



## Sidekicks

*Jack D. Ferraiolo*

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Batman has Robin, Wonder Woman has Wonder Girl, and Phantom Justice has Bright Boy, a.k.a. Scott Hutchinson, an ordinary schoolkid by day and a superfast, superstrong sidekick by night, fighting loyally next to his hero.

But after an embarrassing incident involving his too-tight spandex costume, plus some signs that Phantom Justice may not be the good guy he pretends to be, Scott begins to question his role. With the help of a fellow sidekick, once his nemesis, Scott must decide if growing up means being loyal or stepping boldly to the center of things.

## **Sidekicks Details**

Date : Published May 1st 2011 by Harry N. Abrams

ISBN : 9780810998032

Author : Jack D. Ferraiolo

Format : Hardcover 320 pages

Genre : Young Adult, Comics, Superheroes, Fantasy, Humor, Science Fiction

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## From Reader Review Sidekicks for online ebook

### **Josh Newhouse says**

Tough book to review. Very wellwritten just like The Big Splash, fun, dark and twisty, managing to surprise me a couple of times which is not always easy...

However, be warned that nearly the first 100 pages are preoccupied with the feelings of the main character about being caught on video "standing at attention" in his costume (guys you know what I mean)... While this is handled humorously, and does play into guys worst nightmares, it makes the book skew more for upper middle, and pretty neatly knocks it out of consideration for most state lists...

I personally thought the story could have used less of that, however it was not overly graphic, and the story is strong right up to the deus ex machina ending...

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### **D says**

Found this book at HPB today and finished it... today. I didn't mean to buy it, but accidentally got dragged in after reading the first few chapters. It was a fast read with a lot of interesting points, but heavy on the pros and cons-

#### **PROS:**

- The writing flows really well
- The characters are likeable
- The premise is interesting and well-executed
- The fight scenes are easy to visualize
- Ferraiolo dodges/subverts a lot of annoying teen-superhero tropes

#### **CONS:**

- The book kicks off with some embarrassment about teen problems, which I wasn't particularly interested in reading about, although it was a really powerful motivator for the MC
- The book goes by so fast that some of the plot progression hits you like a punch in the face
- The romance, similary to the romance it is compared to (Romeo and Juliet), feels rushed and forced, esp. because of the age of the characters
- Overall, the novel seems compacted- I'm tempted to say I would have liked it split into multiple books to leave time for more foreshadowing, etc., but It's possible that would have slowed it down too much

Overall, I'd stil recommend it to anyone who enjoys fast-paced middle-grade, as long as they're old enough to handle the beginning. I plan to reread, myself; I did finish it in a three-hour block, so that might have affected my perception of the pacing.

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## **Tommy Hancock says**

This is my surprise love of 2015 so far(meaning something I knew nothing about and had low hopes for), and I doubt if that will change by New Years.

I expected a fun superhero read: I got that.

I expected something lighthearted and kid friendly: I got about 30% of that.

If I had to criticize anything about the book it's be the cover. Not because I dislike it. I love it, as far as art goes. But I think a lot of the people who would love this story will pass it over thinking it's going to be too kiddish and silly.

It's very decidedly a YA read, and an upper age group YA read at that. I wouldn't let most middle grade aged kids read this book. The cover doesn't portray that at all.

Now that out of the way: This book is less a prose version of Teen Titans GO! and more a blend of Watch Men and Kick-Ass wrapped up and sold to folks who enjoy shows like Buffy.

So basically, this is my jam.

And for those not too into superheroes, this is SO much more. It tackles a lot.

The awkwardness(and dread) of adolescence..

Young love.

Corporate greed.

Tragedy.

Bullying.

Betrayal.

Moral gray areas.

Etc. Etc. Etc.

It's brilliant. Read it. I almost passed on it and it is right up around my favorite reads of the year. One of my favorite super hero stories ever, in any format. And as of posting this, I've been reading the genre for 23 or so years.

This is gold.

i wish it was a series. I wish it was a comic. I wish it was a movie. I. Just. Want. More!

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## **Goodwin Lu says**

As I read on this book, I liked how the story set up for both characters' transformations, as the arch nemesis of our main character fall in love with the protagonist. It might seem a bit sudden and unbelievable, but considering the time frame, the romance is very sweet and is the foundation for the unbelievable plot twists (albeit there were too many in the end for my taste; hence only 4/5).

I really liked the "Dark Chapters", even meticulously examining the chapters, they managed to shock me and give away little of their real plan and/or intentions with their purpose. You have to use connections, implications, careful reading skills to logically deduce the further events that come, and truly know how

Phantom J. is cruel and heartless; even Dr. Chaotic had a little heart in him left to save his daughter Allison, and possibly Bright Boy too ("Whoever gave you this didn't give you the real deal")--and keep in mind, even with the real deal, Dr. C. had an antidote alongside with it. Dr. C. serves as the silver lining in the clouds, just enough light in him to be good. In fact, Allison even manages to put doubt into their "dastardly plans"--should they really be stopped? Dr. C. is only trying to help the public, and he thinks these harmless "plays" if earning his money, is alright to keep himself alive. Dr. C. serves as a greatly contrasting character against Phantom Justice and does the story well. However, the ending is very abrupt and very ridiculous, with random unexplained, poorly set-up twists in contrast to the real nice shock values of the Dark Chapters.

Nevertheless, overall this book was very fun, exciting, romantic, sweet, and interesting in my first read. My second read exploited all of its good and bad further--the plot twists were more shocking and set-up more nicely, the villains were much crueler and developed than the first time I read the book without much thought; even if the jokes got less funny on my second read and the ending was much more ridiculous and unexplained.

