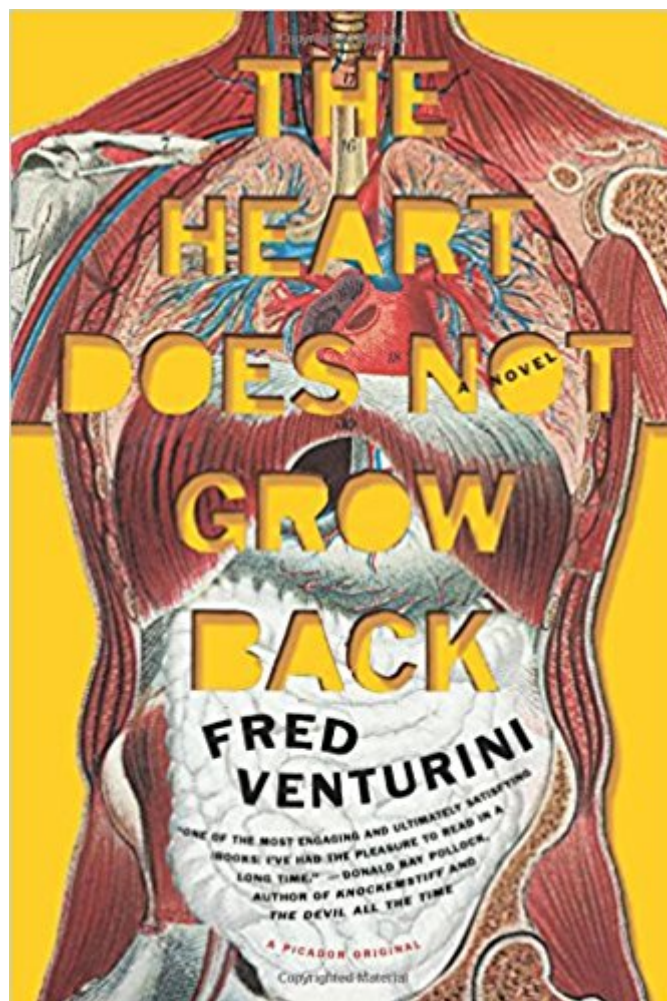


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# The Heart Does Not Grow Back: A Novel



## Synopsis

EVERY SUPERHERO NEEDS TO START SOMEWHERE...Dale Sampson is used to being a nonperson at his small-town Midwestern high school, picking up the scraps of his charismatic lothario of a best friend, Mack. He comforts himself with the certainty that his stellar academic record and brains will bring him the adulation that has evaded him in high school. But when an unthinkable catastrophe tears away the one girl he ever had a chance with, his life takes a bizarre turn as he discovers an inexplicable power: He can regenerate his organs and limbs. When a chance encounter brings him face to face with a girl from his past, he decides that he must use his gift to save her from a violent husband and dismal future. His quest takes him to the glitz and greed of Hollywood, and into the crosshairs of shadowy forces bent on using and abusing his gift. Can Dale use his power to redeem himself and those he loves, or will the one thing that finally makes him special be his demise? *The Heart Does Not Grow Back* is a darkly comic, starkly original take on the superhero tale, introducing an exceptional new literary voice in Fred Venturini.

## Book Information

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Average Customer Review: 4.3 out of 5 stars 27 customer reviews

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## Customer Reviews

“What starts out as a tender and hilarious coming-of-age novel turns into something quite different....The writing is joyous, but the dark side of life...gives depth to the comedy. Dale’s voice is refreshing, his strange power of regeneration and the aftermath of fame and fortune expertly rendered. *The Heart Does Not Grow Back* is an exciting, thoroughly enjoyable ride, hitting the perfect spot of strange and bittersweet.”  
—Paula Bomer, *The New York Times Book Review*  
“*The Heart Does Not Grow Back*, combining the elements of literary fiction in a plot

straight out of science fiction, offers a reading experience if not unique, then certainly fascinating, and fascinating, to my mind, is better than unique.

— Jack Goodstein, Seattlepi.com

— “Venturini’s melancholy but fascinating first novel is an invitation to think about altruism, ethics, and the tangled precincts of the human heart.

— Booklist (starred review)

— “It’s a testament to this novel’s unusual pull that it keeps the reader engaged despite its deeply disturbing imagery and much bloodshed.

