



# Empire State: A Love Story (or Not)

*Jason Shiga*

Download now

Read Online ➞

# Empire State: A Love Story (or Not)

Jason Shiga

## Empire State: A Love Story (or Not) Jason Shiga

Jimmy is a stereotypical geek who works at the library in Oakland, California, and is trapped in his own torpidity. Sara is his best friend, but she wants to get a life (translation: an apartment in Brooklyn and a publishing internship). When Sara moves to New York City, Jimmy is rattled. Then lonely. Then desperate. He screws up his courage, writes Sara a letter about his true feelings, and asks her to meet him at the top of the Empire State Building (a nod to their ongoing debate about *Sleepless in Seattle*).

Jimmy's cross-country bus trip to Manhattan is as hapless and funny as Jimmy himself. When he arrives in the city he's thought of as "a festering hellhole," he's surprised by how exciting he finds New York, and how heartbreaking—he discovers Sara has a boyfriend!

Jason Shiga's bold visual storytelling, sly pokes at popular culture, and subtle text work together seamlessly in *Empire State*, creating a quirky graphic novel comedy about the vagaries of love and friendship.

Praise for *Empire State*:

"He [Shiga] displays a wicked sense of comic timing."  
-*Publishers Weekly*

"*Empire State: A Love Story (Or Not)* is funny, sweet, geeky and affecting, and definitely worth a read."  
-Wired.com

"Shiga's illustrations . . . are unique and endearing, and his images of NYC are instantly recognizable."  
-*am New York*

"If Woody Allen grew up in Oakland rather than Manhattan, he'd most likely see the world, and especially New York City, as Jason Shiga does in *Empire State*." -Big Think.com

## Empire State: A Love Story (or Not) Details

Date : Published May 1st 2011 by Harry N. Abrams

ISBN : 9780810997479

Author : Jason Shiga

Format : Hardcover 144 pages

Genre : Sequential Art, Graphic Novels, Comics, Fiction, Romance, Adult, Young Adult

 [Download Empire State: A Love Story \(or Not\) ...pdf](#)

 [Read Online Empire State: A Love Story \(or Not\) ...pdf](#)



**Download and Read Free Online Empire State: A Love Story (or Not) Jason Shiga**

---

# From Reader Review Empire State: A Love Story (or Not) for online ebook

## lucy black says

I liked this a lot. The drawings of buidings are amazing and make me want to sit in a big city and draw all the sconces and finials and windows and windows and windows. The story is sweet and unfolds at just the right pace. The drawings of the people pot me off a bit at first cos they kindof look like fisher price little people but I got over it.

---

## Jessica-Robyn says

I found this graphic novel to be incredibly underwhelming. From the grand design on the cover to the grand title evoking the ideas of a Love Story and the Empire State I created a reasonable expectation that this book would have a lot more to it. If anything I feel like it was grossly mis-marketed.

There were a lot of things in this in that I really disliked. These things includes the likes of the characters, the character design, the plot and the tone. It wasn't that all these aspects were inherently bad, but none of these them really worked. The plot mostly consists of a guy who is going nowhere and really likes a girl who just wants to be his friend. The characters are all written as static and flat, which also describes their design.

These things made the experience of reading this book rather meh, but that isn't to say that there wasn't any positives. The use of colour and the design of the backgrounds are both fantastic. I would be interested to see what could happen if the art was applied to a different story.

---

## Abby says

3.5 stars. My crush on Jason Shiga continues. This one was more melancholy and reflective than his other works, which are more like elaborate puzzles than graphic novels. Unrequited love story of two slacker 20-something friends living on opposite coasts -- total Adrian Tomine territory, I know, but Shiga's love story (or not) struck me as much more sincere and painfully real (and funny). If you've ever done something incredibly impulsive and poorly thought out because of a crush that's way out of your league, you can relate to this story. I loved Shiga's use of color to signify the tense (past or present) and the way he showed characters interrupting each other by drawing the word bubbles on top of each other and blocking out parts of a sentences. Plus the main character works in a library and there is a two-page spread on the proper technique for Mylar-ing book covers. NERDY love.

---

## Wendy says

I forgot to mention that the part where he's showing a real web programmer his website, and he said he coded it all in Notepad....lol funny... but only to people who realize the ridiculousness of that. He wants to be

a designer, but has the education and ability of a 7th grader.

cute story of a not worldly-wise 25 yr. old from Oakland traveling to New York.

Some GN's tend to end in a silly way, but this one actually wraps up pretty well.

