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Junji Ito , Yuji Oniki (Translator)

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Kurôzu-cho, a small fogbound town on the coast of Japan, is cursed. According to Shuichi Saito, the withdrawn boyfriend of teenager Kirie Goshima, their town is haunted not by a person or being but by a pattern: *uzumaki*, the spiral, the hypnotic secret shape of the world. It manifests itself in everything from seashells and whirlpools in water to the spiral marks on people's bodies, the insane obsessions of Shuichi's father and the voice from the cochlea in our inner ear. As the madness spreads, the inhabitants of Kurôzu-cho are pulled ever deeper into a whirlpool from which there is no return!

Uzumaki Details

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Author : Junji Ito , Yuji Oniki (Translator)

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From Reader Review Uzumaki for online ebook

♥ Emm ♥ says

"This town is contaminated by spirals!"

It's contaminated with many stranger things than spirals, if you ask me.

Vampiric mothers-to-be, a lighthouse whose beam melts flesh, hair that takes a life of its own, all products of madness caused by an unknown force which is slowly taking over a sleepy mountain town.

I read this series before it was that popular, being kind of a quirky cult classic. I owe *Uzumaki* and its artist a lot. This started a complete re-evaluation of the way I look at art, I had actually never seen anything like this before it.

Uzumaki nowadays is known as **the** quintessential horror manga, unparalleled in Lovecraftian weirdness, compulsively detailed and realistic artwork, and a story that executed by anyone else, wouldn't have made a bit of sense. Does it make any logical sense as it is? Well... don't worry about logic, an overrated silly thing in books.

But if I'm honest, while it's Ito's best-known and best-loved work, I don't think it's his best. I really think his short stories are better, and have more focus than his series, which as great as they are tend to drift all over the place. Even this book drifts into short-story mentality during the middle. The infamous hospital chapters, the jack-in-the-box and the lighthouse segment are all **never mentioned** by the characters again, despite being very freaky and traumatic. They feel like stand-alone short stories that Ito remolded to fit into the narrative. However, they are some of the most intense, horrific, *very* well-executed chapters of the series.

Anyway, I can't even put in words how extremely deserving the high ratings this, and most of Ito's work has. I recommend looking into his short story collections as well, however, as to me they seem more composed and better-suited to his style.

Story - 4/5

Art - 6/5

Characterization - 4/5

Inventiveness - 5/5

General - 4.5/5

Baal Of says

This was the most recent selection for the Nightmare Factory book club, which I had suggested based on my reading of the Viz editions in the early 2000's. I loved *Uzumaki* when I first read it, which then launched me on the pursuit of reading anything I could find by Junji Ito, and for me this re-reading didn't just reveal how well *Uzumaki* holds up, but cemented this story as my favorite horror manga. Horror is particularly difficult to pull off well in comic form. For many people, the criticisms will immediately turn to discussions of how less is more, and how the most frightening monsters are those you never see, etc. I've never quite bought into those notions, even though I think there is an element of truth. I love not only the suspenseful, hidden evil type stories, but also the gory, sticky, noxious, effluvia-thick fun of body horror.

The first night I cracked open the covers of this gorgeous volume, I read nearly 300 pages, and that night I had intense dreams about spirals, that were continuations of the story I had just read. I am always seeking good nightmares, as opposed to the mundane dreams of work/life anxiety I usually have. It is a rare book

indeed that can infect my brain in that way, thus five stars is the only possibility. That night I felt like I was being drawn into this world, and my mind could not escape, just like the characters in the book.

Junji Ito has a masterful touch when it comes to portraying bizarre and grotesque ideas, and his style of weird stands out from much in the genre. His artwork is gorgeous, and the nightmarish obsessions with spirals makes for some amazing panels. The number of ways he manages to work spirals into the various chapters is impressive. The book starts off feeling rather episodic in nature, as if the full story had not yet been conceived, but as events transpire, the disparate elements are pulled together into an over-arching narrative that clearly blends Lovecraftian themes into Junji Ito's unique vision of madness and obsession. I liked this book better the second time around, because I could see the various chapters pointing the way towards the end, and it was also better served as a single volume, instead of three separate books spread out over too much time.

