



School for Sidekicks: The Academy of Metahuman Operatives

By Kelly McCullough

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"Evan Quick, Hero's Log, May the 25th... and darn it – I just can't do this. I'm never going to be a Mask. Get over it Evan."

Evan Quick has spent his whole life dreaming of becoming a hero. Every morning he wakes up and runs through a checklist of test to see if he's developed powers over night, and every day it is the same thing – nothing. No flying, no super strength, no heat rays or cold beams. No invulnerability – that always hurt to check – no telepathy, no magic. Not even the ability to light a light bulb without flipping a switch. And now, he's finally ready to give up.

But then, the class field trip to the Mask Museum is interrupted by a super villain attack, and Evan somehow manages to survive a death ray. Even better, Evan's favorite Mask, Captain Commanding, shows up to save them all -- and when things go very wrong, it's Evan who finds the strength to come to *Captain Commanding's* rescue.

Yet the hero's reception Evan is expecting never happens. Before he even gets the chance to say hello, Evan is bundled away to The Academy, an institution derisively called The School for Sidekicks by its students. Forced to take classes like Banter Basics and Combat with Dinnerware, while being assigned as an 'apprentice' to Foxman – a Mask widely considered a has-been -- Evan starts to worry that he'll never be able to save the day...

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School for Sidekicks: The Academy of Metahuman Operatives By Kelly McCullough Bibliography

- Sales Rank: #378135 in eBooks
- Published on: 2015-08-04
- Released on: 2015-08-04
- Format: Kindle eBook



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Editorial Review

From School Library Journal

Gr 4–6—Evan Quick is a self-proclaimed superhero geek in a world where superheroes (called Masks) and villains (Hoods) are real. Evan has never wanted anything more than to become a true superhero but, despite checking daily, has never shown any discernible supernatural abilities. So when Hoods attack a museum during his class field trip, and he somehow manages to save his idol Captain Commanding and survive an unsurvivable death ray, Evan is surprised to find himself in a secret Academy for Metahuman Operatives, aka the School for Sidekicks, where he discovers that the world of Masks and Hoods is not at all what he thought. The story's pacing is a bit uneven, and the multitude of character names, superhero aliases, and descriptions of cryptic superhero technology can get a bit muddled. Evan, however, is a likable protagonist, and the story is infused with equal measures of wit and action. VERDICT This will appeal to middle grade readers looking for slightly campy superhero stories.—Jessica Marie, Salem Public Library, OR

Review

“Evan's smartass narration, dangerous run-ins with evil Hoods, tough moral quandaries, and a wild range of superpowered heroes and villains make this an excellent choice for any reader awaiting the next Marvel film.” ?*Publishers Weekly, Starred Review*

“Disquieting revelations await a fledgling teenager at superhero school...Readers will savor his triumph as well as the melodramatic plot and the cast's rib-tickling array of 'metahumans'.” ?*Kirkus Reviews, starred review*

“Evan is a likable protagonist, and the story is infused with equal measures of wit and action. This will appeal to middle grade readers looking for slightly campy superhero stories.” ?*School Library Journal*

“This thoughtful superhero book will appeal to readers who prefer world- and character-building over action. Evan is a compelling character, whose internal wrestling with his parents' rejection of his ambitions, his loss of faith in the cowardly Captain Commanding, and his determination to do good ring true. His interesting world overflows with unusual, humorous, and creative superpowers that go beyond simple strength.” ?*VOYA*

“The author of the Fallen Blade fantasy novels for adults makes a sparkling debut for middle-grade readers in this entertaining, expertly crafted parody of superhero adventures....The superheroes he creates are inspired...Add to that Evan's hilarious narration, a vivid setting of high-tech wonders and page turning suspense, and you have a real summer treat.” ?Jean Westmoore, *The Buffalo News*

“There is so much to recommend about this wonderful adventure tale. . . . Evan and his friends at Hero High are pretty normal adolescents caught in extraordinary circumstances, much as a famous young wizard once was in the 'Harry Potter' series.” ?*Children's Literature*

“McCullough manages an impressive feat in *School for Sidekicks*; the novel takes pre-teen readers on a nuanced journey into the day-to-day complexities of everyday adolescence, while giving them a breathless glimpse into an amazing new world rendered real by vivid prose.” ?Ella Cosmo, BNKids Blog

About the Author

KELLY McCULLOUGH is the author of the adult fantasy series *Webmage* and *Assassin's Blade*. *School for Sidekicks* is his first novel for young readers. He lives in Wisconsin with his physics professor wife and a small herd of cats, all of whom he adores.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Charles Settles:

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