



Starling

Sage Stossel

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POWERLESS?

For Amy Sturgess, life in the big city comes with even bigger problems. Her marketing career is being derailed by a conniving coworker stealing her accounts. Her family crises range from her down-and-out brother running afoul of the law to her mother's growing affections for the house cats. And Amy's love life just flatlined thanks to an unexpected reunion with the one that got away—who's now engaged.

When Xanax and therapy fail to relieve her stress, Amy does what any young woman in her position would do: She uses her superstrength, speed, flight, and ability to generate 750 volts from her hands to fight crime as the mysterious masked vigilante Starling. But while Starling is hailed as a superhero, will Amy remain a super-zero?

Starling Details

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Author : Sage Stossel

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From Reader Review Starling for online ebook

Fraser Sherman says

An enjoyable super-hero comedy. Protagonist Amy has typical chick-lit work/family/romance challenges, plus being a super-hero forces her into action at the worst possible moments. Can she pull things together? Can she get her kid brother out of trouble? I've seen other writers try this with nowhere near as much success.

Skye Kilaen says

Amy Sturgess became a superhero crimefighter while in her teens. She's kept doing it while going through college and landing her dream job. Her secret life as Starling often sabotages her work life, though, and let's not even talk about relationships. Now things are getting even more complicated. The job is finally getting away from her. Her brother's trouble with the law may collide with her crimefighting. And the boyfriend that got away is back, but possibly not in a good way.

This is the sweetest little book about trying to make life work, which all of us have trouble with even though we can't generate electricity with our hands.

Jim says

this was sooo good, a superhero on Xanax. Combines Supergirl w/Carrie Bradshaw.

Raina says

Being a superhero is logistically tricky! You have to leave at a moment's notice, whenever disaster strikes!

Amy finds herself needing to save the world all the time in the middle of important events. This has lead to her gaining a reputation as a flake, and her career is on the line!

Interesting concept, but ultimately a meh for me. Not particularly illuminating or memorable.

Office Space (the annoyance, not the hilarity) + Sex & the City (less shoes) + Superheroics
Which might sound awesome, but lower your expectations or you might be disappointed.

Ceejay says

I really enjoyed this unique and entertaining graphic novel. A young woman, Amy, when she reaches puberty suddenly finds herself with the ability to fly, run at superspeed, has superstrength, and can produce

750 volt bolts of electricity from her hands. What could be bad? How about a jerk at work undermining all her efforts. Parents who just aren't normal. An ex-boyfriend showing up engaged to somebody else. A brother in trouble with a drug lord. And yet, it seems like everything MIGHT come together. Sage Stossel has done a fantastic with this graphic novel aimed at adults. I enjoyed reading it, and hope the saga of Starling (Amy's hero name) will continue.

Katelyn says

I really enjoyed this graphic novel about a woman in marketing who uses her super powers to fight crime. She bemoans how fighting crime interrupts her work, often causing trouble with her boss (her coworkers think she runs off suddenly because she has IBS). I don't usually like superhero stories but I really liked this one because the focus is on the main character's troubles, thoughts and life, not on fighting crime.

Jackie says

I wanted to like this graphic novel about an everyday woman who moonlights as a superhero, and finds the superhero part of her life the more annoying, more than I ended up doing. Lots of feminist humor in both Stossel's art and in her story (love the sequence where our heroine rejects several overly revealing potential superhero costumes before settling on her own signature style), but Amy's own ability to assert herself on the job in the face of a bullying male colleague comes rather late in the game (and gets undercut by the arrival of potential boyfriend/famous wrestler, whose presence woos her potential clients as much as Amy does). The romance storyline also proved pretty bland, relying too heavily on overheard conversations rather than honest discussions for its HEA. Still, a pleasure to read a graphic novel featuring a female protagonist older than a teenager...

