



SuperMutant Magic Academy

Jillian Tamaki

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Unrequited love, underage drinking, and teen angst rule at a high school for mutants and witches.

The *New York Times* and *New Yorker* illustrator Jillian Tamaki is best known for co-creating the award-winning young adult graphic novels *Skim* and *This One Summer*—moody and atmospheric bestsellers. *SuperMutant Magic Academy*, which she has been serializing online for the past four years, paints a teenaged world filled with just as much ennui and uncertainty, but also with a sharp dose of humor and irreverence. Tamaki deftly plays superhero and high-school Hollywood tropes against what adolescence is really like: The SuperMutant Magic Academy is a prep school for mutants and witches, but their paranormal abilities take a backseat to everyday teen concerns.

Science experiments go awry, bake sales are upstaged, and the new kid at school is a cat who will determine the course of human destiny. In one strip, lizard-headed Trixie frets about her nonexistent modeling career; in another, the immortal Everlasting Boy tries to escape this mortal coil to no avail. Throughout it all, closeted Marsha obsesses about her unrequited crush, the cat-eared Wendy. Whether the magic is mundane or miraculous, Tamaki's jokes are precise and devastating.

SuperMutant Magic Academy has won two Ignatz Awards. This volume combines the most popular content from the webcomic with a selection of all-new, never-before-seen strips that conclude Tamaki's account of life at the academy.

SuperMutant Magic Academy Details

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From Reader Review SuperMutant Magic Academy for online ebook

Elizabeth A says

Let me start this review by saying that I'm not a fan of the short story format. Why does that matter? Because this book is a collection of connected comic strips. Each page is a single vignette of life as experienced by a group of teens in their final years of high school. Yes, it is boarding school, and the kids are all mutants in some manner, but first and foremost they are teens, so prepare to wallow in vats of teen angst.

The mostly black and white art is really sketchy, which I did love it, but I think the author wonderfully captured the humor, anger, moodiness, and snarkiness of that age group. I read some place that this book is a collection of her web comics, and as with any anthology, there are some pieces that are fantastic and others that were merely OK. Still, the ones that are fantastic are breathtakingly on point, and I would highly recommend this one for older teens.

Raeleen Lemay says

3.5

THIS WAS SO WEIRD. And I'm a fan of weird, but I found this just plain didn't make sense sometimes. There were tons of single pages that seemed really pointless to me, but maybe I'm just not reading into them enough. I don't know. The book was enjoyable, made me think and/or laugh multiple times, but I wouldn't call it amazing.

Ariel says

A new favourite! What a flippin' hilarious read.

Told in a series of single page comics, this graphic novel explores the final few years of high school at a school for mutant teens. This gave Tamaki the opportunity for impressive larks - this book made me laugh out loud consistently. Some of the strips were so good that I had to take pictures and send them to friends. I think the fact that teenagers were supermutants was used extremely effectively, especially because 1) they were able to do normal things that teenagers do and show that teens EVERY WHERE act the same way, and 2) they were able to amplify and caricature teenagers by using their powers. This book also had some surprisingly powerfully sad and troubling comic strips that made me think and reflect.

On the illustrations I absolutely enjoyed them. The sparing use of colour was very effective, and overall the drawings were a lot of fun to look at.

Absolutely recommended to everyone. (Although do note that it has some mature content.)

Vivian says

This was such a strange read. Very funny at times but also very weird. I didn't expect the commentary on society, culture, feminism and technology but it was much appreciated. Despite the quirkiness of the characters, you can't help but fall in love with them.

David Schaafsma says

I read this because I had liked her and her cousin Mariko's *Skim* and *This One Summer*, which are both more serious and contemplative and moody stories than this, which pretty much seems like it is a collection from her Ignatz award-winning webcomic by the same name. This is snarlier, smart-assier, funnier by far, representing Jilian's personality in a way *Skim* and *This One Summer* may represent Mariko more? Who knows. This one is set in a precocious, bored boarding school which Tamaki makes fun of, but also delights in, and she loves all the characters. It was totally surprising to me in tone. I was expecting elementary school level cute, a kick-ass superhero girl story, which would have been fine. But it is sometimes edgier, which I prefer (as an adult). It's also web-comicky episodic, with lots of one page comics strung together, which makes it less novel than collection of stories, though over time you get a good picture of the school and kids.

This story has mutant students, a main character with cat ears named Wendy, and her closeted friend, Marsha, who has a secret crush on her. It has magic everywhere, with plenty of snark and weird, idiosyncratic humor. It has pretentious nineties performance art, a teacher who sees through them and nails their self-absorbed behavior... I really liked it a lot. The art is fast web-comic sketchy, so different than her work with *This One Summer*, so initially I didn't think I'd like it as much, it felt rough, jokey, strange, and then as I read on, it felt Jeffrey Brown-appropriate. More accessible, not polished. Kind of funky. So I really liked it a lot. People keep mentioning the Harry Potter comparisons, and that's here, I guess, but it feels nothing like that world, really, beyond the obvious similarities. It's really funny with great dialogue and real kids in it!

