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IN STORES NOW



BOOK WORMS

"Blankets" by Craig Thompson Top Shelf

For Craig Thompson, love is a wonderful thing filled with pain and joy. The innocence of first love is countered at every turn by the haunting warnings of temptation that the Bible has taught since his childhood. In "Blankets," an almost 600 page autobiographical comic book, Thompson recounts his first love among other memories of his childhood.

"Blankets" begins plainly, with a simple panel that reads: "When we were young, my little brother Phil and I shared the same bed." The simplicity of this panel is a good indication of what comes next in Thompson's touching rendition of his youth.

Throughout the graphic novel, the reader is introduced to a wide variety of characters that orbit around young Thompson. From his wild brother Phil to his sometimes cruel father, Thompson reflects upon the past with enough sincerity that readers will be tempted to take everything he says for granted, no questions asked. When Craig and his brother would fight over who was hogging the sheets at night, his father's solution was to throw little Phil into a hole in the wall for the night. Craig and Phil's babysitter once took each of them aside and exposed himself.

Whether these events actually took place is never questioned as one reads "Blankets." Thompson utilizes such an honest narrative voice, readers will not bother to question what is being presented to them.

"Blankets'" main story surrounds Thompson's emotionally turbulent first love. Thompson meets Raina at church camp and together each finds in the other comfort and peace that they had been lacking. Thompson had always been an outsider, and in Raina he discovers a friend who makes any other person obsolete. Raina comes from an emotionally-distant family in which she was given an overload of responsibility at a young age.

From their first encounter, each finds a serenity that they embrace along with each other. Thompson details his descent into love with a poetic meter that will remind readers of a love song. Not all things are rosy for the young lovers, though. Thompson is constantly at odds with his upbringings and battles with the dual nature of love, striving to find a balance between worship and lust.

The use of beautifully symbolic illustrations helps to tie together his love with the undertones of his faith. The story of Thompson and

Raina's love is bookmarked with reflections about growing up with his brother and their adventures and misadventures.

Thompson's illustrations perfectly convey the innocence of childhood with almost a cartoonish atmosphere that is balanced with the many touches of intricate detail and deftly drawn emotions. The simplicity of snow is turned into masterful artwork with clever panel layouts and creative uses of negative space. The black and white nature of the illustrations actually works well to convey the black and white nature of remembrance. The past is the only thing clear to Thompson as he looks back on his year with Raina.

"Blankets" is a story of love and loss that is not only an easy read, but a poignant one as well. Everybody who has experienced the bitterness that comes when a relationship that once you thought would last forever begins to fall apart will be touched. They read Thompson's autobiography. Fans of pop art will appreciate the beauty found in the simplicity of Thompson's art. "Blankets" is, in short, an excellent read that manages to offer incredible insight into the life of a normal teenager experiencing life, in all its wonderful pain.



—Robert Santoro

- Use this as firestarter
- Read only when insomnia hits
- Buy it at a used bookstore
- Buy it in hardback
- Buy a copy for your coffee table, nightstand, and bookshelf

PEOPLE IN THE NEWS

Clooney raises funds for father's congressional bid

FORT MITCHELL, Ky. (AP) — Actor George Clooney helped raise about \$140,000 Saturday at private fund-raisers for his father's congressional campaign.

Nick Clooney, a longtime Cincinnati televi-

sion personality, is the lone Democratic candidate for the 4th District seat of retiring U.S. Rep. Ken Lucas.

George Clooney spoke briefly at two events in northern Kentucky, but stayed away from making political statements. Instead, he talked about his father and how he wanted to help him with the election.

"It's great having my son come in to help,"

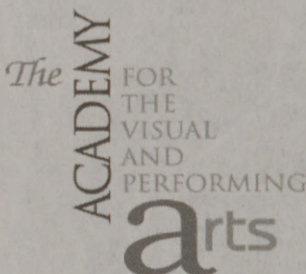
Nick Clooney said. "It's family. When my son and my daughter show up and help me, it means a lot and it shows me this is more than just politics. We still matter to one another."

About 150 people paid \$250 each to mingle with the actor at The Oriental Wok, a restaurant in Fort Mitchell. In another fund-raiser, about 100 people paid \$1,000 each to see the actor at a private home.

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