



Flutter, Volume One: Hell Can Wait

Jennie Wood (Creator, Writer) , Jeff McComsey (Illustrator)

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Fifteen year-old Lily shape-shifts into a boy to get THE girl. Chaos ensues from pretending to be someone she's not. While coming to terms with who she really is and what she's done, Lily learns that life as a boy is just as difficult.

"A truly thrilling graphic novel." - Gail Simone

"Flutter is one of the year's best LGBT graphic novels." - Jacob Anderson-Minshall, The Advocate

"I'm telling you all to read Flutter. This might just be the most unique comic book I have read since...well, I honestly can't remember because there's nothing to compare it to in my personal lexicon. The art by Jeff McComsey is incredible and suits the story perfectly with great color while Jennie Wood weaves one hell of a yarn."

- Shawn Perry, Bleeding Cool

Flutter, Volume One: Hell Can Wait Details

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Author : Jennie Wood (Creator, Writer) , Jeff McComsey (Illustrator)

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From Reader Review Flutter, Volume One: Hell Can Wait for online ebook

Todd Clark says

I really liked this graphic novel and can't wait for the second volume. I love how the story is told, how everything is set up and love the characters, especially Lily and Penelope. I think it does what all good first volumes should do – creates a world that I can't wait to get back to. Please hurry with volume two!

Alexis Sara says

While at some times a bit confusing and the story taking a small adjustment period to really get the grip of this ends up a really nice F/F romance with some deeper roots to pull at. There is a lot going on and I look forward to checking out future volumes.

Keith says

The internet sold this to me as a fantasy story dealing with transgender issues, and I guess it's kiiind of what this is about, but not really. In reality there's a few graphic novels within this graphic novel, and not all of them work. I'm not sure if I can even put my finger on which is the primary storyline, but if I was elevator-pitching this book, I'd say it was a coming-of-age story about a girl who discovers she can change into a boy, and who does so in order to date another girl that she's in love with.

Which sounds transgender-y and kind of complex, for sure. That's the interesting part, and if left as the sole complication in this teen drama, I could see this being a pretty compelling, even subversive entry into the fantasy YA genre. However, the political and social implications of this simple idea are buried in explaining WHY this girl can change into a boy -- call this the Attack of the Midichlorians, because the most important part of this half of the story is that it's not important at all. There's a bunch of top-secret-military-experiment stuff that's clumsily handled, and I think the girl's mom is trying to kill her dad for some reason, and fight scenes and secret agents I couldn't keep track of and yawwwwn anyway.

The dialogue doesn't carry the plot unless it's doing an information-dump, and the lettering is all in italics with poorly-shaped word balloons and serifs on all the I's. I really, really hate all those things.

But the art is cool, the color palette is nice and the core idea is a worthwhile one. I just don't see later volumes of this going anywhere other than more superpowered-shapeshifter-on-the-run-killing-government-agents, which is absolutely not what the best version of this story ever wanted to be.

Clark says

The summary sounded interesting. Girl likes girl, but has the power to shape-shift so she becomes a boy to

get the girl. A fine premise, but the summary leaves out the bulk of the story: government conspiracies, shady politicians, evil scientists, and so many freakin people with guns kidnapping teenagers trying to make them reveal another teenager's location. If you know who Lily's friends are, can't you just follow Lily? Why are you going after her friends?

So the story wasn't the in depth, self identity struggle I thought it'd be, but that might have been fine. The real problem was, I often didn't know what was going on. Sometimes that was from the convoluted, techno-babble, back-stabby plot that didn't want to give the mystery away lest the reader become disinterested (you want to know why the polar bear's on the island, right? Stay tuned. We might get to that, someday...). Sometimes, I was just flipping back and forth between pages trying to figure out what physically occurred. Like things were one way in one panel, and another in the next, and I don't know how we transitioned. I don't read a lot of graphic novels, but that seems like a fundamentally important thing to get right.

Other times, the dialogue didn't make sense. Or occasionally, I wasn't even sure which character was speaking. Again, I don't read enough graphic novels to know the best tools for keeping that straight, but I also don't recall having trouble with anything else I've read.

By the end, I was left with more questions than answers, and not in a 'can't wait to read the next volume' sort of way. However, the next is sitting on my desk already, so you never know.

Jake T. says

The Advocate recently named Flutter one of the year's best LGBT graphic novels and I can see why. (You can read the full review here: <http://www.advocate.com/arts-entertai...>).

