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Jarringly unsettling and genuinely thought-provoking, SEVERED #1 (Image Comics) follows a doomed runaway seeking salvation from a flesh-eating monster who repeatedly crosses paths with evil. This haunting tale for mature audiences is sure to make your skin crawl.

Retired grandfather and loving husband Jake Garron has carried a secret with him since the age of 12, and his peaceful world is shattered when a mysterious letter shows up, bringing trouble from the past. In a flashback to 1916, we are introduced to a sly, grinning General Electric salesman named Mr. Porter. Mr. Porter, you see, hides razor-sharp teeth behind his grin. Razor-sharp teeth with which to feed on the innocent. It is clear something tragic has happened in Jake's past, and surely Mr. Porter played a role.

With SEVERED #1, authors Scott Snyder (2011 Eisner award-winning AMERICAN VAMPIRE) and Scott Tuft have crafted a coming-of-age tale for Jake, set against a backdrop of America's pioneering years. Years full of promise hindered by great evil. Artist Attila Futaki (THE

LIGHTNING THIEF) illustrates the 1900s in superb detail. His take on the sinister Mr. Porter goes against the standard villain grain, with a characterization quite ordinary and vulnerable looking. Details, like the look of awe in a young boy's face when he sees an automobile for the first time, are given special attention, and strong symbolism is found throughout.

Once readers understand the metaphors at hand, they may be turned off by SEVERED's subject matter. The antagonist/monster-in-disguise is a pedophile luring children into his home, an unsettling realization given added weight when considering the eerily realistic conversations between Porter and the orphan boy. That being said, this book packs a profound message about the loss of innocence that will surely hit home with readers, and the tone is carefully rooted in reality.

Made with noteworthy maturity and remarkable sophistication, SEVERED #1 arrives with a gripping plot, a compelling setting and an unforgettable monstrosity in Mr. Porter. Highly recommended for anyone interested in a powerful adult horror comic experience.

For more on SEVERED, click here .