So on to a few favorite scenes, which I will tag a potential spoilers (view spoiler)

The only idea I didn't like was the gang riding the whirlwinds, because it crossed over into typical manga fare, feeling more like a goofy martial arts farce. Some people in our discussion group thought the ending was weak, but personally, I liked it. Endings are difficult, particularly in weird fiction, and in this case I liked the way it wrapped up with a feeling of both closure, and cyclical inevitability. Unlike much western horror, where people can fight back, here the characters have little power, and even when they struggle, they ultimately lose. The forces arrayed against them are too strong, too ancient, and too powerful, and for me that makes for an effective sense of dread.

Anthony Vacca says

Possibly one of the most inspired hunks of derangement I have ever had the pleasure to thumb through. Manga maker Junji Ito conjures up an epic phantasmagoria that obsessively plumbs the most modest of shapes, a spiral, for all the perversity and horror to be found within its endless contours. Set in a small town, the first segment of chapters presents various ways in which a spiral can configure into madness, mutation and murder. A slow-moving fatso turns into a lusty snail. A battle for popularity ensues between two high-school divas with increasingly treacherous coifs. The local incinerator for the dead starts pumping out winding trails of ash that wreak ecological havoc. A woman decides to rid her body of any spiral that may naturally form within her body. The eye of a tornado gets the hots for a particular girl and hilarity ensues. Bad things happen with a maternity ward and umbilical cords. And then things get even weirder. By the time the reader reaches the last two-hundred pages, chaos reigns as the town turns into a wasteland of freakish mutants and good old-fashioned human depravity. This is a horror yarn of grand scope that is filled with wild free-wheeling inventiveness, wicked black humor and grotesquely detailed drawings.

Tristan says

SPIRAL INTO MADNESS

"I saw it myself now. His eyes were spinning around and around...separately."

Among storytellers of whatever stripe, conventional wisdom dictates that there are two genres which you have to work the hardest at to perfect: comedy and horror (the kind that evokes dread, not the one that assaults you with cheap jump-scares). Both are very specific responses to elicit from your audience, and

enormously tough to pull off.

It shouldn't come as a surprise then that horror comics rarely succeed in unsettling me to my core. Unlike some of its cinematic counterparts - which naturally greatly benefit from the use of sound and music- there always seems to be a frustrating disconnect, an invisible barrier erected between what's pictured on the page and the mind that is targeted to be affected.

This is not what happened while I, as in a trance, was thumbing through Junji Ito's epic *Uzumaki*, in all likelihood the most genuinely disturbing, iconographically nightmarish piece of sequential art I have thus far come across (believe it or not, the pictures shown here are relatively tame compared to the fevered phantasmogoria this manga is brimming with).

Formerly a placid Japanese coastal town, Kurôzu-cho has fallen prey to a series of strange, seemingly unexplainable occurrences, all somehow having to do with spiral patterns. They pop up in the unlikeliest of places, while infiltrating, taking over, contaminating, even mutating human bodies, and slowly but surely its inhabitants one by one succumb to its mysterious spell. Some turn obsessed and go mad (one woman after learning that a part of the inner ear, the cochlea, has a spiral shape hysterically stabs herself there with a pair of scissors), literally turn into snails or find their bodies twisting themselves into a coil. Other, highly inventive, yet disagreeable fates await the rest.

This premise (secluded village, odd happenings, ensuing madness and hopelessness) does remind one vaguely of a certain early 20th century American horror writer, and the comparison isn't at all a trite one to make. To be sure, it has a distinct whiff of the Lovecraftian to it, especially as a hinting at a deeper horror - on the cosmic scale - is never far away.

Yet even though Ito has taken some noticable cues from one of the acknowledged masters of the weird, he had the good sense - and artistic flair - to make it wholly his own, delivering a new horror to the modern world. Utilising an episodic structure for his storytelling, with our protagonist Kirie each time witnessing a strange event, he takes us through the various stages of the infection, slowly ramping up its severity, right until the inescapable bleakness of its conclusion.

