gangster drama which keeps the pages turning.

Scarface follows the story of Tony Guarino, a small time gangster who becomes the head of a powerful criminal organisation. After going to fight in World War I Tony returns to his home and finds he has been declared dead. This allows him assume a new identity and begin again. What follows in the life of Tony Guarino and his criminal empire.

A good story, easy to read and enough action to keep the pages turning.

Daenerys says

I read this book many years ago, but I remember clearly how it disappointed me. To this day it is one of the worst books I ever read.. the story would be interesting if the author had any style at all, but the whole narrative is just bland and has about the same verve and originality of a wikipedia entry, also, the author seems to be unable to use synonyms and therefore keeps using the same expression to describe the actions and attitude of the protagonist. Simply awful.

Kevin Rubin says

"She was the sort of girl that immediately and unconsciously made a young man ambitious for more intimate acquaintance and an old man regretful for his age."

That would've been a fantastic opening for the book, but it came later... It actually opens with Tony, a young nobody, killing a gang leader for his dame...

The book is about the rise of Tony through the ranks of gangsters in post-world war I Chicago, with Prohibition and lots of homemade alcohol and machine guns.

Tony starts off as a nobody, but after bumping off a gang leader to steal his girlfriend, he joins up with another mob, rising up in the ranks till an incident with the chief detective in the police forces him to flee Chicago and join the Army to fight in the war.

Coming back, with the eponymous facial scar he joins a different mob and through a deadly combination of brains and balls quickly rises up again. The only emotional feeling he shows is that he doesn't want to disappoint his mother by having her find out he's the most ruthless, successful gangster in town.

Written in 1930 it's fast paced and entertaining. Cars described seem more modern than I realized they were at that time, and the language feels like it fits old-time gangsters.

It makes me wonder if my own grandfather talked like that back when he was bookmaker for the mafia out of his New Jersey candy store in the 30's and early 40's.

Jeff says

Scarface (1930) This fairly straight forward gangster story is the basis of the 1930 Howard Hawks gangster film and it reads a lot like Little Caesar (1929), which was published a year earlier. Trail may or may not have read Burnett's piece, but it's conceivable that two separate writers could have come up with this straight-line narrative. A lot of the elements of the Ben Hecht script are in this novel, but they are better written in the movie. This does grant Tony Guarino some dignity and as in most tragedies, it is his character strengths that destroy him. Glad I read it.

George K. says

Ο Χ?ουαρντ Χοκς ε?ναι ο σκηνοθ?της της γνωστ?ς νου?ρ ταιν?ας του 1932 και το βιβλ?ο αυτ? γρ?φηκε απ? τον Χ?ουαρντ Χοκς με β?ση την ταιν?α αυτ?. Φυσικ?, τ?σο η ταιν?α του 1932 ?σο και η ταιν?α του 1983 με σκηνοθ?τη τον Ντε Π?λμα και πρωταγωνιστ? τον Αλ Πατσ?νο, βασ?ζονται στο βιβλ?ο του ?ρμιταζ Τρ?ιλ, που ?χει ?μως διαφορ?ς με το βιβλ?ο που δι?βασα.

Ο Σημαδεμ?νος αφορ?, β?βαια, τον Σημαδεμ?νο, τον Τ?νι Καμ?ντε, ?ναν γκ?νγκστερ που δεν μπορε?ς παρ? να τον αντιπαθ?σεις. Ε?ναι σκληρ?ς τ?πος, σκοτ?νει ε?κολα και χωρ?ς να το πα?ρνει κατ?καρδα και το μ?νο που θ?λει ε?ναι ν'αποκτ?σει πολλ? λεφτ? και δ?ναμη. Στο βιβλ?ο βλ?πουμε πως απ? απλ?ς σωματοφ?λακας εν?ς γκ?νγκστερ ?γινε μεγ?λος και τραν?ς, βγ?ζοντας απ? την μ?ση πολλο?ς ανθρ?πους και κ?νοντας δι?φορες βρομοδουλει?ς, ?πως λαθρεμπ?ριο ποτ?ν και ?πλων.