Jesse (JesseTheReader) says

This was strange and hilarious and all sorts of wonderful.

Lex says

Where do I even begin? *SuperMutant Magic Academy* is a series of comics about the students (and some staff members) at *SuperMutant Magic Academy*. I had originally picked up *This One Summer* because it looked interesting, but then I saw this one and it won out. I'm definitely going to have to go back get *This One Summer*, though, because if it's half as good as *SuperMutant*, I'm going to **love** it.

I don't even have the words, really, to explain how much I loved it. It was everything I could want out of a comic. I can't even think of a single thing in this that I would change. It's so realistic and hilarious. It manages to say some pretty deep things, things that need to be said, without getting heavy. The art wasn't mindblowing or anything but I really liked it.

Did I mention how realistic it is?! And it's a fantasy, okay! But there's a part (and I don't think it's a spoiler, but if you don't want to know, then just skip this paragraph okay) where this prophetic cat (yes! a prophetic cat!) tries to tell two kids that they're 'the chosen one' and instead of turning into a cliche where they're like 'yes i accept my destiny', they're like HELL TO THE NO, and get up and run away.

"Dude's going to lay down a prophecy or something! And we're going to get suckered into fulfilling it because we were sitting in this cave on a full moon or whatever? I'm not letting that happen. I am SO CLOSE to getting out of here! I'm not going to let some asshole in a little cap drag me back in!"

(view spoiler)

If that's not enough to convince you there's also: girls crushing on girls, a boy named Cheddar, a football player who believes sexuality has nothing to do w/ appreciating how perfect another man's ass is, awesome friendships, boys making out in the shower, and a girl who turns into a fox. Also a cat as a student. And knower of prophecies.

So yeah. This was great. Go read it. Right now.

Dov Zeller says

When I first got this book out of the library I thought I was getting a graphic novel, and soon discovered that this was something very different. At first I was disappointed and I almost didn't read it, but then I read a friend's review and that helped me navigate the pages. This book comes out of a web comic I haven't read. It is not a building narrative, though there are certainly narrative threads. It is more like dailies that are loosely connected because they are all concerned with a cast of characters in a school for super-mutant angst teenagers.

There is a lot of humor, absurdity, gorgeous bleakness and joyous silliness that altogether remind me most of John Allison and Adrian Tomine. This is not Harry Potter, but it makes a lot of Harry Potterish references (including a teacher named Grimdorff) and jokes, and offers some Potterish charm while still being completely irreverent and messed up. (Here is a comic about a kid who dies all the time and rearrives in the world of the living.)

There are super funny dungeons and dragons scenes that sort of remind me of the scenes in Louis CK when all the comics get together and play poker. There is something both grounding and charming, it gives one a sense of familiarity with the characters that humanizes them and shows us their foibles.

But it's also a reminder of how stories work — how narrative feeds on pain — and how humor works — taking the familiar and shifting it in ways that are at times groan-worthy but at times ingenious.

One of my favorite comics from the book is one in which some kids (girl-type people) have a seance and the dead person they conjure is a total asshole sexist jerk. It's really funny and also, well, sick and sad and not that far from real life. (Here is a third of a 3-page episode in which the guy is conjured and they ask him about what heaven is like, and what his life was like before he died.)

That is another really great thing about this book, is that it overturns expectations of the mundane vs. the extraordinary, and the distance between mutant and not-mutant feels thinner and thinner as the comics continue on.

Characters: there is lovelorn Marsha longing after her pretty and popular and totally lovely best friend Wendy (a fox, and part fox).

There is Cheddar, a student trying to out-Sartre Sartre, and he existential philosophizes his way out of classes and all kinds of stuff, which is funny. And he's kind of self-absorbed, but also, the kind of kid whose depth comes as a welcome variation on the theme of high school popular guys. There's Gemma who is an interesting combination of jaded and world-weary, and kind of idealistic? She is best friends with Francis who is a fantastic performance artist.

There is some cosmic stuff I don't always get, but it's pretty beautiful and uncanny and sometimes bleak.

And there is some great queer humor. How she managed to, in one page, make fun of stereotypes about people turning queer from reading queer authors, and also totally humorously retell the story of Brokeback Mountain (a very serious, very beautiful, but somehow infinitely tease-able film, though I can't speak for the book) I may never know.

So, what can I say? Read this book! Support this author! Her other graphic novels are a bit more gloomy but there is always off-beat and often sad humor to help ease or bring home the pain.

<https://dovreading.wordpress.com/2016...>

Katrina (trinareadsbooks) says

3.5 stars

This was a strange, but, at times, hilariously funny read. I especially loved how the novel was more like little stories all in the same universe than one linear story.

Kelly says

Irreverent, absurd, and totally hilarious. Frances is a Queen.

somuchreading says

Οι τελευτα?ες 3 εβδομ?δες δεν ?ταν και οι καλ?τερες και δι?θεση/μυαλ? για δι?βασμα δεν υπ?ρχε, αλλ? ευτυχ?ς που ?ποια στιγμ? ?πιασα κ?τι ?ταν αυτ?.

