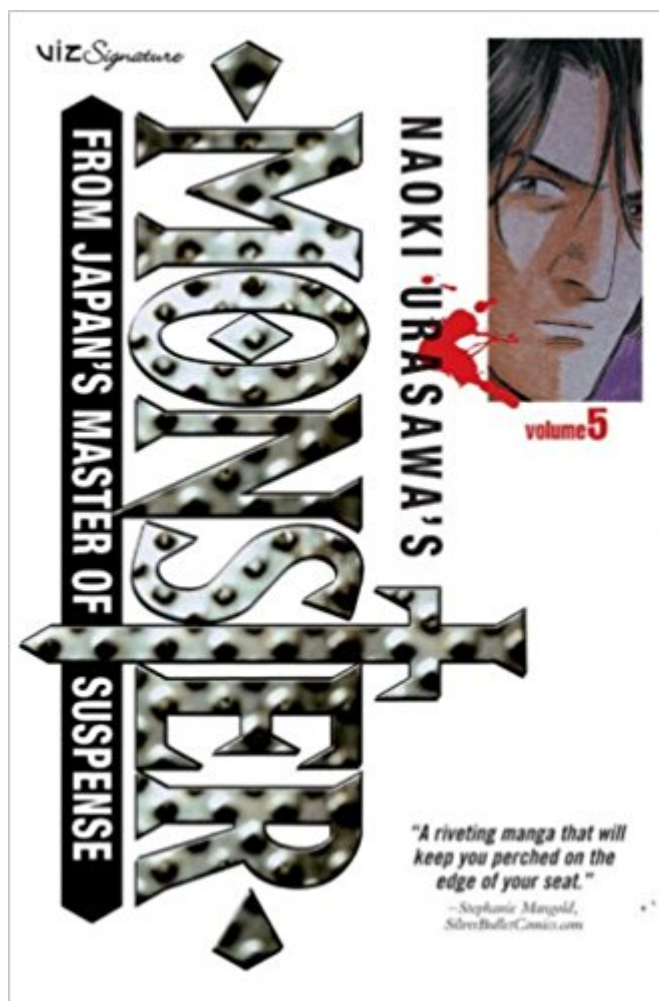


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Naoki Urasawa's Monster, Vol. 5



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Customer Reviews

Naoki Urasawa's career as a manga artist spans more than twenty years and has firmly established him as one of the true manga masters of Japan. Born in Tokyo in 1960, Urasawa debuted with *BETA!* in 1983 and hasn't stopped his impressive output since. Well-versed in a variety of genres, Urasawa's oeuvre encompasses a multitude of different subjects, such as a romantic comedy (*Yawara! A Fashionable Judo Girl*), a suspenseful human drama about a former mercenary (*Pineapple ARMY*; story by Kazuya Kudo), a captivating psychological suspense story (*Monster*), a sci-fi adventure manga (*20th Century Boys*), and a modern reinterpretation of the work of the God of Manga, Osamu Tezuka (*Pluto*: Urasawa x Tezuka; co-authored with Takashi Nagasaki, supervised by Macoto Tezuka, and with the cooperation of Tezuka Productions). Many of his books have spawned popular animated and live-action TV programs and films, and 2008 saw the theatrical release of the first of three live-action Japanese films based on *20th Century Boys*. No stranger to accolades and awards, Urasawa is a three-time recipient of the prestigious Shogakukan Manga Award, a two-time recipient of the Osamu Tezuka Cultural Prize, and has received the Kodansha Manga Award. Similarly, *Monster* has been nominated three times for the Eisner Award in America. Urasawa has also become involved in the world of academia, and in 2008 accepted a guest teaching post at Nagoya Zokei University, where he teaches courses in, of course, manga.

This is a very long series.. I got bored of it - not my cup of tea.. however it is an excellent story line and the illustrations are fantastic. If you are a Urasawa fan like I am - you will enjoy the illustrations

even if you don't like the story.

This is the continuation of a series of Manga. Once you start reading the first volume, you can't put it down! With each volume the plot gets thicker and the suspense increases. I loved how the story takes place over different parts of Europe; there is a feel that this is Jason Borne in Manga form! I thought it was also neat to see how this was originally in Japanese but the author and the artist gave great attention to detail concerning Europe, it's like looking at the specific city and location and the subculture. This series does a good job with developing the characters and getting the readers interested as soon as they are introduced. The part that made me interested in this series are the philosophical themes throughout the book. The antagonist is known as "him," or the "monster." We often think of monster as aesthetically ugly but here the villain is someone that is attractive and seems normal. This villain is also one who is able to perpetuate his plans by manipulating other people and taking advantage of what motivates them. In some sense the monster is a demonic figure or an Anti-Christ. It made me ponder a lot about how this illustrates spiritual truth of spiritual warfare that the devil out there is one who knows us and takes advantage of our weaknesses and motivation.

Monster is a carefully constructed thriller that builds with each passing chapter. It really must be read from the beginning. Tenma turns to an old classmate whose work with serial criminals might shed some light onto the questions surrounding Johan's behavior, while Nina follows a different lead and Inspector Lunge's obsession with his own search begins to compromise his methods...I adore the way Urasawa can intertwine secondary characters and side stories along Tenma's journey without losing tension. The brief glimpses of the supporting cast reveal complex, fully developed characters despite short "screen time" and always pose interesting ethical and philosophical questions regarding Tenma or other members of the core cast. Three main characters get solid focus here, and all of the stories are engaging and intriguing. The story regarding a corrupt cop seen earlier in the series was particularly compelling. The deliberate pacing won't be to everyone's taste, but I'm loving every suspenseful, character-driven page of this fantastic manga. Highly recommended.

Naoki Urasawa, *Monster: After the Carnival* (ViZ, 1995) The cops, of course, think Tenma is responsible not only for Johan's murders, but all the events in the last volume as well. (This despite

all the witnesses who talk about how Tenma saved them, etc.) When Tenma contacts an old classmate of his who's gone into psychology, the police approach him and ask if he'd be willing to wear a wire. The psychologist originally subscribes to the police's theory that Johan is a separate personality of Tenma's; will the evidence Tenma shows him change his outlook, or will their meeting at the carnival be a trap to lure Tenma into the clutches of the police? Very good stuff, as usual. ***

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