



Vigilante

Shelley Harris

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Jenny Pepper never expected to end up like this. Tired of her job and the domestic grind, and bewildered by her teenage daughter, one night Jenny stumbles into a vigilante rescue. Suddenly her world is exciting again - and she's a hero. In the costume, she can be anyone she wants. And so her secret life begins. But when a real villain appears, Jenny's need for adventure begins to cost her dearly. As she starts to see less and less clearly through the mask, she finds her fantasy life becoming frighteningly real.

We all want to be extraordinary, and we all have a moment in our lives when we realise that we're not. Vigilante is about a woman who refuses to accept it gracefully...

Vigilante Details

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Author : Shelley Harris

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From Reader Review Vigilante for online ebook

Anne Goodwin says

Jenny Pepper abandoned her career as an actor to become a mother; now she finds herself increasingly marginal in her teenage daughter's life and unstimulated in her work as the manager of a charity bookshop, the spark long having gone from her marriage. Rendered virtually invisible by dint of her age, unglamorous job and gender, tidying-up has become her life's purpose until, en route to a fancy dress party, she witnesses a woman being attacked. Although lacking the skills of a comic-book superhero, Jenny does manage to save the woman from harm. Soon, her secret identity has become an addiction, threatening her marriage, friendship and her own safety. When a masked villain stalks the town, preying on girls the age of Jenny's daughter, her alter ego is tested to the limit.

Full review <http://annegoodwin.weebly.com/annecco...>

Snoakes says

Vigilante is the story of Jenny Pepper - a woman who is tired of domestic drudgery, envies her husband's more glamorous-seeming job and basically feels invisible. When she successfully foils an attempted mugging she embarks on a secret life as a vigilante.

Jenny is a believable character and the effects of her secrecy on her family are well explored as is the real danger she puts herself in as she prowls the streets in full superhero garb.

Julie Cohen says

A generous, thoughtful, and often profound book about a woman who takes life into her own hands. I absolutely wept my heart out at the ending, and I am still thinking about Jenny Pepper. One of my favourite books this year.

Blodeuedd Finland says

Jenny is a 40ish mum who is bored. Bored with daily life in the bookstore she manages (even though she loves books!). Bored that she and her husband never goes anywhere. Worried about her teenage daughter who is drifting away from her. She is a normal woman, doing normal things.

But then the book takes a turn when she helps someone. And then maybe she could help more? Oh Jenny. Sure, yes good that you saved people, but that is so dangerous. Vigilantism is, oh I am torn. She helps people, but well I do not have to tell you how hurt she can get. The mask wont hell you there.

Then the book took another suspenseful turn as something bad is going on in town.

But, it was a good book. Jenny was just so normal, in a good way, just like anyone of us. Except that she sure makes her own story exciting.

Anne says

Jenny Pepper is a pretty ordinary woman. She works in a charity bookshop, she has an angst-ridden teenage daughter who is into steampunk and is most probably gay. Her husband is a successful designer and Jenny tidies up a lot. Jenny feels fat and invisible. She gave up a career as an actress to be a wife and mother. When she was an actress, people noticed her. Now she's a wife and a mother, she's seems to be wearing her own personal invisibility cloak. Jenny is fed up.

It is a completely different cloak that changes Jenny's life. An invitation to a fancy-dress party would usually be her biggest dread, but when she hits on the idea of dressing as a super-hero, complete with mask and cloak, she begins to feel excited. Jenny buys the outfit in secret, guarding it until the day of the party, nobody has any idea of what she will be dressed as.

The night of the party arrives and Jenny is ready. On her way to the venue she stumbles upon a mugging and leaps into action, becoming a real-life super hero. She is noticed, she is admired, she feels great. Jenny decides that this is the life for her, she will go out there and protect the public from the bad guys.

Up to this point, Vigilante is best described as a funny, well-written, if a little over the top, story about a woman going through a mid-life crisis. It soon turns into a tale of terrifying attacks on young girls, and a mother's realisation that her own daughter is in danger, and that a fantasy life is not always better than real life.

I like Jenny, she's very real, she likes books and reading and she's a little unsure of herself. She's funny and bright and a little bit mad.

Shelley Harris has done 'that' thing. Written a book that deals with some dark issues, and looks quite deeply at relationships whilst still being funny and an easy read. Her writing is sharp and assured, and a little bit different.

Vigilante is one of those books that make you gasp and smile within one paragraph. Light-hearted at times, yet deadly serious at others. A finely balanced story that delivers a satisfying punch.

Hayley Scott says

Jenny Pepper is everything I love, and want, in a character. She is the hero of a book that never usually gets written. She is the woman you never see in a movie or a TV series (unless she's a passing 'wife' to show how miserable and dull the male lead's life is). She is so many women; the story that isn't about spies, hit men, soldiers or Kings. She is 'ordinary', but only because we live in a society that says the only interesting stories are the stories belonging to men.