Chris Vigilante says

This was a really fun graphic novel. Borrowed it from a friend and I definitely see why they like it so much. Amy is a superhero. Her regular life isn't so super and having to run off in the middle of important meetings and events cause all kinds of problems for her. Usually problems. Especially at work where she has to deal with the coworker from hell. I hated that guy. I love to see Starling stand up for herself as a hero and as a business woman in this graphic novel. She did not mess around and still almost gets derailed in a workplace. It really makes you think.

Loved the romance Arc in the story. Don't love Amy being hung up on a guy from her past or even contemplating going after a guy who has a girlfriend. I do like that there was a love what comes out of that plotline by the end. Women supporting women instead of competing is always great.

Starling's parents might actually be the worst. How can they be so oblivious? Starling shouldn't have to do all she does for her brother. If the parents were more attentive he would not have ended up where he is at the point of this comic.

Matt would be an awesome sidekick. He should really get a mask, though. Otherwise, everyone is going to know who Starling is in no time. Honestly really liked his character. That surprised me.

Great Graphic novel.

D.M. Dutcher says

This is a tough book to review. It accomplishes what it sets out to, but I can't stand it mostly because the author doesn't get superheroes on a fundamental level.

Amy is an ordinary young woman who is also the superheroine Starling, and part of a secret group of superheroes who deal with crises as they come up. However, her own personal life is a mess; she's in therapy, her hero work is more like a very annoying temp job, she's estranged from her brother, and her primary job isn't the best. The story is more about how she deals with her life more from the idea of a young, rather stereotypical, urban woman who just happens to deal with minor heroing on the side.

For the slice of life aspects, it's decent. The author nails Amy as a single young urban professional, and all of her harried, rather frenetic life. It gets a little annoying, but not newspaper comic Cathy levels of annoying. The art style is more indie comic/newspaper strip fare than heroic, though lovely in full color and in a trade paperback.

Now the controversial part of the review.

Imagine picking up a Superman comic, and reading the entire thing to find out it spent more time on Clark Kent and his dealing with that bitch Rachel in Accounting, as he goes to therapy to resolve issues from smelling like chickenshit due to being raised on a farm. Oh, and Jimmy Olsen is his little brother who seems to be going down the wrong path, and there is this sexy woman called Lana Lang who shows up on her motorbike now and then to add affirming, non-threatening support as on occasion, Superman captures bank robbers only to let them go because the poor men are on hard times, and here take some money because I'm guilty it could be me. That's Starling.

The actual aspects of heroing; the idea of fighting for truth, justice, and the American way or the joy in or strangeness of the superpowers the hero has is not only not present, it seems to not even pop up. There's not a single supervillain in the book, and barely any other superheroes, with most of Starling's doings really about mundane villains if at that. Heroing really could be substituted in this game for being a detective, or even a temp job of another kind, and nothing would suffer much. This isn't really a deconstruction, because it barely touches on heroing at all, save for a crack about who designs their costumes.

In one sense, it does get that heroing is a power fantasy, but the power fantasies are incredibly mundane. Beating up annoying guests at a wedding, and getting back at that smarmy coworker who steals your ideas. The idea of a superhero as larger than life isn't even present in this book; it's more about the mundane wishes and fantasies of some harried urban office worker than that. It even transgresses the idea of heroes as heroes by having Starling just constantly help "good" criminals and doesn't even really glance at justice.

You can even see this in the art. Comics in general have exaggerated musculature, large panels, and often breathtaking vistas on which the hero broods down over his city. Every single page in Starling has 6 or so panels, all of the same box size, kind of like a 4-Koma, and the art is soft, fuzzy, and intimate. Every single panel seems to have Starling or the person she is speaking to in it, or both. It's like anti-heroic art.

But there's nothing, well, transcendent about this book. It's just all mundane power fantasies. Of course the love interest is a slightly dangerous but always affirming motorcycle-rider who looks good in a leather jacket, because that's as mundane a romantic interest as you can find in romantic fiction. It would be one thing if this had pitched itself as a deconstruction, but usually those have transcendent ideas too, just focused on criticizing the idea of the hero. This book doesn't even seem to care about that all that much, positive or negative.

