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The Untouchables is the gripping true story of the team of men who broke the back of the vicious Chicago crime mob and its stranglehold on the nation, told by the man who orchestrated the effort. Enormously successful as a long-running TV series, The Untouchables should leap onto the bestseller lists when released as a major motion picture in June, starring Robert DeNiro and Sean Connery.

The Untouchables Details

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Author : Eliot Ness , Oscar Fraley

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Doctor Moss says

I was just 6 years old when The Untouchables series began running on television, but I have vague memories of the noirish feel of the series and the expressionless, determined face of Robert Stack as Eliot Ness. Kevin Costner's Ness never really took the place of that neo-human hero of the late fifties and early sixties, in atmospheric black and white.

My impression of Ness's own story, told in this book, is close to that mythological Ness. The book feels more like a novel than a modern autobiography. I've heard that Ness exaggerates his own role in the events he describes -- I don't know whether that's true or not. But the narrative is smoother than real life. Ness radiates a kind of all-conquering goodness, enhanced with clever tactics and the loyalty of an equally incorruptible team. Good conquers evil, because, well, good is just so . . . good.

We can fault Ness for self-aggrandizing myth making. But, setting that aside, it's fun reading. Ness is a man on a mission. He rejects the corrupt peace that the police and the criminals, most notably of course, Al Capone, have reached. The police force and prohibition agents are ruined by "bad apples" -- the fatal moral weakness that allows Capone and others to rule Chicago in the twenties and thirties. Ness devises a simple plan, a "small select squad" with "no bad apples" -- a team whose greatest strength is its moral incorruptibility.

As the team goes to work, busting breweries and distribution networks, the bootleggers realize that this is a different game. They can't buy victory, they'll have to outfight and outmaneuver Ness's team. But Ness's team is as determined to bust them as they are to make money and build power. When the bootleggers adopt new tactics, Ness and his team figure out new ways to defeat them. It really is a good story, and the good guys win.

I do have to mention one odd departure from the facts in the book. Betty Andersen appears in the book as Ness's girlfriend, and, in the book's Epilogue, Ness's co-author, Oscar Fraley, notes that she later became his wife. There is no mention of Edna Staley, who was actually Ness's wife during the time covered by the book. Ness and Betty Andersen did marry, but only after his divorce from his second wife, Evaline Ness, in 1946. We can only suspect that this cleaned-up version of his personal life is not the only cleaning up of the facts in the story that Ness tells.

The story makes better reading if we accept that the truth may have suffered a bit, or more than a bit, in the telling.

Lauren says

I gave up 50 pages in or so but I'm counting it as read because I feel like I know all I need to about it--this reads like a little boy writing a story about himself as a big strong detective. Fascinating story but I can.not.deal. with the writing.

John Lyman says

Very interesting, first hand account of the bootlegging business in Chicago in the 20s and 30s. Easy read, read it in one day. Interesting to see how Capone, etc. were making so much cash they could offer bribes of \$100,000 or more a year, a highly respectable salary even today.

Rose says

I was more entertained than educated by "The Untouchables", which is hardly surprising when you consider that Ness was a publicity monger who recognized the value of a good story and enhanced the truth whenever it fell flat. There are phone threats, drive-by shootings, and murders galore, despite the fact that the son of one Untouchable, Barney Cloonan, told Ness biographer Paul Heimel that they were rarely shot at.

Although Ness and the Untouchables did not take down the Capone mob as claimed in the popular media, they did damage the famous mobster's bootleg income, inconveniencing him financially.

Ness died just before "The Untouchables" hit print, making it a haunting as well as intriguing read. It's not an objective look at the dying years of Prohibition and the downfall of Al Capone, but has novelty value as Ness's final words on that exciting period in his career.

James Nance says

Eliot Ness tells the story of how Justice finally caught up with Al Capone. Much better than the movie, Ness tells how he and his men really were untouchable by Capone or his gang. Though not acknowledged by Ness, it seemed clear that, for whatever reason, God's providential care was on this man.

Ian says

Fictional? Enjoyable lite read.

Chris Magro says

Seems a little sensationalized, after all it was written by the man himself some time after all the events took place. It seems like a typical 1950s type documentary. But still interesting, especially so since I'm from nearby all the places where this took place and I grew up with stories of gangsters in Capone's mafia.

Jacob says

Jacob Wirth

This book is about Eliot Ness when he was just getting started into the Prohibition Bureau. It started out with him and his friend talking what to do about how to stop all the bootlegging and they came up with ideas. Eliot Ness came up with a great idea and his friend went to the chief and later on. "I'm sorry, I can't do that because the leader of this squad is going to have free hand-and not even I am going to tell you whom you should choose."(Eliot Ness, 22) This quote show the first time they made the decision on who is going to be the leader of the team.

I think the Author did a great job with this book because he gave great detail into every plot that was going on in the book. It make it easily to tell what was going on in the book at the time. I learned how it was like to be an officer during the Prohibition era. There was a few parts in the book I didn't generally like because there wasn't much going on. But all together this was a good book to read.

