



## Don't Be a Hero

*Chris Strange*

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**Don't Be a Hero** Chris Strange

It's a bad time to be a superhero.

When the world turned its back on metahumans, the golden age of superheroes came crashing down. But now a mysterious supercriminal is making one final bid for power, and with no one else left to protect the world, ex-hero Spook must risk everything to take him down. There will be no reprieve, no negotiation. War is coming.

Put on the mask. There's work to be done.

## Don't Be a Hero Details

Date : Published November 2nd 2012 by Cheeky Minion

ISBN : 9781479341092

Author : Chris Strange

Format : Paperback 372 pages

Genre : Comics, Superheroes, Science Fiction, Fantasy, Fiction

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# From Reader Review Don't Be a Hero for online ebook

## Nick Sayce says

This is a good superhero book, not great, but good. The story is pretty predictable but in least a lot of thought has been put into the meta humans powers as they do have weaknesses and limits to their abilities. Which makes a great change from the usual all conquering hero.

I loved Morgan and his crew, especially Obsidian as though they were the villains of the piece they were still working for a cause and a belief rather than the usual lets just destroy the world. Morgan is a very developed character and someone i really looked forward to reading about. I loved how each innocent death affected him, he was more than just a ruthless murder and was a very complicated character.

Spook on the other hand is a little flat. I couldn't truly warn to her and The Carpenter, at times I found their progress quite boring and would skip ahead. Though I do like how her sexuality was not ab issue.

So as i said i think this is a good book, but not one I would read again

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## Angie ~aka Reading Machine~ says

What if the world isn't always black and white but full of shades of gray. That is the premise for Don'te Be a Hero. In a time of war superheroes emerge to take away the blackness that war brings. Metahumans can be both good and evil. Superheroes were much loved and hated by other metahumans and normals.

Supercriminals always want to rule the world yet come up short in the end. Gloomgirl now named Spook along with her partner The Carpenter take on a case of a missing child. Yet they are not told everything they need which is a great hindrance. There is a new criminal on the loose named Quanta trying to get the heroes to return. Quanta doesn't want to be seen in a bad light yet that is what he's planned for. To Quanta's mind the heroes are all but forgotten. Can the missing child be found? Will Spook and Carpenter rescue the child? What is Quanta's ultimate goal? Will the heroes return? Your answers await you in Don't Be a Hero.

I really enjoyed the whole shades of gray concept in regards to heroes and villians. You constantly wanted to cheer and yell at the heroes for screwing up like they do. I found that all the characters were relatable and rea. I really enjoy Mr. Strange's work and will definitely continue to read what the author writes next.

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## Carl says

Superhero novels aren't easy to do well. I have read some of the mainstream Marvel and D C novels and they mostly not very good.

The best non mainstream story is Soon I Will Be Invincible but to be honest this story by Chris Strange surpasses even that.

There are a lot of comparisons between this story and that. Both have female leads and both have a great villain.

But The author has placed the action in New Zealand and not the usual New York and that has lifted the story out of the norm.

The use of light and shadow as the main rivals plus not the obvious either .light is evil-ish. And shadow is good.

One of the heroes also has a unique power over wood! Such innovation and characterisation makes this the 'Watchmen' of novels.

Nice and dark with splashes of pure brilliance makes this a 5 star read.

So if you liked any of the stories mentioned in this review this is the book for you.

I hope Chris Strange writes a sequel!

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### **Trax says**

I really liked it. When reading this book it was difficult not to think of Watchmen, or even X-Men. I don't think that is a bad thing necessarily. I think Don't Be A Hero carves out its own unique space though. The meta humans, their powers, lives, and dilemmas are engaging. I loved the ending and the lead up to the final chain of events, always a difficult part of any story. Also, a great passage about the hero's dilemma and how it plays out in comics versus real life. (This dilemma is also present in superhero themed video games like InFamous, for example). Overall, I just really liked it and thought it was a great superhero and detective story. I liked it enough to seek out more books by Chris Strange.

