


Behind the Mask: An Anthology of Heroic Proportions

By Kelly Link, Cat Rambo, Carrie Vaughn, Seanan McGuire, Lavie Tidhar, Sarah Pinsker

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Behind the Mask is a multi-author collection with stories by award-winning authors Kelly Link, Cat Rambo, Carrie Vaughn, Seanan McGuire, Lavie Tidhar, Sarah Pinsker, Keith Rosson, Kate Marshall, Chris Large and others. It is partially a prose nod to the comic world - the bombast, the larger-than-life, the save-the-worlds and the calls-to-adventure. But it's also a spotlight on the more intimate side of the genre. The hopes and dreams of our cape-clad heroes. The regrets and longings of our cowed villains. That poignant, solitary view of the world that can only be experienced from behind the mask.

The authors in this collection, both established and new, are all dexterous and wonderfully imaginative, each deserving of their own form-fitting uniforms and capes. Some of the stories pulse with social commentary, like Cat Rambo's whimsical and deft "Ms. Liberty Gets a Haircut" and Keith Rosson's haunting "Torch Songs." Others twist the genre into strange and new territories, like Stuart Suffel's atmospheric "Birthright," Kate Marshall's moving "Destroy the City with Me Tonight," and Adam Shannon's reality-bending "Over an Embattled City." Some punch with heart and humor, like Matt Mikalatos's satisfying "The Beard of Truth" and Chris Large's adventurous "Salt City Blue," while others punch with bite and grit, such as Michael Milne's evocative "Inheritance," Aimee Ogden's poignant "As I Fall Asleep," and Jennifer Pullen's heartfelt "Meeting Someone in the 22nd Century." Some of the stories feature characters who might not be superheroes in the traditional sense, yet are heroic nonetheless, such as Sarah Pinsker's imaginative "The Smoke Means It's Working" and Stephanie Lai's majestic "The Fall of the Jade Sword." Some shine a unique, captivating spotlight on supervillains, like Keith Frady's dramatic "Fool" and Carrie Vaughn's romantic "Origin Story." Some are somber, ponderous works, where our heroes consider their impact on the world, like Lavie Tidhar's regretting "Heroes" and Nathan Crowder's resonant "Madjack." Others tread more light-hearted waters, with heroes adjusting to the sometimes-comical, sometimes-stressful life in the public eye, like Seanan McGuire's entertaining "Pedestal" and Patrick Flanagan's lively "Quintessential Justice." And then there are the softer, quieter moments between heroes, as they navigate their extraordinary lives in their own unique ways, such as Ziggy Schutz's tender

“Eggshells” and, of course, Kelly Link’s captivating “Origin Story.”

Publisher’s Weekly - "Reeks and Richardson have pulled together a treasure trove of 20 stories . . . exploring the lives of superheroes when they’re not saving the world. . . . There is nary a miss in this diverse and thoughtful collection, which will have readers considering what it means to be human."

Kirkus Reviews - (starred review) "A momentous, readable collection, its sole downside being that there are only 20 superhero stories."

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Editorial Review

Review

4.5/5 Stars - "Masterfully-written, this compilation lets us peek inside these people's ordinary lives, and shows us that they may not be as different as we think. . . . Absolutely recommend it!"

(Inky Reviews)

"In this world where cynicism and noir are popular, I feel that superheroes are the antidote. I found that hopeful vision in those particular stories of *Behind The Mask* which makes me glad that I read them."

(Shomeret: The Masked Reviewer)

Reeks (*Love Hurts*, 2015, etc.) and debut editor Richardson assemble a series of tales centered on superheroes' constant struggles with saving the world and maintaining secret identities. . . . A momentous, readable collection, its sole downside being that there are *only* 20 superhero stories.

(Kirkus Reviews (starred review))

"Presenting a full range of strong, articulate, varied voices, distinctive troubled characters, and thought-provoking narratives, *Behind the Mask* stands out as a mighty collection of supremely imaginative and innovative tales."

(Colorado Review - Nicholas Litchfield)

"The variety of approaches to the collections theme is impressive. The characters may have amazing abilities, but their problems and challenges frequently remain in the realm of the human."

(Register Guard | Brian Juenemann)

"Reeks and Richardson have pulled together a treasure trove of 20 stories . . . exploring the lives of superheroes when they're not saving the world. . . . There is nary a miss in this diverse and thoughtful collection, which will have readers considering what it means to be human."

