



Villains Inc.

Marion G. Harmon

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FIGHTING THE FUTURE. Astra has finished her training and is now a full-fledged Sentinel, but things are not going well. She suffers from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, and the public revelation of her relationship with Atlas has caused her popularity to nose-dive. To complicate things, the Teatime Anarchist's intervention has changed the course of events--leaving her with lots of knowledge about the way the future was before the Big One, a complete future-history that is now out of date. And just when she thinks she's getting a handle on things, unfolding events (a bank-robbery and a horrific murder) show that one of the nastier pieces of the old future isn't so out of date after all; unless she solves a murder before it happens, Blackstone is going to die.

Villains Inc. Details

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Author : Marion G. Harmon

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From Reader Review Villains Inc. for online ebook

Gilbert Stack says

This book starts with Godzilla attacking Chicago and just gets more exciting from there. The plot is tighter than in the first book as it all revolves around a mystery involving a shape-changing thief and the super villains trying to kill him. Astra also has to come to grips with the problem that powerful as she is, she's not truly invulnerable, and she has to figure out what to do about that. Harmon packs this novel with more interesting breakthroughs and some great new characters. (I'd like to see a short story collection featuring some of the supporting cast like Seven, Lei Zi, Fisher, Blackstone, and Touches Clouds who are never going to get the on screen time I'd like to see.) Ultimately, while this novel thrives on excellent battle scenes, it also carries through on the strengths of the first book—going the urban fantasy route with superheroes instead of vampires and werewolves.

Ronny says

Another ok read, don't really learn too much more about the main character or the world here, but enjoyable afternoon read regardless.

Bri says

What I liked: This story throws us for quite a few spins, and manages to still entertain and make me laugh at some of the strange things that happen (or at least smile). We also see how Astra deals with the negative backlash the media (and therefore many regular people) is giving her because of what happened between her and Atlas in book one, and has to also deal with media assumptions for her sudden costume change. Fame is such a fickle thing. Then there's the new threat she's faced with, trying to save Blackstone from dying. We learned lots about different characters and their origins, plus Hope makes some...well, interesting choices so I don't really spoil anything but it made me question if the situation would end in the same way as book one. The pace is really nice and I really liked the action scenes, they always seem to be really well thought out and written wonderfully!

What I didn't like: I wanted to know more about the team of villains we meet in this book, and I was also hoping for a little more character development out of Hope than I got. Or you know, some decisions that wouldn't potentially end up like book one.

Overall Review: This was yet another entertaining read that I read as soon as I finished *Bite Me*, simply because I really love the world that Harmon has written. It is incredibly interesting to read about all the things that happen to the characters, and how they go about to solve these problems while tackling other problems at the same time, like Godzilla-esque monsters (no I'm seriously not joking about that). Suffice to say that I really liked it and will continue on with *Omega Nights*.

Recommend?: Of course! This series hasn't lost its touch yet and you should really read it!

C.T. Phipps says

Villains Inc. is the sequel to the extremely enjoyable Wearing the Cape novel. It takes six months after the events of the first novel, our protagonist forced to deal with immense fallout from the climax. I won't spoil what happened there but will say it's one of the better endings I've seen for this genre.

The setting is still light and cheerful but more wary of the destructive power of superhumans. Initially, I thought this novel was going to focus on Hope having to deal with being a figure of negative publicity as well as the rising tide of anti-superhero sentiment but the author surprised me by going in a completely different direction.

Instead, Villains Inc. is a story which focuses on giving the Chicago Sentinels their very own archenemies. Because the Wearing the Cape series has a more "realistic" sense of scale, it's a group of mob-related heavies but they still manage to invoke the kind of team-ups which gave us the Legion of Doom and Injustice League.

Speaking of realism, this book introduces an element to the setting I wasn't expecting: magic. Without changing the rules set out from the Breakthrough Event, Marion G. Harmon broadens the nature of his world significantly. We knew Breakthroughs include people who can imitate magic, vampires, and demons from the last book but this volume suggests they actually outnumber 'normal' superheroes.