Some suspension of disbelief is required of course (it's highly doubtful the villagers would have stuck around that long, if they hadn't committed mass-suicide under the direction of some Japanese Jim Jones first), but in this genre, that just comes with the territory.

I for one applaud Junji Ito for this expertly crafted masterpiece, and consider it to be more than worthy of inclusion in the Hall of Fame of the weird. If the patently bizarre and transgressive holds even the tiniest shred of appeal for you, I very much urge giving this collection a look.

Just remember to turn your attention away from the page once in a while, if you please. It tends to set its claws into you...

Hmmm... Now what's with that spider in the corner back there? It's moving around so fast, going into spirals, spinning spirals, ever more spirals, unending SPIRALS...

Sara says

For the past few months, every time I walk into our local comic store I found myself hesitating near this book and petting it. I don't really read manga, but for some reason the prettiness of the edition, the bizarre and creepy cover art, and the spiral....just kept drawing me in.

So I bit the bullet and bought it (it isn't owned by my library system), and I am SO GLAD I DID. I feel like the art in most manga is kind of light and airy and sketchy, and it feels like it's just there to representationally move the story along. This manga is all about the art. The art is it. This is horror art at its best -- the images are disturbing and detailed and unnerving, and they make the story (instead of just existing to serve the story).

The first half of Uzumaki is probably one of the best horror comics (comics, in general?) I've ever read. The vignette style works perfectly, and I just totally could not get the art out of my head. It's just so....so scary. The second half I didn't like as much. It felt like it had moved into a more traditional story line and focused on the characters too much. The first half used the characters to bring out the terror, and the second half for some reason got too plotty for me.

But man, the art. It is SO WELL DONE. If you love horror and you haven't read this comic, you have to. The art and the first half of the series alone are worth five stars.

Amber says

When Shuichi Saito's father turns himself into a human spiral killing himself getting cremated, his ashes are accidentally sent up into the atmosphere and land into dragonfly pond. This results in a horrifying curse that is spread onto the small coastal town of Kurôzu-cho, Japan. Can Kirie Goshima and the rest of the town survive the Spiral curse that is Uzumaki? Read on and find out for yourself.

This was a pretty good and freaky horror anime. The artwork is great and it had a good storyline too. If you are looking for something different to read in a manga then definitely look for this book at your local library and wherever books are sold.

Mur Lafferty says

Excellent horror. The gore is low and the "OMG WEIRD F-ED UP STUFF" is high. The only downside is there is supposedly a romantic subplot (it is kind of important near the end) that fails to deliver. If they didn't say "boyfriend" I would assume the protag's boyfriend was just a neighbor who was a good friend. But this was amazing overall.

Oscar says

La acción se sitúa en Kurouzu, un pequeño pueblo japonés, donde asistiremos a los más extraños sucesos. Ya desde el inicio, Kirie, la protagonista, tropieza con el padre de su novio Suichi cuando está observando atentamente un caracol. La locura no ha hecho más que empezar. Y es que el pueblo está contaminado por

las espirales, como no deja de decir Suichi.

'Uzumaki' (Espiral), de Junji Ito, se publicó entre 1998 y 1999, y es sin duda un referente en cuanto al cómic de terror se refiere. Había visto por aquí y por allá alguna imagen, pero no sabía hasta donde podía llegar la obsesiva, perturbada y surrealista imaginación de este creador japonés. La historia es muy buena y el dibujo excelente. Sin duda, no deja indiferente.

Roxana-M?lina Chiril? says

It all starts with a man who becomes obsessed with spirals - he collects kimonos with spiral patterns, he looks endlessly at snails, he commissions a spiral bowl from the potter in town. And, well, there are quite a lot of spiral-y patterns in nature, just look at those leaves!