So it's really frustrating to read. Starling could just be a bail bondsman instead of a superhero and the book wouldn't lose all that much. The author doesn't get heroes enough to make a good hero story; it's just a device to distinguish a rather mundane tale about a harried basic girl and her dull real life.

Liviania says

I've always enjoyed graphic novels, but I've found that there are very few in the United States aimed at women past their teens - particularly not superhero comics. Thus, *STARLING* was a bit of fresh air. Sage Stossel is a cartoonist whose work has appeared in many publications, including *The Atlantic*. I wasn't into the art at first, since it looks like magazine-cartoon style. But it grew on me.

Amy Sturgess is Starling, a popular superheroine. (Although she might be more popular with one of the more revealing costumes she refused, in one of the graphic novel's funniest sequences.) She's also an employee at an ad agency, where she's on the rise despite her frequent absences due to "Irritable Bowel Syndrome." She has to pay the bills, but she's also determined to help as many people as possible even when it affects her sleep and personal life. (Also funny: Starling going out to fight crime in her comfy pizza-eating clothes because she can't be bothered to change.) Unfortunately, a slimy coworker is attempting to steal Amy's accounts, using her work.

There's also a romance to go with the drama of balancing work and unpaid work. Amy is hung up on a former boyfriend, which becomes complicated when she meets and likes his wife. She's also meet a new guy, one who might be able to understand her life as Starling. And to make things even more complicated, Amy's hapless younger brother is in trouble. It's pretty standard superhero stuff, but it's nice to see it happening to a normal, not rich, not super sexualized woman.

STARLING is a charming graphic novel. It's also the first book I've read from Penguin Random House's InkLit graphic novel imprint. I might have to check out more of their books if they're all of this quality. *STARLING* is a terrific choice for readers searching for a low-key superhero comic and for DC fans (and Marvel fans) fed up with how their favorite superheroines have been treated.

Griffin says

2.5

Sean Kottke says

Imagine Ally McBeal or Bridget Jones with superpowers, and you have a sense for where this fits in the pop

culture firmament. Given the author's roots in cartooning, the comic strip style and rhythms aren't a surprise, but it also lends the story an all-ages gentleness and good humor that's missing from most "realistic" superhero tales. It's the rare superhero tale that gives equal weight to the civilian and super alter egos, and weaves its many subplots between the two identities together quite well. It's also the rare female driven superhero tale that isn't an excuse for oversexualized costumes or generic superhero antics in which the hero's sex is irrelevant. Underneath the breeziness of a superhero chick lit surface, there's ample material for rich discussion of gender roles, politics and pop cultural depictions thereof.

Rhode says

Totally enjoyable. I think some critics were way-the-f overthinking things. I love the reality of the office politics, the idiocy of the superhero organization (no pay and a 12 year old boy designs women's outfits to show maximum boob), the reality of juggling real life with superhero life and how the world tries to shame you that one time you wear sweatpants and no makeup outside (a uniquely feminine shame- male superheroes don't put on mascara before they save the day).

And ok yeah there's stuff about being single in the city, being a loving sister, and meeting the guy of your dreams. Can't beat that.

Alex Boyd says

As a graphic novel about a harried, well-intentioned female superhero, it's fairly conventional stuff, but it has heart, and enough realistic detail and originality to be thoroughly enjoyable. It combines a cartoonish look with real, complicated problems like how to pull your own life together without stepping on the lives of others. Looking forward to more from the same author.

Stephen Dorneman says

Starling is a superhero (in a world with other superheroes, although they hardly feature in the book at all), but all her most important conflicts happen to her secret identity. Work, romance, family life, all seem to be getting worse and taking their toll -- and the late night superhero calls aren't helping. Stossel doesn't push the concept hard enough, and we end up with happy endings for all with very few, if any, surprises. It would have been nice to have some chapter breaks, too. Recommended, perhaps, for young adults but not much meat here for a more mature audience.