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### **Bob Milne says**

As a teenager, I probably spent more time in comic books stores than was wise, and certainly spent far more money there than I care to remember. I witnessed the rise of of superstars like Todd McFarlane and Jim Lee, enjoyed Tim Burton's stunning cinematic rebirth of Batman on the big screen, and suffered through Sidney J. Furie's death-blow to the Superman franchise on VHS. I saw comic books stores explode across North America . . . and then slowly die of attrition as the 'coolness' factor of comic books waned once again.

While I stepped away from the comic book world when the reboots and restarts made it clear the writers had run out of stories, I never lost my love of superheroes. As a result, I'm always on the lookout for new books that feature superhero themes. They're generally hit-or-miss, but Don't Be a Hero is definitely more hit than miss. From the writing style, to the characters, to the storyline, to the dialogue, it's clear Chris Strange has not just a love for the genre, but an understanding for what makes it work.

Yes, it's derivative and cliched at times, but honestly so. Strange wears his superhero cape proudly, and tells precisely the kind of story you might expect. Simultaneously, it's also daring and original at times, with some rather unique touches that undeniably make the story his. Rather than reuse another nameless, faceless, booming North American metropolis, he transplants us to the streets of New Zealand, giving us a setting that's familiar, but which has room for invention. It's a world where mankind has made it to the Moon, establishing a colony for unwanted superheroes, but still gets by with steampunk-ish technology.

Similarly, he resists the urge to go with either the 'super' masculine or the endearingly geeky hero, giving us instead a lesbian superhero - one who's disillusioned and cynical, but otherwise quite ordinary. Heck, there's even a sidekick with the corny "guess my power" name of Carpenter, but he provides a nice balance to Spook. As for the villain of the story, he's very well-crafted, a character who serves as both a worthy foil and source of tangible menace - and who, it must be said, has some memorable henchmen. Strange clearly understands that at the heart of every great superhero tale is that balance . . . that conflict . . . that dichotomy of good versus evil. Without a worthy adversary, even the greatest superhero is just an impressive guy (or gal) in tights, and Quanta certainly helps to make Spook matter.

After a pair of superhero-themed novels that I left unfinished last year, and another pair that I quite enjoyed, I was curious to see how Strange would tilt the balance. Fortunately, this is another story that I quite enjoyed, and one that has me anxious to see what he'll do next. Not only does he keep superheroes cool, he makes them fun again.

*Originally reviewed at Beauty in Ruins*

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### **Jim C says**

After failing to win this in a giveaway, I received this as a generous offer from the author. For this reason I wanted this book to be good and it exceeded expectations. This book is about metahumans (humans with mutated powers) that are not accepted in society. Think X-Men interwoven with Watchmen. It is a dark, gritty story and not your usual light, fluffy comic story. I loved everything about this book. The dark storyline, the setting, the characters and the twist and turns were perfect. The book had a strong storyline with plenty of action and it was exactly what you want from this type of book. If you are a fan of Watchmen, I strongly recommend this book.

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### **Laura says**

I received a free eBook copy in return for an honest review.

*Don't Be a Hero* is set in an alternate-but-parallel world to ours in which "metahumans," humans with x-men-esque superpowers, emerged due to concentrations of radioactivity in certain areas. Following a period in which superheroes were revered and welcomed as protectors from evil, crime and supervillains, the world's attitude changed and became hostile toward anyone with powers. Anyone too strong was given a "kill-switch," a device that will terminate the individual when activated with a particular radio frequency. Heroes, then, disappeared from society.

That's where the two main characters, Niobe and Solomon, come in. They're still around, doing what they can even to help humanity in their community of Neo-Auckland even though their superhero group was disbanded.

The book started off slow. By that, I mean I wasn't hooked until around chapter six or so when I started to care whether Niobe and Solomon succeeded or failed in their quest to find a missing boy. The jargon threw me off a bit at first until I got used to it, and some of the description fell flat (that being said, some of it was also quite well done).