But as time goes by, his obsession grows so much that his wife throws out his spiral collection, and he decides he can turn his body into spirals: he spins his eyes around, he rolls his tongue into a chameleon-like spiral and, eventually, dies after breaking his whole body to fit himself into a spiral shape.

It's only the beginning of odd and increasingly terrifying occurrences, which slowly make the town descend from normal life into a terrified struggle for survival as the spiral affects the lives of their inhabitants, killing them in horrific ways, turning them into monstrous creatures, and wrecking their homes with whirlwinds.

There's a lot of body horror here, with people twisted into spiraling shapes in each and every way. Eventually, as the town is driven mad, the darker side of the human psyche surfaces - is it bad to eat a human being if you're starving and they're not human anymore? What if they're really delicious?

The art is really good, by which I mean that it'll probably haunt me for a while. And the story escalates really well, really knowing how to become more and more horrifying as it goes on. Kudos to Junji Ito, now I'll try to remove some of the images from my memories so I can sleep tonight.

Oriana says

Oh man, Jugs & Capes. This club sure knows how to expand my horizons.

I haven't read much (any?) manga. And this one, which seems to be something of an international cult horror fave, was certainly an interesting place to start.

It'd be tough to be terribly spoilery because any description I give you won't make much sense if you don't read the book. But let's just say that *Uzumaki* is about a town that gets overtaken by spirals. (I know, right?) This takeover assumes many forms, from spiral-shaped scars that eat your face to spiral-patterned plates that poison your food, from spiraling tornados that knock down your damn house to spiraling hair that chokes anyone who tries to cut it off.

Oh look, the internet has made us a gif of what that last one looks like before it gets deadly:

So yeah, with 300 pages of spirally craziness? Obviously the art is incredible. The book is really hypnotic, in fact, especially if you wait until two days before book club to buy it and have to burn through the whole thing in an evening.

As an avowed anti-horror person, my #1 hope going in was that the book didn't give me malevolent lingering nightmares. And that, at least, was a win: despite being often horrifying, I didn't really actually find it *scary*. Which is so strange for me! I get scared by like a single well-crafted measure of ominous music, or a single sparsely spooky paragraph of text, or even a shadowy dark split-second shot in a movie—and yet this book, replete with face-eating spirals, vampire babies, and jack-in-the-box zombies, left me... well to be honest, it left me a little bit bored. Or, well, not *bored* really, but definitely not afraid.

Partially I think this was due to the melodrama that is (I think?) inherent in manga. I mean there's so much AIEEE-ing and cartoonishly gaping mouths, so much scampering around and overplayed reaction shots, that it's tough to keep a patina of fear going. Also in fact so much of the "scary" stuff here is actually gross-out, like people turning into giant slimy snails, or a baby being surgically reinserted into its mom, or two people twisting together so tightly that their bodies become enmeshed. Like b-grade horror, which even I know isn't the same kind of scary as when there's a girl alone in a dark house who hears a whisper-soft *tap tap tap* at the window.

Another *Uzumaki* gif? Okay:

The last thing I'll say is that this book is really, really, really long. I mean, yes, this is a combination of three volumes, each of which is probably made up of dozens of issues, but it's supposed to be a whole, right? And a lot of the time what it felt like was a whole lot of repetitive vignettes where the same characters go through similar but slightly different horrors, while everyone in the town dies in a different horrible (spiral-related) ways. Some of the vignettes didn't even *have* spirals, and some didn't seem to fit into the storyline either temporally or character-wise. And then the ending... Several J&C ladies felt that the ending redeemed much of the journey, but I thought it was kind of a letdown.

So. Even though I didn't really love this, I'm not at all sorry I read it. It was a great departure from the twee graphic novel memoirs we often read (though I adore those!), and the art was fantastic, and the story was super weird and in many ways awesome.

Here's one more gif to close us out:

Beatriz Aguilar Gallo says

Grotescamente brutal.

Garrett says

For the most part this is a good manga. A good setup and a great conclusion. A ridiculous nonsensical premise. And beautiful surrealistic artwork from horror manga master Jungi Ito. The one problem though

was that there are too many filler stories that feel like side chapters. It starts off as a linear plot and then develops into seemingly different short stories, but the story eventually picks back up again towards the end. I feel like this would make a fantastic video game. Please Hideo Kojima?