The scope of this graphic novel is ambitious both in story and in art and I think it delivers. While there are subplots involving the FBI and stolen government research, a guilt-ridden shape-shifting mother and well-meaning father, the heart of the story is this: a girl falls for another girl and pretends to be someone she's not. Her journey - learning to be true to herself in order to find true love is something anyone can relate to. It's about growing up and learning that you don't have to be someone you're not. Therefore, I think it's not only one of the year's best LGBT graphic novels, but one of the year's best graphic novels period. As a straight, Midwestern born and raised guy, I can totally relate and can't wait to see where Jeff McComsey and Jennie Wood take volume two.

Michelle Hoover says

Such a smart and touching story, so true in its strangeness and the spaces in the text for the reader to walk through, fill in, and relate to. The illustrations are beyond gorgeous as well.

Audrey Marquardt says

The premise I bought this on, that a girl would change into a boy to get a girl, sounds like something I am wholly interested in. Perhaps I've read too many fantasy or dystopian tales, but I was willing to buy at face value that she had these powers and was ready to get into a great teen drama about identity. Instead, I learned

early on that just as important to this story was the source of these powers and the military conspiracy and/or science poachers (?) who are hunting Lily and her dad and possibly her mom (?) who are hiding from spies and killing people willy-nilly and I spent some time wondering when I might go back to the high school for more teen drama.

Maybe it's me, but the part of the story spawning the above run-on sentence wasn't well explained, and since I think the artist may suffer from what I've heard called, "twelve face syndrome," I'm having trouble telling people apart (especially if they keep changing faces, or worse, barely changing faces and then just telling me it's a different character). I'm willing to buy the next volume to see how it goes, but I'd like to come out of it less confused and more satisfaction on the teen drama front (which felt a little shafted while trying to get me up to speed on the secret science).

Jack Stricker says

I really love this graphic novel. I started it late Tuesday night and couldn't put it down. I stayed up until 2am reading it - even though I had to work early the next day. And then I read it again that next morning on the way to work. So my point is that it's a page turner. I've read a lot of graphic novels and this one ranks up there with me. It does not disappoint. I could identify with the main character, not feeling comfortable in her skin, just wanting to fit in and get the girl. I think everyone can. We all pretend to be something we're not at some point growing up. It's a part of growing up. Flutter hits that point home quite nicely.

There's a larger plot, too, that I like so it's not just about teenagers. It's about so much more and that will carry the series through for hopefully many more volumes!

Dani Reynolds says

I think this is a great LGBT story, great for teens as well as adults. The struggle of the central character is one that all of us can relate to. Who didn't feel uncomfortable in their own skin in high school?

And who doesn't pretend to be someone they are not at least once in his / her life to get something he / she wants? The story is fresh, new, but at the same time very relatable. Great writing with great art to match!

Katherine Leary says

This is a great graphic novel for adults and teenagers. It's all about learning to accept who you are and loving yourself for who you are. It's about a 15 year-old girl who can shape-shift into a boy. She does this to get the girl of her dreams, but she learns that being a boy is just as hard. This is a page turner. The writing is top notch and the art matches the writing perfectly.

Red says

I'm easy. You tell me about an interesting trans/queer story and I'll bite. I like supporting a kind of work that

isn't plentiful enough and I will shell out for it even when it's not in my budget. (I'm thinking of Shimura Takako's increasingly expensive, but ever worthwhile, volumes of *Wandering Son*.) Throw in the fact that it's a speculative fiction comic book, and I'm basically just a big grin with a person attached to it.

I've finished *Flutter*, and I'm sitting here looking at my two-star score wishing it could be a 1.5. That score is for the ideas this book was built on. Ideas like the lengths one will go to for acceptance and romance, filtered through struggles with sexuality and identity, and with a dash of homage to stories about the early years of super heroes. But these ideas never go anywhere. The main character never struggles with their gender so much as employs it as a plot device. The romances that spring up never amount to more than "Hey, we're together." "Cool." And then a kiss. The skin of high school popular versus unpopular dynamics are here, but hollow. We never understand the kids at their school as anything other than people who love the home team, or are popular, or are jocks. There's no sense of place to the school environment, the author just seems to be asking us to assume that everyone here is a cliché and thus beneath our concern. I love Daria as much as the next person, but Daria used stereotypes to make a point, even when that point was about Daria's own failings to see people as something other than stereotypes. When I think of the entire cast, actually, I can't honestly answer for myself why they do anything that they do. There's no depth to these relationships, and I can not imagine why anyone is together with anyone else because very little time is spent showing us how they work as a couple, or as an ex-couple, or as a parent and child, or as two colleagues, or as an attacker and assailant. Is *Flutter* trying to leave us in the dark to intrigue us enough to read more when a possible future volume comes out? Because so much is left off the table in terms of explanation I am not sure about enough of what happened in this book to know what I would be coming back for.