I think this book is actually better than Wearing the Cape, showing that Hope isn't just a one-trick pony. She is growing as both a hero and a character, moving beyond her origin story to become a more multi-faceted complex character. I still love her relationship with Artemis and am eagerly looking forward to reading said character's solo novel.

If there was an element I missed, I rather regret losing the element of celebrity that was such an ever-present part of the previous books. It was still present, to an extent, but Hope only seems to deal with the negative elements of being famous in this book. I felt it was a missed opportunity to not explore more "responsibilities" of celebrity.

In conclusion, buy the novel. It's an excellent example of why internet publishing can be a good thing.

9.5/10

Emily says

Very rarely does a sequel live up to the original, but I think the author has done one heck of a job with this one.

I struggle to put into words just what I like so much about this series. I think the author does a good job of at least some of it in the afterword he included in this book. Superhero mythos, superhero archetypes...they're near and dear to many of us. So many of us grew up with them and the very real stories of human struggles that the stories told us. They strike some deep chord with those of us who enjoy such things, and he not only understands that, but I get the idea he feels it himself.

This, to me, is the next step from the comics. Oh, it doesn't replace them, but the medium of a story lets the characters have a bit more depth. It allows things to be come fuller, richer, while at the same time not losing anything that made superheros what we loved, growing up.

These stories, these books...they're about people. People who happen to have superhuman powers, but what makes them so dang good is the people. Their struggles, their tragedies, their triumphs. I, at least, really feel for those in these books. The characters are real, believable, and even the 'bad guys' aren't necessarily all bad.

I find Astra really intriguing as a main character. Watching her grow and change, adapt to what's happening around her, that is the best part of this book. Of course, the fight scenes aren't bad either. ;) The author has a gift for writing highly entertaining combat scenes.

I'm eagerly awaiting the next book in the series. Each book opens up more possibilities for the author to explore, and I don't see any risk in things becoming 'dull' anytime soon. There are lots of stories left to be told in this world and I hope he keeps writing so I can keep reading them.

K.F. says

OK, I totally wrote an enormous review for this and somehow it got deleted (which makes me very frustrated!)

But as I said in my previous review, I think the difference between Hope/Astra and Jacky/Artemis as narrators is the difference between Ben and Jerry's Phish Food and a Reeses Peanut Butter Cup.

Astra's stories are like Phish Food--super complex and delicious but sometimes they get messy and confusing.

Artemis's stories are very concisely written and much less complex/confusing, but on the whole, just as satisfying and wonderfully mixed.

I have to say, yes, that my main gripe with Hope's books is the sheer amount of characters and the way they seem inadequately introduced. I had to make judicious use of the X-ray function on my kindle app because I wasn't sure who was who (question: who is watchtower and what does he do exactly?) Complex characters are introduced with simple one-liners, and are almost never physically described (ex: Lei Zi--I'm assuming she's Chinese [because HELLO, that's a Chinese name!] but what does she look like? How old is she? Does she have any interesting battle scars? I want details!) A glossary of characters/superheroes/supervillains would be really nice.

I'm also really sad that Hope seems tragically drawn to awkward tension-filled moments with older men and still hasn't admitted that the tabloids have the right of it--that Astra and Artemis are destined to be together. Forever. As lesbian lovers. Astra, darling, Artemis bit you and it FELT FANTASTIC WHAT ARE YOU DOING WITH YOUR LIFE.

I'm really happy, PS, that the Bees are Phi Mus (being a Phi Mu myself). There should definitely be judicious use of the phrase "LIOB/Love in Our Bond" in the future novels. That is, in fact, the chosen sign off for every Phi Mu and also it fits the story line great. PLEASE TAKE NOTE!

I'd also like to see more exploration and explanation of super powers. For example, I could have sworn that Rush couldn't interact with everything when he's all hyperspeed, but I guess now he can carry things with him? Also, Artemis is hUMAN now, and can go out in the sun, so why can't she go to mist in the sunlight?

Also sometimes Hope's obsession with "Asian culture" (and God, that is a cringe-worthy phrase! Asia is AN ENORMOUS CONTINENT WITH SEVERAL DIVERSE ETHNIC GROUPS SO PLEASE WTF DOES THAT MEAN) tends to get a bit weeaboo at times, and I'd really like it if the non-white characters got some more description and background other than a vaguely ethnically coded name and a power (other than Riptide, who is adequately described and thus is the standout badass of the book).