Jenny is a woman who feels her prime has passed. Her memories of being an actress, of being looked at on the street, of fun, of kisses, of being wanted; they torment her and not only that, they seem like a long time ago. When Jenny looks at her body she sees shame, loss, disappointment. If we think about how women are presented in the media, in movies, in books, they are always through the male gaze. Jenny Pepper sees herself through the male gaze and feels like nothing.

What I love about Harris' writing is how funny it is whilst at the same time showing such flaws and worries and sadness in her characters. If I was Harris I would write all the time because I wouldn't be able to believe just how darned good I was. I laughed, hard, at so many sentences. I highlighted a few to put into this

review, but it ended up being so many that I didn't know what to choose. A part where a male customer in Jenny's bookshop patronises her about the use of 'vicariously' is one of my favourite sentences in fiction in, well, years.

Jenny's sense of disquiet is kicked off by the discovery of her husband Elliot's fantasy woman: a cartoon character with a flat stomach and perfect, hairless body. She looks at herself the way women are trained to see themselves. She looks at herself the way she feels men will look at her. And, she, who was an actress and beautiful and had excitement at parties, in doorways, in halls, is suddenly invisible. Gosh. I can't even put into words how moving and pertinent some of the stuff in this book is.

Harris' writing is so elegant and effortless it would be easy to miss the depths she explores. Jenny's feeling of being totally defined by her role as wife and mother. How nobody wants to hear about her job, her life, her thoughts, and how glamorous and exotic Elliot is - like the interesting parts of him automatically wipe out anything about her when they talk to other people. This writing buzzes with disappointment and confusion. It is also full of hope.

There is a sex scene so utterly brilliant and true, sad and inevitable between Jenny and Elliot that, as a reader, you don't know whether to jump into the book and shout at them, or sit back and acknowledge the change that occurs in a certain type of long term relationship with nodding frustration. I don't know how to describe it. Shelley Harris is one of the best writers working in the business today.

Jenny becomes an accidental superhero - mostly because she dresses up as a superhero for a party when everybody there expects her to be something homogenous. The scene in which dress-up superhero becomes real superhero is utterly compelling and breath-taking. You will Jenny Pepper to become a real super hero. She deserves that, doesn't she?

I'm never going to write reviews that reveal plot. Needless to say this book starts off as an exploration of what it feels like to be a middle aged woman, a brave, intelligent, good-wife, good-mother, disregarded woman and turns into something different. Jenny's relationship with her daughter Martha is full of questions and pathos. The book explores the difference between reality and fantasy and whether it's possible to live our fantasies without risk or danger.

The world in which Jenny Pepper enters into is uplifting, thrilling and frightening. The plot has all the twists and turns of a thriller, but with heart, originality and flair. This is a book that makes you think. If you dare dismiss it by the description of Jenny Pepper, then that shows exactly how important this novel is, how important it is to hear Jenny's voice.

Fantasy and reality are things that we all play with in our heads. Fantasy is safe. We are always the superhero. Even things that hurt us, don't really because we have ways that make it acceptable or easy. This book isn't afraid to question what it's like to be a wife and mother, to feel useless, powerful, powerless, loved, unloved, scared and desperate. Shelly Harris has written a book that should be read by everybody.

To ignore Jenny Pepper is a mistake so many people make in real life. Vigilante is a book that pushes you into the world of a woman it's easy to ignore. I loved it. I felt like I wanted to thrust this novel into the hands of every person who loves a male-led thriller, who doesn't think of women other than whether they are attractive and arousing, who allows for the sexualisation of teenage girls, and of women in a way that doesn't allow them to be the hero of their own story. To exist.

If you don't read it, you are missing out on a book that says so much about our society; a book that shows you a life that is often ignored, that shows you the dangers of ignoring women who aren't admired in the traditional way.

I love Jenny Pepper, and so will you.

Janine says

It has been a month or so since I read this book but it has left a strong positive impression on me - enough to award it five stars. I thought it was quite different - bored housewife acts on impulse, feels free, dramatic things happen, things start to get better - but are still not perfect. I felt that the escapism wish for Jenny, our main character was well expressed - that sense of first world ennui that unfortunately strikes too often dealt with in a fairly novel way.

Maya Panika says

I was surprised by how quickly this story drew me in, I wasn't expecting to enjoy it. Though it sounded intriguing, the book, when it arrived, put me off; the cover, the blurb, made it sound silly and chic-litty. It was neither. I thought too, that it would be funny; a quick and easy read, a bit of a laugh. It wasn't really any of those things, either. It was occasionally funny, in a dark, disturbing, Inside Number 9 sort of way. But it was mostly, a surprisingly touching look at a female mid-life crisis in the face of frightening and tragic events. The characters, the situation, the whole package, was *very* believable and all too desperately, heart-breakingly real. Jenny Pepper - the protagonist, the Vigilante herself - is perfection: so vulnerable and so righteously angry; so wonderfully, hilariously, movingly true.