Each chapter begins with a superhero entry. Although the entries were interesting, at first their significance was unclear. Some of the characters we meet in the story have entries, and those particularly intrigued me. The others seemed to be there to show a bit of how the world changed, how superheroes were perceived then versus "now."

The antagonists in this story were well-crafted. Morgan Shepherd, a.k.a. Quanta, was not a black-and-white villain. He had strong motivations for what he did, although his means were naturally not ethical or moral.

Morgan reminded me a bit of Sylar from the first season of the TV series "Heroes." Doll-face, one of his henchmen metas, was decidedly creepy (view spoiler).

The weakest point of the story, in my view, was the climax/ending. I thought Sam's transition occurred too quickly, too much happening "off-screen" so to speak. We hear from his point of view during a few chapters earlier on but then that disappears (view spoiler). (view spoiler)

Overall, however, I enjoyed the story. I have never read a superhero-oriented book before, although I have seen and enjoyed superhero films.

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### **Debbie says**

I really enjoyed this novel set in a gritty, noir-type world where superheroes have become hatred and feared by the people they used to protect. Most of the action takes place in Neo-Auckland in a post-nuclear New Zealand, and it's a fast-paced, action-packed read.

The main protagonist, Niobe, quickly became one of my favourite superheroes. She's more hard-boiled detective than spandex-wearing superhero with her trench coat, jaded attitude and reluctant nobility. I also like her ability to move into and out of shadows, and the way she uses it. Her partnership with Solomon (a.k.a The Carpenter) creates some delightful banter and her troubled relationship girlfriend Gabby (formerly The Silver Scarab) were well done.

I wasn't as fond of the main nemesis, Morgan. I found him too smug and self-justifying to be either sympathetic or threatening. His hench-psycho, Doll Face, is nightmarishly creepy and sadistic, and the scenes involving him were wonderfully chilling and unsettling.

I heartily recommend this book to anyone who is a fan of superheroes or noir-esque fiction, or anyone who isn't for matter because it's a brilliant read.

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### **Opal says**

Spook isn't a classic hero. She's not out to save the world. In fact she doesn't like the world very much. What she wants is to go to the lunar colony that the metahumans have and the job she takes guarantees the money to get there. All she has to do is find a missing boy. Except it's not so simple as that. It turns into something much more sinister.

Spook did have a classic sidekick in the hero named Carpenter. Carpenter has an affinity with wood as his superhero name would suggest. He can communicate with trees and manipulate wood to do what he wants. He's also a perfect foil to Spook's cynical outlook. He's an idealist who believes that the world will always need superheros. Carpenter also believes it's their duty to protect the normals from villains and criminals alike no matter how society views him.

Quantra is a complex supervillain. He is multi-layered and has many facets to his character. His motives were manifold and varies, too many to really penetrate and delve into in one review. It gave the story a lot of dimension and depth. I became very invested in finding out what made him tick and what his true objective was.

The world the story takes place in is a contradiction in itself. It has rocket ships yet it doesn't have advanced computers. It has dirigibles and helicopters yet doesn't have things like cell phones. I found it intriguing and different. It gave it a Sam Spade feel with a technological or "steampunk" edge.

Don't Be a Hero was a pleasant surprise. I wasn't expecting it to be as great as it was. I thought it would be passingly entertaining. Instead it captured me and held me in its grips. I wasn't completely sold on the concept of superheroes in a novel versus an action movie but I am now. I consider this book a win.

\*A free copy of this book was given to me in exchange for an honest review.

This review was also published on [The Akamai Reader](#)>.

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## **Paul says**

I'm one of those people who loved superhero fiction as a child and never quite grew out of the interest as an adult. I've read my share of comic books and watched a number of movies, some good and others bad. But up until a few months ago I had never read an original written superhero novel unrelated to Superman or Batman or any recognisable characters. Around that time I stumbled across, to my great surprise, a number of titles such as "Ex-Heroes" and the "Wild Cards", but it was "Don't Be a Hero" by Chris Strange that drew me in from start to finish...

