

## ***Queen B Superheroine: Reborn***

**Kailin Gow**

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Barbie Barton has just about everything a fifteen-year-old girl could want. She's pretty, popular, the captain of the cheerleading squad, and girlfriend to a football player. Her family is great, and she and her best friend are taking over the school paper this year. She has a nearly perfect life in a nearly perfect small town.

But when Barbie is stung by one of her father's experimental bees, her life turns upside down. Suddenly inhumanly fast and strong, Barbie gains a queen bee's protective instincts. Barbie's metamorphoses happens just in time, because suddenly a murderer begins leaving drained corpses around town.

In this first novel of the *Queen B Superheroine* series, author Kailin Gow uses all the classic elements of the superhero mythology familiar from countless comic books. The bee sting that endows Barbie with her powers is reminiscent of Peter Parker's encounter with the spider. Any fan of the TV series *Smallville* will see several parallels, from the chemical plant that turns local teenagers into mutants to the newsroom antics of Barbie and her friend Jamie. Eighteen-year-old Roman Reynolds possesses a back-story much like that of the young Lex Luthor; he was the victim of a plant explosion that killed his mother and estranged his billionaire father from him. Only time will tell if he has similar villainous leanings or if his overtures of friendship to Barbie are genuine.

While the elements of the classic superhero story are all here, one thing is missing: the angst. Barbie adapts quickly to her new powers. When Barbie and her friends run up against a couple of bodies and the fluid-sucking teenage mutant, their reactions are muted. Barbie herself is almost incomprehensibly well adjusted for any teenager, let alone a super-powered one. It's as if the author is ticking off plot points without really connecting them emotionally. Perhaps Barbie's interior life will be explored more thoroughly in future books.

Written for ages 12 and older, *Reborn* seems unlikely to capture that audience; its extremely action-oriented narrative, lacking in some emotional nuances, might not hold their attention. It is more likely to find fans among the pre-teen set, although some parts of the story may be a bit intense for them. Girls in particular will identify with a female superhero and her love of horses and riding.

Kailin Gow also writes under the name Victoria London. Her work includes the *Queen B Superheroine* series, the *Gifted Girls* series, and the *Tiffany T.* series for young readers.

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