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Dare to Know

Thriller Comics

Comics in which the reader is kept on tenterhooks by plots that feature a build-up of suspense, tension, uncertainty, menace, and anxiety.

This genre is usually defined by the dark, engrossing mood elicited and the general focus on plot, the tone of danger and sudden violence, the quick pace, the abundance of physical action, and the high stakes of the outcome. They focus on characters being in danger or on the verge of discovering the villain’s master plan. While still considered thrillers, more suspenseful stories slowly build tension and convey feelings of anxiety, heightened anticipation, and uncertainty before the resolution. Often, the protagonist must fight for his or her survival, stop a villain or halt a destructive conspiracy, or save the victim of a crime. In many cases, protagonists are current or former member of the regular armed forces, special operations forces, or an elite government agency. Sometimes, they are part of a team of experts. Other times, main characters are scholars, journalists, or amateur investigators who stumble into the role of toppling secret societies or conspiracies. They use their wits and specialty knowledge to resolve the situation, with or without the help of authorities. Villains are often internationally located and rule a large, powerful organization or entity, and the hunt for them spans continents. Settings may include urban areas, deserts, jungles, polar regions, and the high seas.

Common Elements

False clues (“red herrings”)
Plot twists
Cliffhangers
Suspenseful excitement
Focus on physical danger

Exhilarating action sequences
High-speed vehicle chases
Close quarters combat
Significant body counts
Rumors

Lies
Secret histories
Revenge
Kidnappings and ransoms

Graphic Novel Examples

<i>Bankshot</i> (2021) by Alex De Campi and Chriscross
<i>The Black Order Brigade</i> (1979) by Pierre Christin and Enki Bilal
<i>Disciples</i> (2022) by David Birke, Nicholas McCarthy, and Benjamin Marra
<i>Eden’s Fall</i> (2017) by Matt Hawkins, Bryan Edward Hill, and Rahsan Ekedal

<i>Loose Ends</i> (2017) by Jason Latour, Chris Brunner, and Rico Renzi
<i>Postal Volume 1</i> (2015) by Matt Hawkins, Bryan Edward Hill, and Isaac Goodheart
<i>The Prague Coup</i> (2018) by Jean-Luc Fromental and Miles Hyman
<i>Pulp</i> (2021) by Ed Brubaker and Sean Phillips

<i>Resistance</i> (2021) by Val McDermid and Kathryn Briggs	<i>Stray Bullets: Innocence of Nihilism</i> (2005) by David Lapham and Maria Lapham
<i>Roughneck</i> (2017) by Jeff Lemire	<i>Tear Us Apart</i> (2024) by Jay Baruchel and Van Jensen
<i>Scarlet</i> (2022) by Brian Michael Bendis and Alex Maleev	<i>The Tithe Volume 1</i> (2015) by Matt Hawkins and Rahsan Ekedal
<i>Sherman Volume 1: The Promise: New York</i> (2018) by Stephen Desberg and Griffio	<i>Write It in Blood</i> (2021) by Rory McConville and Joe Palmer
<i>The Specialist: Full Moon in Dendera</i> (1987) by Magnus	