---

### **paula says**

I bet that nobody that meets Jason Shiga doesn't like Jason Shiga. He just comes off as a sweet guy, a math geek working as a page in the Oakland Public Library, who is also a comics and puzzle savant. Empire State is his first full-length adult graphic novel, a little story about a naive 25-year-old Asian guy who works as a page at the Oakland Public Library. In the story, Jimmy is sort of secretly in love with his best friend Sara. When Sara moves to New York City to work in publishing and despise Williamsburg hipsters, Jimmy follows her out for a visit. Realistic, understated dialogue and atmospheric landscapes contribute to the low-key mood of this gentle, funny, sweet story.

---

### **Sesana says**

I wonder: do you have to be able to identify with Jimmy's clueless, Nice Guy pursuit of a girl who really does just want to be friends with him to truly enjoy this book? It just made me sad. Not for Jimmy, but for Sara, who thought she had a friend in Jimmy.

---

### **Sam Quixote says**

Loved it - really well told and put together comic book about growing up and unrequited love. Full review [here!](#)

---

### **christa says**

Jason is a young employee of the public library in Oakland, a real whiz with the process of wrapping Mylar around the books. He has never left the city and has dinner with his parents once a week. He doesn't have a bank account, rather signs his checks over to his mom and receives an allowance.

And he thinks he might have it bad for his friend Sara, who moves to Brooklyn to pursue the literary life among the hipsters. She did, afterall, introduce him to the different sorts of coffee drinks a person can purchase.

Jason Shiga's graphic novel "Empire State" stars young Jason, bravely hopping a Greyhound to meet Sara for a "Sleepless in Seattle" moment at the Empire State Building. Taking a bit of a risk in an otherwise pretty safe little life void of adventure. Once he arrives in New York City, a few layers of truth are revealed about these characters. Namely that Jason is super naive and that Sara's mail service is a bit suspect.

His story is told in not-quite linear order, color-coded to indicate flashbacks. It has moments of funny, like when Jason explains to his mother the urban legend behind applying for a job at Google. Unfortunately, I only read this far before buying the book and considered that a good endorsement, even though I wasn't digging the art at all.

I should have listened to my art critique instead of being led astray by single funny panel. The Google part is, unfortunately, the only part of the story that exceeds "Meh."

---

## Seth T. says

I suffer from a perhaps strange inability to watch Ben Stiller movies. It's not so much Ben Stiller himself that I find unwatchable. He's perfectly capable of entertaining me or playing a role that I can enjoy. The affecting issue seems to be more with the type of character for which he is usually cast. Awkward characters. Men with little ability to suss out their social environment in a facile manner. *Reality Bites*. *Meet the Parents*. That sort of thing. Films that stock and trade on Stiller's ability to play a truly, madly, deeply embarrassing schlub.

When I encounter characters doing terribly embarrassing things, I become physically agitated. Or at least my psychological agitation translates into a physical experience. I shake, cringe, and sweat. I start to become nauseated. I feel the same while watching Michael Scott interact with anyone outside of the employees of Dunder Mifflin, Scranton. After watching the "Scott's Tots" episode of *The Office*, I made a deal with my wife that I would leave the room whenever Michael Scott did anything and she would call me back when it was over. And I wasn't always this way so much. I think it's getting worse as I grow older.

This is the long way about to explain my issue with Jason Shiga's *Empire State: A Love Story (Or Not)*. Every critic comes to a piece of work from the context in which he or she lives. Every last one of us. You'll find no such thing as an objective opinion on a book or movie or piece of music. Our tastes govern us and our tastes are in turn governed by our experiences. We can employ certain means to help mitigate the effect of our tastes when we're aware of these kinds of imbalances, but we can never neutralize completely?—?and who would want to? Nostalgia is a big hurdle for a lot of people, rendering them incapable of seeing a book as it is. For me, the hurdle is watching a character suffer self-wounding humiliation over and over, never recognizing how it is by their own actions that their lives remain in torment. I can almost not judge a book or movie sensibly if that kind of thing is present.

But I try. I do.

The savvy among you will have discerned that there is something embarrassing going on in *Empire State*, perhaps some moment of shame or painful humiliation. It's worse, really. The book's central premise, the plot from start to finish, is that moment of humiliation. Our protagonist is awkward and socially oblivious?—?and even while feeling the initial pangs of shame, continues doggedly upon the horrible, scarring course he's laid out for himself. The book, for me, was painful from beginning to end. I had to read the short work in discreet chunks in order to even finish it. Apparently, for some of the reviewers who have lauded the work, the book was not difficult to take in at all. It is primarily for this reason that I make you aware of my... condition?—?to give you reason, should you need it, to entirely dismiss my review on grounds of mental instability. If your name is Jason Shiga, this may be the best tack.

[Man, I remember not knowing what Perl is. Not really, I don't. But I can imagine my life was probably more carefree. I was also a newly minted bachelor. Oh Perl, you kidder, you cad.]