Things I did like:

- a) I think it's hilarious that Hope's solution for every doomed love thing ever is "HEY LET'S GET ENGAGED." She's SUCH a good little catholic girl.
- b) Riptide and his judicious use of Spanish insults
- c) Artemis. Just Artemis. I'm in love with Artemis.
- d) Iron Jack--his backstory is SO FUCKING TANTALIZING. WE NEED MORE IRON JACK.
- e) Max Fisher was amazing and his origin was fantastic and we need more of that.

All in all, satisfying, crunchy with tantalizing bits, and intriguing--and I'm sad that I'm almost done with this series!

Shawn Camp says

Seriously disappointed. As a sequel I was expecting further character development and a chance to really know the world that has been built here. What I found was just an extension from the original with nothing too new on Astra.

There's another threat where numerous super powers are thrown together in action scenes almost every chapter. And in the middle of all this are appearances from a team of villains that we really don't learn much about. With little familiarity and interest built upon the villains there really isn't much of a reason to call this Villains Inc.

K.F. says

I think the difference between Hope/Astra and Jacky/Artemis as characters/narrators is the difference between Phish Food Ice Cream and a Reeses Peanut Butter Cup--Astra is sort of all over the place and rich and messy and filled with lots and lots of details and bits, but sometimes it can get to be a bit much and rather confusing. Artemis is more like a Reeses Cup--self contained, totally satisfying and rich, but on the whole, easier to follow and discern.

That being said, my main gripe with this book is the same gripe I had with the last Hope-centered book: the fact that I had to use the X-ray function on the kindle app so much because there were SO MANY CHARACTERS to keep track of. It's not necessarily the number of characters, it's more the number combined with the fact that their introduction into the book was so sparse and one-liner-ish (ex: I'm still not sure of what Watchman can do).

I'm glad that Artemis is now human(ish)! I'm not quite sure of how that works and why she's still not able to mist during the day, though. Surely if she can walk about during the day she could mist?

I'm also sad that Artemis and Astra are not actually real-life lesbian lovers because they would be perfect together and are clearly meant for each other and instead of having awkwardly tension-filled moments with older scruffy men, Astra should think about the fact that she's totally been bitten and it felt really good and she can heal really fast so if she has issues with Artemis biting people then maybe she should just let Artemis bite her for a change.

The organization of this novel was, again, a little confusing--but only because the compulsion is the read this in great big gulps and as a result things can get a little confusing in your head. I wish there was a glossary in the back for characters and events and powers and things like that, and even physical descriptions would be nice (for example, Lei Zi is never actually physically described; I'm just going to assume she's Chinese, because helloooo that's such a Chinese name! But still, I'd like to know what she looks like!).

And PS: Of course the Bees would be Phi Mu. Best sorority ever! Suggestion for the author: there should be judicious use of the phrase "Love In Our Bond" /LIOB (since that is the catchphrase of our divine sisterhood and it TOTALLY FITS THE BEES).

Also I find it hilarious that Hope's main response to any love troubles is "HEY WE'RE GONNA GET MARRIED." She's such an 18 year old good Catholic girl.

Either way, it was rollicking good fun and now I'm off to read the next books!

Noran Miss Pumkin says

Godzilla attacks Navy Pier in the first chapter. That gets it 5 stars alone! Even with the sappy happy endings in the sequel-5 stars for the down to earth , witty dialogue.

J.L. Dobias says

Villains Inc (Wearing The Cape #2)by Marion G. Harmon

Astra, aka Hope Corrigan, is at it again. This time she starts out up against a godzilla like beast, while trying to keep it away from the public and her not so super friends she had accompanied on a weekend outing. This seems par for the course for our super hero. As with many, I had reservations about how well Marion G. Harmon could have followed the first book in this series.

Right from the start this one does not disappoint.

Astra is back with her internal friend Shelly who is like a ghost from the past provided by future technology and left to her by The Teatime Anarchist: a past friend and nemesis who proved to be his own worst enemy; but you need to read the first book.