Also, the violence in *Flutter* has no drama. You can not have a fist thrown or an explosive go off and be satisfied that we the audience are surprised or shocked or saddened by it without some idea of the parties involved, what their desires are, what brought them to these desperate courses of action, and how they plan to make it stop so that they can achieve the life they want for themselves. I don't have to be an avid comic book reader to be tired of government conspiracies and gunfire. I can be just any American citizen who has seen a Hollywood blockbuster. Murder is not clever by itself. One of my favorite comics ever written is *Elektra: Assassin*, and it is promiscuous in its conspiracies and violence. However, the book's first chapter outlines to you that Elektra is damaged, dangerous and unreliable, and in this way your experiences as a reader are in a constant struggle to understand whether Elektra is "doing a good thing." You just don't know. And the book misdirects constantly with a mix of the satirical and the serious to keep the reader unbalanced about their evaluation about what is really going on and why. *Flutter*'s characters are robotically comfortable with killing, but the real world is too big and complex for this to simply be a coincidental meeting of Psychopaths Anonymous.

Under- or unexplored characters. A conspiracy about secret super weapon projects that is unlikely to turn out as interesting as, say, Shin Takahashi's *Saikano: The Last Love Song On This Little Planet*. Oh, and the art can be a mixed bag. There are several times where characters look very much like characters they are not (or no one in particular at all). There's actually a long list of things that don't work in *Flutter*, but I don't want to rag on an indie title with some strong ideas when I can make suggestions instead.

- 1) Decide whether the lead character cares about their gender. Decide whether they feel different, in their mind or in the way they use their body, as one person or the other.
- 2) Our lead is really comfortable with killing. Why? Have they killed before? How old were they? Who did they kill? Were they trained by the government? By their mother? By a foster parent? A sensei?
- 3) There's a break-up near the end of this volume. Will the dumpee come back or just disappear? Will they

follow their ex looking for answers? Will they join or aid the villains? Will they learn something new about their sexuality? Will they have any thoughts at all about the crime they were witness to, or thoughts about how they treated the dumper? What will their parents think about this?

4) Ask yourself: do you want a government conspiracy at all? Because g-men, suits, sunglasses, pistols, black cars, spies, bombs, assassins, secret government projects, the involvement of a major politician, people double-crossing each other for money? We've seen this before. There is no part of this conspiracy we haven't seen before...except, the notion that anyone could be one of these super people. It's very Red Scare. Since no one knows about it, though, there's no way to exploit that yet. But it could turn into something fun, like Battlestar. Instead of everyone being a Cylon, everyone could be one or two people. How crazy would that be? Look at the DS9 two-parter, "Homefront" and "Paradise Lost." See what happens to seemingly benign bureaucracy when it's confronted with the threat of an unknown and omni-adaptive infiltrator. It's great drama. Make a list of movies/books/etc. you think of when you think conspiracies. Notice the ways in which your sis similar and think about what you can do to change it into something that's yours, rather than something that belongs to so many others. Or lower the involvement of the conspiracy overall. To go back to Saikano, we know so very little of the government bodies controlling Chise, and that makes them scary. We don't know why they picked Chise to become a super weapon, and by not knowing it became a statement about how powers and principalities (run by men) use its citizens however it sees fit to wage its wars and establish dominance.

5) Tell us anything about the lead's father, because right now he has been a goofy buffoon and a military scientist. You can't have both, unless he's using the first as a feint to lure people into his plans.

6) Sit down and explain to me why the governor is against marriage equality, and why she thinks it is not "hate" for her to do so. Why distance her from hate groups in this book but offer no explanation as to why?

7) Consider making the next volume just about our lead and their new friend. No shootouts or anyone else, just a ship in a bottle type situation, or a train in a bottle. Make it Before Sunrise, or The Sandman story "The Sound of Her Wings," or any story that is just two people talking and connecting and taking in the world around them in an attempt to better understand themselves and one another, and what they want out of life. We're not attached to anyone yet. Make us love these two people in volume 2, and whatever course their relationship takes, let them confront the problems of volume 1 as they arise in volume 3. Then it will matter what happens to them and why, we can have someone to root for and follow and care about whether or not they live or die.

