

Dark & Twisted: The Killing Hole

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An isolated teenager finds a companion in another loner, but their friendship leads to tragedy in the graphic novel *Dark & Twisted: The Killing Hole*.

In 1979, Stewart lives in Virginia with his divorced mother. He meets Peter in their apartment complex; Peter shares Stewart's disdain for school. They bond over horror movies, music, and marijuana. For a hideout, the boys dig a wide, deep hole and cover it. When Peter arrives at the hole covered in blood, carrying a gun, and prepared to exact revenge on everyone who's wronged him, Stewart commits an act that haunts him.

The story is gripping and tense, anchored by the boys' relationship. It unfolds in a natural manner, with flashes of contrast in how the boys handle their difficulties. For example, Stewart discusses his mother, who "could be harsh sometimes" but also takes him to see *Alien* even though she hates horror films. It's a detail that shows the difference between the boys' support systems in a nuanced way.

The color artwork is outstanding, layered, and intimate, employing expressive techniques in its panels: Stewart's screaming mother is set against a heavy-lined background to convey the force of her outburst, and when the boys drink alcohol, Peter's features, along with the bottle he's holding, morph into psychedelic proportions.

Dark & Twisted: The Killing Hole is a haunting graphic novel about death and its consequences.

PETER DABBENE (July / August 2024)

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