The story takes place in a world where superheroes are somewhat commonplace and have been so long since the second World War. However, with great power comes a great price; no longer trusted by the innocents they protected, superheroes have become feared and ostracised by the non-powered community. To make matters worse, the governments of the world have put into place the Seoul Accord, which restricts superhuman activity through the use of "kill-switches" implanted in a superhuman's brain. As a consequence, many former heroes have been forced into early retirement or even killed outright by their kill-switches. Others have established a "lunar colony" upon the surface of the moon itself, inviting others to join them to start anew. But of course, a trip to the moon is extremely expensive, and a number of heroes still stuck in a hostile world struggle to find work and scrape out a living.

Enter the protagonist, Niobe, aka "Spook". While fortunate enough to avoid ending up with a kill-switch herself, her female lover, Gabby, formerly the "Silver Scarab", is not so lucky, forced into early retirement. Fully aware of the stigma surrounding her powers and the potential risk to Gabby's safety and security thanks to the current laws, Spook wants nothing more than to leave Planet Earth behind with Gabby in tow and to join the lunar colony... but she needs money, and a lot of it. A vigilante detective, Spook often faces difficulty in her work with the threat of the local police looming round every corner, and for a while her situation seems hopeless until she gets a job offer from a mysterious old man named Frank, whose nephew, thirteen year-old Sam, has gone missing, presumably abducted.

With a suitably large sum of cash offered in exchange for Sam's return, albeit without many details to go on,

Spook embarks on what may be her most dangerous assignment yet, assisted only by her best friend-slash-sidekick, Solomon aka "The Carpenter", quite possibly the only superhero alive who enthusiastically carries his superhero status with pride in a world that fears the superhero name. Together the two uncover a plot that may place not only Sam but the entire world at risk. But with the rest of the superhuman community unwilling to come out of hiding, Spook and The Carpenter must face this threat alone.

Believe me when I say my description does not do this story true justice. While the book features and portrays its share of tropes and aspects familiar to comic book fans, it also throws in a few original niches and extras that keep its characters interesting and the pages alluring. Every scene is lovingly written in a way that almost creates a clear picture, and it is easy to imagine many of the settings explained here. Better still, the characters themselves are fleshed out and multi-dimensional, showing various flaws and imperfections that create layers to their positive traits. Spook and The Carpenter's powers, in particular, are a joy to read and are put to good use throughout the book. The personal chemistry and drama between certain characters, in particular the aforementioned dynamic duo, also adds to their appeal, making you feel at times like you can relate to them.

Of course, no superhero novel would be complete without its' supervillains, and boy oh boy, is the main antagonist something else! Morgan Shepherd, aka Quanta, is a prime example of a more-than-meets-the-eye antagonist. While his grandiose plan involves no shortage of slaughter and destruction and can be easily considered heinous in every regard, there is also a slight method to his madness. He is also regretful of his actions and does not always appear as evil as his actions would otherwise suggest. As you read through the story and his true intentions unfold, you may either come to outright despise him or even ROOT for him! A brilliant portrayal of a supervillain in my opinion.

All in all, Chris Strange has written one hell of a novel and I found it incredibly hard to put it down. Even as I write this, I can envision the exploits of Spook and her fellow heroes, and I sure as hell hope to see more of them in the future. If you happen to be a comic book nerd/fan and are searching for a written novel to sate your science fictional lust, this is the book for you!

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### **Anthony Surber says**

Picked up a free copy from Amazon but I plan on buying a paper copy just to have it on my bookshelf. I was hooked on the story from the very start and I could not read this book fast enough. I would love to see a graphic novel version.

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### **Kimberley Anglesey says**

I was perusing for a good detective novel, when Don't be a Hero happened to catch my eye. I was not a comic book kid, but I've seen most of the movies and am somewhat familiar with the superhero ethos.

The concept of a superhero detective intrigued me. I decided to click through to the preview of the writing.

After the first few paragraphs, I easily determined that Chris Strange knew how to write both a well constructed sentence and an interesting story . . . And so I contacted the author and asked him for an advanced copy of the book for Faerytale Magic, which he generously provided.