There are many more characters from the first book; but one of the important ones in this one is Artemis. I say this because both Artemis and Shelly undergo some awesome changes, which help develop their characters.

Once again Hopes main concern is one of her mentors, Blackstone. Through the future information available through Shelly, Hope discovers that Blackstone dies soon in at least one version of the future. Since the first book proved that time could be altered somewhat, though at great cost, Hope seeks to find a way to reduce the cost and save a friend.

Of course one problem with super heroes is that they have to have a challenge and this book certainly presents those to her to the tune of often leaving her quite battered throughout the story.

There are secrets to uncover and bad press to try to work through, while she searches for an assassin who might be able to summon demons that can shred the target leaving puddles of liquid full of tiny bones.

The characters are so great and diverse and the notions so widely open that this series of books is beginning to shape up as something that might further entertain me for a quite some time.

This novel contains great stuff for many SFF lovers and all lovers of Comic book heroes.

Well written and nicely done; thanks for the entertaining read.

J.L. Dobias

Terence says

Fun book like the first one.

Cloak88 says

Upbeat superhero fiction worth reading.

Astra is back for her second novel and things start right off with a monster fight (against godzilla no less) and then a superpowered robbery and murder. Things start of interesting and continue right along that path. New characters are introduced and existing characters are given room to grow and shine in this novel.

In all the novel contains plenty of action an interesting mystery and a compelling plotline. If you're interested in a upbeat superhero novel then this is the novel for you.

Mary Catelli says

The second *Wearing the Cape* book, in which life goes on. For instance, in the opening scene, when Hope is trying to hang out with her friends, a godzilla comes out of Lake Michigan to attack the pier. (Spoilers ahead for the earlier book.)

She talks with Shelly about it. Turns out that godzillas are turning up "early" -- before they would have in the timeline before the Teatime Anarchist changed things, the last timeline that he was able to give them. And then Astra gets called in to check out first a bank robbery -- by a shapeshifter -- and then the murder of a person connected with it. A rather nasty murder. And Shelly tells Hope that in the previous timeline, this murder had been committed at a different time, to be followed shortly by the murder of their teammate Blackstone, in the same unpleasantly distinctive manner, which was never solved. She told him, of course, and his reaction did not lead her to think he would avoid the investigation that led to it. Jacky reacts rather strongly to the news, and Hope is onto the task of trying to solve a murder before it happens when their own team detective can't. Among the other things. . .

The team got shaken up, obviously, after last book, and it's a bit underplayed. I'm not surprised that Riptide's on the team, but I would have expected a bit of story about it; after all, Veritas is there to check him out. Seven is a surprise. And Lei Zi needed more intro. Even if Hope was grieving too much to pay much attention, a little would have helped.

But except for that, we have the life of a superhero carrying on. It involves Shelly and Hope deciding they can change the future, too; Hope's attempting to use the carrot and the stick on someone who could help, and ending up getting it because villains attacked him; the mob's having recruited the title Villains Inc. and their unofficial deal with superheroes; a robotic dragon; Hope's having dreams of a fox; anti-superhero agitation, and a lot more.

Niall Teasdale says

Better than the first one, I think. Very much an action-oriented book. I could see this being turned into a film, mainly because the action is only rarely allowed to stop. For that reason, I think the book lacks a little character development, but it works pretty well, the characters remain likeable, and Astra has a new costume which is a little more adult (even if it does make me feel like a dirty old man for even imagining it).

The book could *really* do with a proofreader. That's normally a BIG red flag for me and I'm not so bothered, so maybe the book deserves an extra star. I can't quite bring myself to give it, but I did enjoy this one.

David says

The protagonist of the series is a young woman who has her superpower breakthrough during a terrorist attack in Chicago, nearly killing her. She now has the alias Astra and is super-strong, super-durable and can fly. She also belongs to a justice league-type of organization which tries to put a smiley face on super-powered humans. However there is a shadowy group of super-powered evil doers taking them on, leading to massive battles between them. Lot of fun, much improved over the series' introductory novella which was much less intense, focusing on world-building and introducing some characters. Look forward to continuing

the story.