(Publisher's Weekly)

"Verdict: Fans of superhero fiction will find that these imaginative stories, with their original perspectives, make for a thoroughly worthwhile compilation."

(Library Journal | Jennifer Funk)

“These stories take the tropes that we know all too well and turn them on their ears, lampooning and embracing the clichés in equal measure, humanizing larger-than-life characters with a deft hand.”

(*San Francisco Book Review*)

“Delightfully Entertaining”

(*New Pages*)

(4/5 stars) “[A]n exceptionally high quality anthology.”

(*Rocket Stack Rank*)

“*Behind the Mask* is a solid anthology, filled with well-written and -edited stories that fans of the super hero genre will enjoy.”

(*Mad Scientist Journal*)

Review

Short fiction readers should seek out . . . ***Behind the Mask: A Superhero Anthology***.

(*John DeNardo, SF Signal*)

About the Author

Kelly Link is the author of four short story collections: *Get in Trouble*, a finalist for the 2016 Pulitzer Prize in Fiction, *Pretty Monsters*, *Magic for Beginners*, and *Stranger Things Happen*. She lives with her husband and daughter in Northampton, Massachusetts.

Cat Rambo lives, writes, and teaches atop a hill in the Pacific Northwest. Her 200+ fiction publications include stories in Asimov’s, *Clarkesworld Magazine*, and the *Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction*. She is an Endeavour, Nebula, and World Fantasy Award nominee. Her second novel, *Hearts of Tabat*, appears in early 2017 from Wordfire Press. She is the current President of the Fantasy and Science Fiction Writers of America. For more about her, as well as links to her fiction, see www.kittywumpus.net

Carrie Vaughn is best known for her New York Times bestselling series of novels about a werewolf named Kitty, who hosts a talk radio show for the supernaturally disadvantaged, the fourteenth installment of which is *Kitty Saves the World*. She’s written several other contemporary fantasy and young adult novels, as well as upwards of 80 short stories. She’s a contributor to the Wild Cards series of shared world superhero books edited by George R. R. Martin and a graduate of the Odyssey Fantasy Writing Workshop. An Air Force brat, she survived her nomadic childhood and managed to put down roots in Boulder, Colorado. Visit her at www.carrievaughn.com.

Seanan McGuire watches too much television, which does not explain how she also writes three books a year (as two different people, no less - she's also Mira Grant), dozens of short stories, and endless blog posts. It has been posited that she may be a Time Lady herself, or possibly an alien pod plant. Both seem equally likely. Seanan has been nominated for a variety of genre awards, and won the 2011 Campbell Award for Best New Writer.

Lavie Tidhar is the author of the Jerwood Fiction Uncovered Prize winning and Premio Roma nominee *A Man Lies Dreaming* (2014), the World Fantasy Award winning *Osama* (2011) and of the critically-acclaimed *The Violent Century* (2013). His latest novel is *Central Station* (2016). He is the author of many other novels, novellas and short stories.

Sarah Pinsker is the author of the 2015 Nebula Award winning novelette "Our Lady of the Open Road." Her novelette "In Joy, Knowing the Abyss Behind" was the 2014 Sturgeon Award winner and a 2013 Nebula finalist. Her fiction has been published in magazines including Asimov's, Strange Horizons, Lightspeed, Fantasy & Science Fiction, and Uncanny, among others, and numerous anthologies. Her stories have been translated into Chinese, French, Spanish, Italian, and Galician. She is also a singer/songwriter with three albums on various independent labels and a fourth forthcoming. She lives in Baltimore, Maryland with her wife and dog. She can be found online at sarahpinsker.com and twitter.com/sarahpinsker.

Tricia Reeks lives in the bear-infested mountains of Asheville, North Carolina with her mountaineer husband and her two ferocious French Bulldogs. She is the founder of Meerkat Press and the editor of *Love Hurts: A Speculative Fiction Anthology*.

Kyle Richardson lives in the suburban wilds of Canada with his encouraging wife Michelle, their rambunctious son Kai, and a staircase that Kyle seems to be constantly tumbling down. He writes about shape-shifters, superheroes, and the occasional clockwork beast, moonlights as an editor at Meerkat Press, and has been working on his first novel for so long now, his wife has resorted to ultimatums. He made his short-fiction debut in *Love Hurts: A Speculative Fiction Anthology* and has since sold stories to *Daily Science Fiction* and his enthusiastic mother, at exorbitant rates.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Jeffrey Drake:

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Gladys Jackson:

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