*Empire State* is the story of a boy who likes a girl who moves away to a city essentially a million miles away from Oakland, where the boy remains. A better title may have been *Damn the Middle States*. The tough part is that while the boy has his crush (as boys will do), the girl remains either oblivious or aware-but-uninterested (my guess is the latter). That's painful and sad, but a pretty common version of the tale. Where it gets tough is watching the boy pin his hopes on a girl who won't ever have him, knowing this is the case, and witnessing him continue a hapless pursuit of her despite there being no indications that anything will come of it. He imagines some sort of *Sleepless in Seattle* meet-up at the Empire State Building but does so based not even on the flimsiest evidence. Every step he makes closer to that fateful moment and the inevitable lingering shame brought me a little bit closer to total mental collapse.

I wanted to yell at him, to shake him, to pour sense into him. But a kid like that? There's no reasoning with him. He has to take his knocks and hopefully learn some lesson or another. It may be the lesson he learns is to seek a better reading of the signs before embarking on a journey of romantic proportions. More likely, the lesson he'll take away is that women are fickle, inscrutable creatures and are to be pursued wholly apart from reason and that the arbitrary hand of fate is to be accepted for whichever way it chooses to fall. I imagine this boy is well on his way to becoming Oscar Wao. And that's a hard thing to watch.

Look. I've made my own mistakes and miscalculations. I'm not boasting over how superior I am and how I can't possibly relate to this kid. I can?—?and that may be why I feel so deeply the humiliation that he himself should have felt even before he began his journey. I understand this kid, but that doesn't mean I want to read about him.

But apart from that (apart from my personal demons), was the story any good? I don't think that it was. It may in some way have been realistic, but it wasn't really compelling or interestingly composed. Neither the boy nor the girl was engagingly crafted and I found no reason that either of them should attract the attentions of either readers or potential suitors. It's not so much that every book has to feature likable protagonists, but in a love story it's almost essential. And neither is it that these two are as despicable as the leads in *Conversations with Other Women*, but more that they're just flat, uninteresting people with not much to recommend them. The boy has a not-quite-developed fascination with mylaring books, but that on its own is not enough to round him out as a character.

The art is acceptable but nothing worth praising. It's simplistic and the emotion of scenes is often lost in the blank faces of its characters. The most exciting thing about *Empire State* is its use of colour, but even this isn't spectacular (not that I believe it was intended to be and it would be unfair perhaps to put too much weight on the book's central visual gimmick). The story is told in two parts, cyan and magenta?—?with cyan repping for the present and magenta standing in for the past. The colors twirl back and forth as Shiga moves the narrative with flashes back and forward and back again. And when the two periods reach a state of intertwine, we get a blend of cyan and magenta. It's a technique we saw somewhat in *Asterios Polyp*?—?only there, new colours emerge to visually describe the protagonist's psychological growth. In *Empire State*, the colour choices appear to be arbitrarily chosen. This may not be the case, but I couldn't figure out a purpose specifying cyan/present and magenta/past.

At the end of the day, it's difficult to distinguish my evaluation of *Empire State* as a visual/literary object from my strong prejudices against experiences of this kind. I'm pretty certain that I wouldn't have enjoyed *Empire State* even if I were someone who could endure character humiliation as easily as I endure characters who have hair and wear clothes, but you'll have to take that for what it's worth. Perhaps it was unfair for me to review the work at all, but on that note, perhaps it's unfair for any critic to review a work, governed as we are by our circumstances, beliefs, histories, moods, and tastes. I trust that you as the reader will be able to discern whether Shiga's book is something you wish to pursue. After all, plenty of others have enjoyed it.

---

*[Review courtesy of Good Ok Bad]*

---

### **Krista Regester says**

This was cute - and Sara reminds me of myself in an "I'm over this shit" way. :)

---

### **Stacy Fetters says**

*"You were right about the annoying hipsters here, too. The worst are the ones who complain about all the other annoying hipsters while not realizing that they themselves are the annoying hipsters."*

Maybe Jason should stick with what he's good at.... The Demon series!

I'm not sure if I have to be brainless to enjoy this or be an annoying hater of larger cities.

The best thing about this is the cover!!

---

### **BookCupid says**

#### **Sometimes you gotta chase the girl**

After Sara leaves for New York, Jimmy, who never revealed his true feelings, hops on a six day bus ride to see her. To be romantic, he asks her to meet him on the empire state building. But due to a communication issue, Sara doesn't show, instead she waits for him at home with her new boyfriend. Can Jimmy somehow win Sara's heart - or is he too deep into the friend zone?

The illustrations are handdrawn and I need to praise the whole concept of a plus size female protagonist (rare in graphic novels). However, Sara and Jimmy's relationship just seems awkward. Mostly Sara just chats along about her relationships, while Jimmy pretends to understand - other times Jimmy just talks about nothing, while Sara interprets it as a cry for help.