To SuperMutant Magic Academy ε?ναι βαθι? σκεπτ?μενο, βαθι? ουμανιστικ? και βαθι? ?μορφο. Οι ?ρω?ς του ε?ναι ?φηβοι, παρ?ξενοι ?φηβοι που φοιτο?ν σε ?να παρ?ξενο σχολε?ο, αλλ? το ?φος του δεν ε?ναι αυτ? ακριβ?ς που περιμ?νει κανε?ς απ? ?να κ?μικ φαντασ?ας. Δεν υπ?ρχουν κακο?, δρ?κοι, δεν υπ?ρχει B?λντεμορτ.

Ιδια?τερο και κουφ?, με ?ναν τρ?πο που ας πο?με ε?ναι το τηλεοπτικ? Rick and Morty ? σε φ?σεις του το Community, αρκετ? αστε?ο αλλ? και τραγικ?, στεν?χωρο και με στιγμ?ς που σε χτυπ?νε στο στομ?χι, ?πως για παρ?δειγμα το Louie ? το BoJack Horseman, αλλ? και εντελ?ς διαφορετικ? απ? ?λα αυτ?.

Deadpan αστε?α αν?μεσα σε φιλοσοφικο?ς διαλ?γους, εφηβικ? slices of life, teen angst, συναισθηματικ? υπ?ροχα gags, διαφορετικ?, ξεχωριστο? χαρακτ?ρες, ολοσ?λιδα art pieces που ?λλοτε μπορε? να βγ?ζουν ν?ημα κι ?λλοτε ?χι, το βιβλ?ο δε σταμ?τησε να δ?νει διαφορετικ? υλικ? και συνεχ?μενες μικρ?ς εκπλ?ξεις.

Δε θα πω παραπ?νω πρ?γματα. Ξερ?, γεμ?τα 4*/5 απ? μ?να και τ?ρα θ?λω οπωσδ?ποτε να διαβ?σω το This One Summer της Jillian Tamaki, νομ?ζω ?γνα φαν.

Wanda says

My first thought on this is that I am wayyyy too old to truly appreciate this graphic novel! I liked the idea of a school for mutants and witches and I'm pretty sure that this would have totally been my jam when I was in junior high school. Because, let's face it, we all feel like mutants when we're in junior high.

It was definitely a creative way to illustrate all the problems that we have at that age: where do we fit in? What are our talents? What will be do after graduation? Or even today after school? Do our marks matter? Does that cute boy/girl know that we exist?

I can still relate to some of it—don't we all still feel like mutants some days? But those days are fewer and farther between the older that I get. I know that I can support myself and run my life successfully on the majority of days. If I could talk to my teenage self that would be my message: you're going to be okay. Loosen up and enjoy things more. Too bad that wisdom only comes to us once we're short on the energy to appreciate it fully.

Rincey says

I looovvveddd it.

See me talk about it briefly in my March wrap up: https://youtu.be/EFc_Zjs4IZs?t=1m12s

Jan Philipzig says

I guess the title brings to mind the Xavier's School for Gifted Youngsters or the Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry, but the students of Jillian Tamaki's SuperMutant Magic Academy are no aspiring superheroes or magicians – they are mutants like you and me, (more or less) regular teenagers faced with (more or less) regular high-school challenges. This book collects the most popular of Tamaki's Ignatz-Award-winning webcomic strips (and adds a few new ones): some brilliantly observed, some a bit obvious, and some I did not get at all. The good ones are REALLY good, though...

Eilonwy says

I'm not sure how to rate this at all!

I grabbed this at the library thinking it was a graphic novel, and since I've loved Jillian Tamaki's illustrations in *Half World* and her cousin Mariko's graphic novels *Skim* and *This One Summer*, I was really excited to see what Jillian's work for herself would look like.

This turned out to be a series of mostly single-page comics which feature a few teenage kids from the title school: Adorable fox-girl Wendy; Asian nerd-girl Marsha; rebellious performance artist Frances; gorgeous blonde Gemma; cynical boy Cheddar; Everlasting Boy, and all their various unusual classmates. There's no particular plot until a long prom-and-graduation-centered sequence at the very end of the book. The comics make points about body acceptance, feminism, being gay, feeling different from everyone else, and make fun of general teen hypocrisy. Some of them are very funny; some of them I didn't get at all. All of them have a weird charm, though.

The artwork really varied. Some of the comics are very rough-looking while others are very polished and detailed, and I couldn't tell if that was a time progression thing or not, because I can't tell if most of the book is in the order the comics were written in, or not.

So on the one hand, I was a bit mystified by this whole endeavor. I can't quite tell if it was written with an audience in mind, or was just the author making comics for herself. On the other hand, by the time I finished the collection, I felt very fond of all the characters, and started missing them as soon as I closed the covers on the final panel. Did I mention how weirdly charming this collection is, even though everyone is slightly grumpy most of the time?

Read this if my review makes you curious! :-)