I would rate this book a 4 out of 5 because it had great detail and a good plot. I would recommend this book to my other police cadets because they would like to know how crime was and how it was like to be an officer during the 1920's. It shows that gang violence is just has bad now as it was then, it hasn't changed much.

Liz says

I may be the only person in the Western Hemisphere to not have seen the movie, 'The Untouchables'. Even I'm surprised that I haven't seen more than a minute or two here and there. This type of story is right up my alley... why? Well, because it's a true story, real history

- it takes place (I'm sure you know) during the Depression and Prohibition in gangster riddled and control Chicago.

It was a great story. These men were exceptionally hard working and dedicated. What they accomplished was truly an amazing feat. I'm going to seek out more books in this.

Sarah says

I gave this book 5 stars even though it had a lot of language. It was an incredible read; I would have thought it was a fiction action-thriller if I didn't know better. Absolutely amazing that this is all true.

Jack Heath says

Synopsis: The true story of the team which broke the Chicago mob as told by its leader. A great movie.

Chris says

I had always wanted to know what it was really like during those times to see how the war was fought by those agents assigned to taking down Copone and his henchmen. What is also interesting to learn about those times was how much money those special agents were paid by the government compared to how much money Copone and his men were making, the difference is huge. Great cop and robber book of its time and I can see why each Eliot and his team of men went on to do bigger and better things in their lives.

Josh Bauder says

The airbrushed story of federal agent Eliot Ness, whose squad brought down Al Capone's illegal alcohol empire in depression-era Chicago.

sergevernaillen says

Nog éénje uit de enorme pocketverzameling van mijn vader.

Het verhaal van Eliot Ness en zijn strijd tegen de maffiabaas Al Capone, opgetekend door Ness zelf.

Voor ik begon te lezen herinnerde ik me vooral de film *The Untouchables* van Brian De Palma met Kevin Costner en met de fenomenale vertolking van Sean Connery als Jimmy Malone. Die film was zelf gebaseerd op een TV-serie, die op haar beurt zou gebaseerd zijn op het verhaal van Ness, dit boek dus.

Het verhaal beperkt zich tot een periode van 2,5 jaar, vanaf het moment dat Ness de opdracht krijgt om een groep integere mannen te vormen, de onkreukbaren, tot het moment dat Capone achter de tralies vliegt.

Wat ik interessant vond is dat we hier het verhaal van Ness zelf te lezen krijgen, nog niet bijgewerkt onder invloed van allerlei verfilmingen (mijn exemplaar is van 1966). Ness doet zorgvuldig het verhaal van begin tot einde en zo krijgen we een idee van het huzarenstukje dat zijn onderzoek toch was. Hij houdt strak de chronologie aan en geeft hier en daar een beetje bijkomende informatie zoals bijvoorbeeld de voorgeschiedenis van Capone.

Maar het is allemaal nogal rechttoe rechtaan met korte zinnen en korte hoofdstukken. Ness omschrijft gewoon wat er gebeurde zonder enig gefilosofeer, zonder meningen, zonder nabeschouwingen. Het is net alsof hij zijn verhaal vertelt tussen pot en pint en het dan gewoon zo letterlijk wordt neergeschreven. Zo vertelt hij over de moorden, de zoektocht naar illegale stokerijen en hoe ze die ontmantelen, over de invalen, over de bedreigingen en de pogingen tot omkoping.

Dat zorgt er wel voor dat er vaart in zit maar het is allemaal nogal oppervlakkig. Over Ness zijn karakter, zijn opinies, zijn andere leven, zijn dromen, zijn ambities, ... komen we zo goed als niets te weten (behalve

dat hij verloofd is). Ook alle andere personages met inbegrip van de mensen waar hij intens mee samenwerkt worden nergens uitgewerkt. Sommige personages krijgen niet eens een naam maar worden gewoon met hun roepnaam of koosnaam vermeld.

Verander de "ik" in "hij" en je krijgt gewoon een geschiedkundig verslag over die 2,5 jaar.

Och ja, ik zal dit niet gauw zeggen maar in dit geval was het een zegen dat men voor de film het scenario "verhollywoodiaanst" heeft en zich niet strikt aan het verhaal van Ness heeft gehouden.

Brent says

The Untouchables movie from 1987 has been one of my favorites since my first viewing. I've been interested in reading the book the film was based on for years, and picked up Elliot Ness/Oscar Fraley's 1957 The Untouchables at a used book store recently. While historical sources would indicate that some level of exaggeration or fabrication made its way into the novel, the story of young Elliot Ness' drive to address graft in the Chicago PD and Treasury Department's ranks, and subsequent targeting of Al Capone's criminal empire was fast-paced and gripping. Step by step, first-person accounts of raids on distilleries call to mind Robin Moore's French Connection, and Ness' interactions with police recall Serpico. Recommended.