— Kirkus Reviews

— “Fred Venturini’s *The Heart Does Not Grow Back* is a marvel. Simply stated, it is like nothing I’ve ever read before. That’s a rarity, something to be treasured whenever you have the good fortune to encounter it. So thank you, Mr. Venturini.

— Nick Cutter, author of *The Troop*

— “Venturini has a voice that’s something like noir poetry, alternately hard-boiled and beautiful, and the story he tells with it is intriguing, intense, and—dare I say it—visceral. Keep your eye on this guy. He’s going to cause trouble.

— Isaac Marion, author of *Warm Bodies*

— “A smart, funny, and dark coming-of-age story that successfully balances the weird and the heartfelt.

— Shane Jones, author of *Light Boxes* and *Crystal Eaters*

— “Fred Venturini is an awesomely talented writer, and he proves it on every page.... This novel about a shy, emotionally damaged loser with a bizarre but coveted ability to regenerate his vital parts is one of the most engaging and ultimately satisfying that I’ve had the pleasure to read in a long time.

— Donald Ray Pollock, author of *Knockemstiff* and *The Devil All the Time*

Fred Venturini was born in Patoka, Illinois. His short fiction has been published in the *Booked Anthology*, *Noir at the Bar 2*, and *Surreal South '13*. His story "Gasoline" is featured in Chuck Palahniuk’s *Burnt Tongues* collection. He lives in Southern Illinois with his wife and daughter.

I’ve been looking forward to reading this novel ever since I first came across Fred Venturini’s short story "Gasoline" in the Chuck Palahniuk anthology "Burnt Tongues." What starts out as the story of a high school misfit quickly shifts gears into overdrive and becomes the tale of a man who discovers his unique and unexplained ability to regenerate lost body parts and organs. Despite the somewhat misleading synopsis on the back cover of this book, the story is far more complex, heart wrenching, and unique. The back cover states that "every superhero needs to start somewhere" and gives the impression you’ll be reading a sort of "Batman Begins" of a nobody. This novel is so much more. In an interview Fred Venturini mentioned that Stephen King and Chuck Palahniuk are two of his biggest influences, and it’s those two names that immediately spring to mind. Venturini has King’s

grasp of small town politics, body horror, dialogue, and command of a fairly large cast of characters. Combined with Palahniuk's visceral writing and page turning plots, THDNGB is a stunning achievement that is one hundred percent Venturini. Fiction does not get much better than this. The plot moves head long in directions you never see coming with an emotionally charged core that affected me more than I care to admit. Themes of loss, forgiveness, and coming to terms with yourself as a human being all weave together. This is a fast and fun read, entertainment at its absolute best, but more than that it is a mature and accomplished work that sets the wheels in your head turning, and keeps them spinning long after the final page. There's not much else to say. I went into this book virtually blind and I think it's best experienced this way. So, I will leave it at this: "The Heart Does Not Grow Back" by Fred Venturini should be read immediately by anyone who loves fiction that pushes the boundaries. Fiction that is complex, challenging, and unique, written in an unforgettable voice.

This is a book that is difficult to stick into a particular genre. It contains organ regeneration, which is definitely in the realm of science fiction. That subject, however, is not the focus of the novel. We follow the protagonist as he integrates this ability into how it defines his life. This is the evolution of a troubled youth into a more troubled adult, often on the edge of suicide. The psychology is raw but real, the experiences he experiences frightening but even more believable. For a first novel, this is a remarkable work. There had to have been aspects of the author's own story incorporated.

I was extremely excited for this Novel after reading "The Samaritan" by Fred Venturini and I was not disappointed. It usually takes me weeks to finish a novel but i finished THDNGB in one day. "The Heart Does Not Grow Back" took me on a ride that I will not soon forget.

Great writing but in service to no discernable point. It goes on and on. A young man finds that he can grow back his body parts. A television show ensues, and we are treated to episode after episode after episode. There is no point in the closure, which smacks of a writing workshop. He has a really good novel in him, but this is not the one. Take a pass. Wasted time does not grow back.

Very well written book and gives food for thought on growing up... Author did a great job

Read this book on the car ride to Florida. It was ABSOLUTELY amazing. I hung on every word, couldn't put it down. Absolutely recommend it.

An absolutely amazing read! Once you pick this book up, you won't be able to put it down! One of my new favorites.

This was a great book that kept my attention all the way through. I didn't want to put the book down until I was finished.

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