My only problem with it (and such a teeny, tiny problem it is too, though I'm about to make it sound much more than it is) was towards the end, almost the very end, when... Well, I can't spoil (you'll know what I mean when you get there)... but I was so irritated by the sudden ineptitude, the stupidity, the sudden display of silly-woman syndrome that I wanted to hurl the book through a window. Someone will tell me it was the natural reaction of a normal person. I accept it probably was, but dear God, it did annoy me.

That one frustrating moment aside, this is a rather magnificent novel: a beautifully observed look at small-town family life, readable and compelling; far more complex, far better, than it pretends to be. It is tailor-made for a Radio 4 Book of the Week. It is sure to get a TV outing too, at some stage, when it will probably star Olivia Coleman and David Tennant, possibly Ben Miller too (as Mr Grafton). Whatever else, don't let the superficiality of the cover and the blurb put you off: this is wonderful stuff.

Marta says

I was drawn by this book believing it would be a light-hearted story about a dissatisfied housewife, becoming a heroine to feel alive and necessary once again. What I read instead was a gripping story incorporating lots of very contemporary issues. Gender equality, violence on women, relationships with teenage children, the role of media and technology amongst youth, crime and police's response to it; these were but a few themes explored in 'Vigilante'. I certainly did not expect the protagonist to stumble upon a serial rapist and killer-which I believe was at times over dramatised. However, Shelley Harris very skilfully depicts Jenny's reasoning, behaviour, and suspicions making her incredibly humane and relatable. A very pleasant read which allows us all to pinpoint the superhuman strengths and achievements of women.

Karen Martin says

Karenmartinreads.blogspot.com

Not quite my genre, but a well constructed, humorous look at a real issue...finding yourself middle aged and invisible....

Renita D'Silva says

A beautifully written, realistic portrayal of a woman struggling to find herself once her daughter no longer needs her in quite the same way as when she was younger. A sensitive and raw depiction of a long marriage and motherhood and identity and self worth. Loved it.

Chloe says

To be honest this book deserves more like 3.5 stars!

I was lucky enough to win a copy in a goodreads giveaway, I was hooked as soon as I read the premise and it didn't let me down! It was a great story, very suspenseful, I read the whole thing in under a day. Jenny is a very likable, relatable character, and the book balances light hearted moments with more serious topics well.

I was pleasantly surprised by an aspect of the daughter's storyline - you find out in the first few pages so it's not really a spoiler! I know this is something that would've made me more interested to read the book so I thought I'd add it to my review.

Jenny has suspicions that her teenage daughter Martha might be gay, and I went through the exact same thing at her age. If I'd read this book as a teenager/before coming out, it might have given me a bit more courage and helped me to see things through my mum's eyes, via Jenny's narrative. So I really liked that part! It wasn't made into a big deal and doesn't dominate the main storyline, but it was great to see that representation nonetheless.

I'd certainly recommend this book to anyone, in the mean time I'll be hoping for a tv adaptation!

Damaskcat says

Jenny Pepper is bored with the routine of her life. She manages a charity bookshop and looks after her husband and daughter but where's the excitement and fulfilment in her life? Where's her sense of purpose? There's nothing really wrong - just her life lacks that certain something. An invitation to a fancy dress party sparks her interest and she spends a lot of time and energy on her costume as she intends to go as a female super hero. But on her way to the party she stumbles across a woman being mugged and she intervenes. Feeling the adrenalin rush and the sense of satisfaction, Jenny wants to do it again - to right wrongs and to fight for justice.

Naturally the masked mystery woman catches the imagination of the public and the press alike and Jenny fears her secret will be revealed especially when she starts going out in the evenings dressed in costume and

getting involved in protecting victims. Foolhardy maybe, but backed up by self defence classes and basic common sense Jenny soon becomes a local legend.

But the test is to incorporate what she has learned into her everyday life rather than throwing it all up and starting afresh when she really does have a good marriage and good friends and w worthwhile job. This is a roller coaster of a book which will appeal to anyone who thinks their life lacks excitement and purpose. It is funny, sad and marvellously entertaining to read but it will leave many readers with some interesting questions about their own lives I think. I received a free copy of this book from NetGalley for review purposes.

Julie Cordiner says

Quite a unique story, which at first seemed improbable but the more I read, the more I was drawn into Jenny's life and experiences. Shelley has a deft touch that makes it easy to feel empathy for the characters. A roller coaster of emotions which was very satisfying.

Joanie says

3.5 stars