A great example of how we must never rush relationships and what is meant to be, just is.

---



## **Dov Zeller says**

I love that this is a book in which awkwardness is not overcome for the sake of a happily ever after fairytale ending. This is less a happily ever after fairytale and more of a cautionary tale, though I am not sure what it is cautioning against.

Jimmy is in love with his best friend Sara and feels the need to, once and for all, now that Sara is so many miles away (she moved from CA, where Jimmy still lives, to NY, where Jimmy decides to visit) share that information with her. Jimmy's cross country trip comes after a long friendship in which there is perhaps an unspoken understanding that Jimmy is crushed out on Sara and that she is not crushed out on him. But little moments of warmth and intimacy between them confuse Jimmy.

Is Sara the bad guy in this book? Is there some way she is being unfair? Whose responsibility is it to state clearly the truth of their dynamic? Would open communication earlier on in their friendship have kept Jimmy from years of romantic torment, or would things have gone on like this regardless?

How many of us find ourselves in these strange dynamics which are to some degree fueled by what is unspoken, holding that delicate and often hurtful balance -- one person giving another that little crumb of romantic hope; and that same person receiving just enough romantic attention from a friend that it feels good, but not wanting more. Or maybe that so-called crumb of hope is entirely fabricated by the person with the stronger romantic feelings (because it is possible for a friend to have romantic feelings for another friend, but not the kind that they want to 'act on' by shifting the relationship from a romantic friendship to a fully-fledged romantic relationship.)

So I guess it's all pretty complicated. Because friendship is often nearer to romantic love than we culturally prefer to acknowledge, and often more confusing for all parties involved.

I think Sara is pretty clear in her way that she's not romantically interested in Jimmy, and at the same time, I can't blame Jimmy his fantasies, as his friendship with Sara has a kind of intimacy that has a romantic quality. How is it that two people can share so much with each other over time, have so much in common, and yet one person feels that extra little spark of capital R romance, the possibility of sexual connection, and the other doesn't? And often the fantasy that goes along with this disparity in feeling is that a grand gesture or confession or proclamation could be the bold move that shifts the balance for the other person involved.

So, maybe that is what Jimmy was going for. Or perhaps he just didn't want to live this lie anymore, and in that case, the gesture is one of letting go. I can relate to the semi-fantastical hope and also to the need to say something out loud that has been in the air and unspoken for a very long time.

It's refreshing to read a comic book in which the art is both gorgeous and unremarkable, the protagonists are not that fake awful cartoon plastic pretty. There is a bit of Jeffrey Brown in here, as so much of his writing is about awkward love semi-disasters, and there is a touch of the grotesque and the rough-around the edges cartooning. But Shiga's book has the beautiful cityscapes and dreamy inking (color coded according to narrative time) and the format (a bigger book, a heavier artifact) that is all its own.

Some of the awkwardness in here is even a bit awkward for me, and I'm still trying to make sense of the gender dynamics and some of the dating conversations and the Jewish girl not interested in Asian guy dynamics. I considered giving it a 4, but for now I am sticking with a 3-star thing. I look forward to reading more of Shiga's work!!

---

## Jess Newman says

Have you ever wanted to experience an Indie "mumblecore" romance film in graphic novel form?

**Good news!** This is the graphic novel for you. It features introverted, nebbish-y protagonists, a low-stakes story with an unsatisfying resolution, and an empty feeling of entropy all throughout.

Do you want to know more?

The story focuses on Jimmy, an Asian college grad who works at a public library in his hometown of Oakland, California. He has no idea what to do with his life. He programs html (poorly) in his spare time. He does strange things like time traffic light cycles to see if pressing the crossing button has any effect.

Unsurprisingly, Jimmy has only one friend.

Sara is a snarky bookish type, who is moving to New York to pursue an internship at a publishing house. It is as she tells this to Jimmy that he realizes he loves her. Or doesn't know what to do without her because he has no other human connections other than his mother, whom he still lives with.

So Jimmy decides to go to New York and sweep Sara off her feet, or at least get it off his chest. He has a short adventure in New York, and then (view spoiler)

This book was, as I said above, unsatisfying and unlikable. The characters are unimpressive and uncharismatic, the story is low-stakes and dry, and the art style is, while pretty at parts, not enough to make up for the story's flaws.

A bit about the art style: It is simple, thick lined, and monochromatic, either in rose-pink (when in Oakland) or blue and white (when in NY). His style of illustration is well-suited to buildings and to a lesser extent landscapes, but his characters lack definition and flair. The color conceit feels clever at first, but nothing is done with it, and it feels like the author should have worked longer on developing the story and art style to bring this book up to snuff.

---

## Raina says

[~~secret love of~~ (hide spoiler)]

---