8) If other characters (like drunk cop father guy) hate gay people, give us a better reason than "Just because," or "It's a small town." People are richer and more nuanced than that.

9) Have the main character actually meet a trans person at some point. I think that would be an interesting conversation and opportunity for interaction. Maybe the lead can transfer their powers to this person, permanently or temporarily, because why not at this point? The powers, like most things in this book, are undefined.

10) Give rules to the super powers, other than the transforming slows healing revelation. Does it get exhausting using them? Or is there a set amount of times they can be used ever? What are the consequences of their use? Does it give the characters an exploitable weakness? Will they evolve more powers?

I think Flutter could go fun places, if given the chance to grow and explore itself. It needs to shake off its cliches and decide what it cares about, what it wants the story to be moving towards, how it wants to get

there, how it can get there with depth, and how it can get there without looking like everything else.

Jack Ferris says

Jennie Wood's *Flutter* is exactly what a fantasy graphic novel should be, and how refreshing it is to find that in the world of comics!

There are times when I despair for fantasy as a genre. It seems each trend, even within the indie world, echoes ad nauseum through fiction. The escapist, Tolkien-inspired, D&D fan-fiction-esque *Sword and Sorcery*, the all-fiction-merged, fractured-fairy-tale noir knock-offs, the gritty, over-narrated superhero origin stories - all of these things have their place and all have at times been written well, but even outside of the mainstream, I sometimes feel so drowned in repetition that it can be difficult to grab on to something original and come up for air. Sometimes I just want a break from zombies.

There is a spy thriller element to *Flutter*. Its protagonist, Lily, has some extraordinary abilities, including the ability to morph into a boy and some regenerative powers. Neither of these things, however, are at the heart of the story. This is the story about a high school student attempting to find their identity. How Lily's powers came to be is explained with an appropriate sci-fi hand-wave; it's not important how she got them, it's only important because it allows her to live as two different people, both of them outsiders, at times even alienating their friends. Each pulled gun and snapped neck functions the only way a spy thriller in a high school setting can: it simply heightens the tensions within their social dynamic, making each teenage in-fight as life-or-death dramatic as it *feels* for a high school student.

Sex, gender and LGBT issues are of course prominent, but they are not played as one-note character traits or as adult revelations, but as awkward, groping explorations into identity. Where other graphic novels leer at their characters by dressing them as TV high schoolers instead of real ones, *Flutter* focuses its angles on their faces and shows their arms curled over their chests, displaying that uncertain, adolescent gait. Instead of dressing in the odd, uniform "clique" gear, what people think goths and punks and jocks look like, these characters are dressed like high school students: unsure of themselves, often in ill-fitting clothing that sags. When the characters start rehearsing in a band, the notes and chords and flow of music are discussed, instead of simply listing bands in attempt to pigeonhole the characters.

In short, *Flutter* asks that its readers take the tropes of its genre for granted, without obsessing over them or falling to a solipsism of meta-analysis, while it earns its readership where it really counts: its fully realized, teenage characters and their interactions with one-another. We are willing to trust it that Lily can shapeshift, because that's the kind of world this is, but it *earns* our trust with regard to its humanity.

Stephen Dorneman says

I'll admit, I was more than a little confused at times reading this graphic novel. It starts with a literal bang, a deadly explosion, but the reason for that explosion is never explained. Still, once we do get to the main characters (a gender-shifting, shape-shifting teen, her love interests, and her parent/parental surrogates), Wood's story re-engaged my interest. Too many people die without much reaction from our heroine, and I'm still unsure as to who is who among the parties interested in Lily's powers, but that can all be explained as first-issue bumps in the road. We'll see if Volume 2 answers my questions, smooths out those bumps, and

keeps me reading.

Curtis says

This is an exceptional LGBTQ graphic novel from a terrific team of collaborators! Jennie Wood's writing is incredibly socially relevant! Jeff's artwork takes those words and makes them leap off the page!

I was fortunate enough to have Jennie sign a copy of Flutter Vol. 1 at MICE (Massachusetts, Independent Comic Expo).

Moreover, she has also been my mentor and friend in the world of writing.

I hope her voice continues to be heard loud and proud in the world of LGBTQ comics!

Peace and Cheerwine :)

Keegan Allen says

A metric-ton of world building jammed into a short book!