Jedi JC Daquis says

While in the hospital, I read *Uzumaki*. This huge tome that collects all three volumes is the horror-child of Junji Ito. It has a twisted (no pun intended) imagery that is just so eerily beautiful to look at. What started as episodic and seemingly strange events that took place in the town of Kurouzo-cho became horrific mystery that involves the whole town.

The first few chapters of this deluxe edition are full of promise and genuinely scary. With the spirals he drew, Junji Ito has effectively made the graphic novel medium into a true horror material. *Uzumaki* doesn't have any jumpscare because such are not effective in comics. Rather, these images give a strong psychological impression to its readers. I'm telling you, his spirals are both mesmerizing and scary to look at.

Yes, I did say promising, because the whole series spiraled (now, pun is intended) from genuine horror to a mess of different things. It seemed like Junji Ito has lost most of his inspiration that made him start *Uzumaki* in the first place. It doesn't feel scary anymore. Perhaps it is the utter indifference of the people to the weird and supernatural events that are taking place in their town that turned me off or the shallow connection of objects which are supposed to be contaminated and scary just because they resemble a spiral (the spiral hairstyle, seriously?). The origin of the spiral phenomenon of the town has also been vaguely explained without offering any complete resolution.

If there is one thing that is consistent all throughout the graphic novel is Junji Ito's drawing talent. There is always this giddy reader anticipation of what s/he will see next, a longing to see the next full-page panel will reveal. *Uzumaki* may not be the definitive horror manga you'll read but it is certainly on top of the list in this genre.

destiny ? howling libraries says

If you've been following my reviews for a while, you may remember that, a few months back, I accidentally got Volume 2 instead of Volume 1 from the library and decided to read it, anyways. I was less than impressed (and incredibly confused) and chalked it halfway up to not having read the beginning of the story (my mistake) and halfway up to this manga just not being my cup of tea. I decided recently that I wanted to give it another try by reading the entire story, since I know this is a very popular horror manga, so I managed to get my hands on a copy of the deluxe edition version, which has all of the volumes in one hardback.

Having learned the beginning of the story now, I'll say that *Uzumaki* is a very intriguing concept. The book takes place in a city that has been overtaken by spiral designs which are slowly causing the city's inhabitants to go entirely mad. It causes mutations and illnesses in people, and nobody who enters the city is able to leave. Random whirlwinds appear from time to time, destroying houses and sucking people up to never be seen again.

The artwork in this book is probably capable of being pasted beside the dictionary definition of the word "grotesque". There is so much *gross* imagery (like people slowly turning into massive snails), and while gore doesn't bother me, this is just beyond my comfort level of "ick factor". If you enjoy stuff that makes you

squirm and go "ewww", though, this is probably perfect for you.

As far as the plot itself goes, it's bizarre but kind of like a train wreck: it's so god-awful you just can't stop looking. Would I ever read this manga again? Highly doubtful. Did I enjoy it, though? In a weird way... yes.

Brittney says

I meant to read this in one day, but it felt like it took me forever. (Maybe I'm turning into a snail person?)

The good:

- The art.
- Some really creepy body horror moments, especially in the early chapters.

The bad:

- The characters don't act like people. There's no clear motivation for what they do, especially staying in town. (Yeah, it's sort of explained right at the end of the book, but that explanation feels too late and too insufficient.) They don't change or grow in convincing ways, and I spent almost all of the book wanting to shake most of them.
- Junji Ito never satisfactorily explains why any of the spiraling creepiness is happening. Episodic chapters add up to a disjointed story of WTF-ery that never really coalesces into anything substantial.

I had seen so many isolated, eerie panels around the Internet over the years that, when I realized we had it in my library system, I had to read it. I'm not upset that I did, but it wasn't that impressed, either.

That said, I need a SFX makeup artist to do a look based on the spiral forehead chapter.