Don't be a Hero is the story of Spook. She's a Kiwi of Asian descent, lesbian, ex superhero turned private detective scraping out a living solving cases the police can't or won't take on. I applaud Chris for his position that anyone, male, female, gay or straight, can be heroic, regardless of race, religion or any of the other biases we use to label people.

Niobe aka Spook and Solomon aka Carpenter — her partner in crime fighting, have been hired to find a missing 13-year-old boy named Sam. Who took the kid, why do they want him, how is his kidnapping involved with super heroes? The hunt for Sam will pit Niobe and Solomon against some of the world's most dangerous super criminals, land her on the cape coppers wanted list and drive a wedge between she and her lover, Gabby. With no leads, Niobe gives up a piece of herself to the blind man for a glimpse into Sam's mind. The more she learns, the more Niobe knows she should turn the case down and walk away, but once a hero, always a hero.

Writing the action in this book must have been a real challenge, one that Chris pulled off masterfully. His characters are well developed and compelling. Doll Face was one frightening psychopath, one worthy of his own comic book series. His alternate version of history is well thought out and rich with detail. I could have personally done without the brief glimpse into Niobe's sex life, as I don't read romance novels and tend to skip through those kinds of scenes in any book. Consider this my parental warning.

American readers will notice a few differences in spelling and turns of phrase, but you quickly adjust.

Overall I gave the book 4 stars and highly recommend it to fans of the superhero genre or anyone who enjoys a good detective story.

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## **M. Joseph Murphy says**

Don't be a Hero is by far the best book I've read in years. And I read a lot of books: independent and the big houses. The last time I was this impressed was Jim Butcher's Furies of Calderon.

It will draw obvious comparisons between The Watchmen and the television series Heroes. Both show superheroes as "realistic" and "gritty". This is "realistic"; it is serious. Chris treats heroes flying around in spandex or throwing trees around as accepted reality and just tells a great story. The current trend to take the "super" out of superheroes is often works (e.g. The Dark Knight, the television show Arrow, etc.) but it is not what drew me to comics.

This is the book comic fans have been waiting for. It is everything this comic book geek could ever want in a novel.

### **STORYLINE:**

It is the late 1960s in a world where superheroes are real. But the time of heroes has passed. They were loved by the public during World War II. Once the war ended, they were seen as a threat.

Two former heroes, Niobe and Solomon, work as freelance investigators. Unfortunately for them, they stumble upon the career of a life time...a case upon which the fate of the whole planet depends. All the characters have a very solid arc. Often, this type of book has a glaring cliff hanger begging for a sequel. And while there could be one, there doesn't NEED to be one.

#### CHARACTERS:

Niobe is a joy. She is flawed and heroic with moments of fragility and strength. The same can be said for the main villain. He never sees himself as a bad guy. He is rational, sane and very, very human. And, in some ways, I wanted to him to win. That is the sign of a well-written villain.

#### WORLDBUILDING:

A very simple device helps build a fully realized and believable world. Each chapter begins with an excerpt from a government file or document that helps establish the past. Chris never wastes your time with needless exposition. Yet you feel as if you know a ton about this world.

#### Plotting and Pacing:

There is nothing ground breaking about the plot line. Chris Strange uses very familiar comic book tropes. He revels in it. The book is never easy to put down. Every chapter ends at a point that makes you want to keep reading.

#### CONCLUSION:

I was given this book for free to review it. After reading it, I went out and paid for it. I also picked up his other novel, *The Man Who Crossed Worlds*. Do yourself a favour. Buy this book and tell your friends about it. Truly, an excellent book.

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#### **Juho Salo says**

Didn't finish this one. The writing seemed passable, but the world seemed way too dark, the main characters too distant and the story depressing that I just couldn't go on.

This might be a fault of mine and not that of the book - I mean, none of the qualities above are problems per se - but they're problems for me. I came looking for genre fiction. Didn't expect it to be all sunshine, but there didn't seem to be anything to hang to on here.

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#### **Gene Rosso says**

Not your usual superhero book but worth your time

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