Το βιβλ?ο ?δειχνε τα χρον?κια του, οι σκην?ς δρ?σης μου φ?νηκαν κ?πως ?νευρες, η εξ?λιξη της ιστορ?ας μ?λλον αναμεν?μενη δ?χως εκπλ?ξεις και αλλαγ?ς στην πλοκ?, αλλ? η γραφ? ?ταν αρκετ? καλ?, με κ?ποιες ωρ?ες ατ?κες και προτ?σεις.

Το βιβλιαρ?κι στα ελληνικ? ε?ναι σπ?νιο, αλλ? δεν χ?νετε και τ?ποτα αν δεν το διαβ?σετε. Μπορε?τε κ?λλιστα να δε?τε την ταιν?α του Ντε Π?λμα, την οπο?α ?χω στην ταινιοθ?κη μου αλλ? δεν ?χω προκ?ψει ακ?μα να την δω.

Christopher says

Published in 1930, the year of its author's untimely death (Armitage Trail was a pseudonym for Maurice Coons), *Scarface* was the inspiration for the (far better) 1932 Howard Hawks film of the same title, which starred Paul Muni. Somehow, this mediocre novel led to a fairly robust cinematic narrative that was then remade (well), by Brian De Palma, in 1983, with Al Pacino. Loosely based on the life of gangster Al Capone, *Scarface* is meant to be a ripped-from-the-headlines tale of greed and violence on the streets of prohibition-era Chicago. Instead, it reads as a dramatically inert, dreary and exposition-laden series of criminal activities by a man we are repeatedly told is both smart and capable, yet who behaves like an impulsive, unruly and self-destructive baboon. Which is it, Mr. Coons? Furthermore, although I could find nothing in my (granted, limited) reproach to support the following impression, the book feels as if it were published in serial form, since each chapter partially re-introduces characters with information we cannot possibly have forgotten from just a few pages ago. I grieve for Coons, who died of a heart attack at only 28, but this is not good writing.

Rachel says

The silliness of this book does not quite manage to rescue it from mediocrity. The Brian de Palma movie, based somewhat loosely on the book, (which is loosely based on the life of Al Capone) is much better.

Psychogroupie says

I'm not sure if the novel was gritty for a gangster novel. Nothing surprised me or had me gripping the chair for suspense. While reading I also thought the clichés were so awful. One line that really hated was "get a dose of their own medicine". I didn't think it was a gangster line, not that I knew what would sound gangster. But that surely didn't seem a good one. The author also had to recap every characteristics/traits of every character every time they get reintroduced or thought of which I thought was really unnecessary.

Amorish Roychoudhury says

Very different from the movies it supposedly inspired. As you read along, you realise how different it is, but almost halfway through the book, you start spotting the similarities with the Paul Muni film and chuckle to yourself. Also makes you wonder at the genius of Ben Hecht, who took some of the characters and plot points and did his own thing on the screenplay. A very compelling book. It's a pity Armitage Trail had to go so young. He surely would have produced some great work over the years.

Peter says

The movie is one of my alltime favourites!

Noel Thingvall says

The pulpy writing style makes for some great action setpieces and a nice sense of gangster atmosphere, but that's about all I enjoyed in the book. The dialogue is all the old mobster speak clichés amped up to a ridiculous degree, there's no real structure to the story so much as it's a collection of scenes with people filling us in on important characters only as they momentarily become important to things, and Tony isn't really all that much of a compelling character. It's not awful, it's just a rushed bit of cheap lit that never takes a minute to make me care, and even the tragic sweeps of the climax ring hollow because, like everything, they just come out of nowhere instead of being escalating events woven into the story.

I'm sure fans of pulp and gangster lit will enjoy it better than I did, but I just didn't connect with the book on any level.

Carolina Morales says

Firstly, don't let yourself be lead by the cover! Brian de Palma's 1983 film starring (hot hot hot) Al Pacino has almost nothing to do with this novel. The book character Scarface resembles a great deal more Al Capone's profile, a mobster building his empire by illicit substances and alcohol during the Great Depression. Very interesting and definitively worth reading, though.