Re-reading reflection:

Sprinting across the top of the buildings, I ran across and punched my arch-nemesis in the face, teasing him, following with a kick in the shins. Narrowly dodging one of his blows, I back-flipped off the building, only to grab a nearby pole with one hand, turning around smoothly so as to land softly on the ground. Within only moments, my opponent had already followed through and landed in front of me, and once again, we were sparring. With my blood streams pumped full of adrenaline, I was practically fighting an imaginary enemy off as I first read the book. It was a thoroughly exciting experience, as the story was filled with vivid imagery, good action, and sweet romance.

"Don't judge a book by its cover." The quote goes. Yet, the cover was the exact thing that drew me to Sidekicks. Filled with action, the cover art impressed me when I first borrowed it from the library two years ago. The mysterious question stated on the back also was the main reason that I borrowed the book. "How long can he stay on the sidelines and still hope to have a life?" The back cover asked, referring to the main character and his problems within the story. This question made me want to know how the main character still lived on as a sidekick, and how he was going to remain happy, even if he was not the main hero --as media portrays--who received all the attention saved all the people. I had got Sidekicks to reading for entertainment, and I was sure the answer to the question was going to be entertaining.

The book, when I first read it, was a script for an action film. The book quickly opens up with the sidekick, Bright Boy, of the hero named Phantom Menace, rescuing a threatened woman from a big, mentally short-sided kidnapper. The plot moves right to Bright Boy's troubles of being embarrassed about his "lame" costume. The daily news teases the Boy, as his bright yellow shirt and pants only narrowly fit. As Bright Boy's guardian, who is also the hero, exerts his control over him, especially stressing on his wearing the costume, the troubles and conflicts between them deepen. I instantly saw the problem in the beginning, which instigated the feeling of an action movie within me.

The real problem comes in one night in which Phantom is battling his arch-nemesis, Dr. Chaotic, both along with their sidekicks--and the two's sidekicks' identities are revealed. The two battle for a while as usual, but not for long. Soon enough, both of them rip off each other's masks during this particular night, revealing their true identities: it turns out they know each other personally from their school! The first time I read the book, I greatly enjoyed envisioning the following progress of the relationship between Bright Boy and Monkeywrench. At first, Bright Boy seems annoyed at Monkeywrench in the school day after the fight. However, later they learn to co-exist, as well as the fact that while they may be enemies in the "hero-villain-world in which they have to fight", they don't actually have act like enemies in the real world. I actually accepted this at first, as Monkeywrench explains her side of the story--why her villain and father, Dr. Chaotic, is actually doing good to the world. Through this, I foresaw that Phantom was actually fighting for a suspicious and unjust reason, although only vaguely.

As the problems tense up, Phantom and Dr. Chaotic eventually find out about the two main characters' relationship, and they both become angry. It turns out that, as foreshadowed in obscure terms within the "dark chapters", they act as enemies only for the "hero" to earn money for "saving the city", and splitting the money between them. They had planned to get rid of the sidekicks ever since Bright Boy complained about his costume, as they would earn more money from "battling over their fallen children". However, while Phantom is totally into the plan, there is also a hint of doubt within Dr. Chaotic, as he seems to be ambivalent about the idea of killing his own daughter. I was on the edge of my seat as Bright Boy receives a deadly poison that could kill him, only to be saved by a bully in his school. It was such an unexpected, yet masterfully executed twist! The "bully" was, in reality, a "cover" for Bright Boy in order for attention to be drawn away from him. After Bright Boy recovers, he avenges justice and defeats Phantom with the help of Dr. Chaotic, who now realizes that true justice is more important than money. My heart warmed in the inside as, Monkeywrench was saved as well, and the book ends with a kiss as the duo go off to help people and fight crime. I applauded the author by the time I was done, and I decidedly loved the book, listing it in my mind as one of my favorites. I thought the book as a fun, excellent combination of action and romance, with a bit of comedy added to it, almost similar to a good movie.

The second time I read the book was quite interesting and different from the first time. Since I had already read it, I re-read the story at a slower pace than previous, and thus the illusion of an action film was blurred. In addition, while re-reading the book, no matter what the situation, I seemed to be deeper in thought about what the scenery really meant, and having read *How to Read Literature Like a Professor*, I looked more into the symbolism of the passages rather than the actual plot. The beginning was similarly funny, but this time it actually had an awkward mood to it, since the media's teasing seemed actually quite long. I still felt the action and troubles following the beginning seen, although the story seemed more of an internal struggle than an overall physical struggle, regardless of the amount of sheer action. Furthermore, I noted that the "dark chapters" actually gave away far more than they should have when I examined the chapters and scrutinized the way the chapter was worded. Nevertheless, I still was satisfied by the amount of effort put into those two chapters to conceal--but still, foreshadow-- Phantom and Dr. Chaotic's secret plans. I was impressed by how realistic the characters were shaped, and this deeper realization of character was not there before. This could have been due to the fact that over 9th grade English, I had to write essays about books from an analytic perspective about the purpose of the passage, and how the passage fulfills the purpose.

Before I had thought Bright Boy's and Monkeywrench's romantic relationship sweet and naturally accepted it, but this time, I had a more skeptical look at them. I had to try hard to imagine the time-gap between the chapters and the events that happened to put them into the romantic couple they were. The progress becomes almost ludicrous this time as I read on, as the two go off saving people while almost playing around with the crime-dealers, I couldn't help but feel that this scenery was more symbolic rather than actual plot. As I read from *How to Read Literature Like a Professor*, the action was most times symbolic. This time, instead of just enjoying the action scenery, I thought about what the action and violence could mean. Maybe the author is presenting the problems of crime in the world, and that teenagers, when having good traits and ideals, can defeat the crime in the world. Maybe Phantom represents Greed itself, while Dr. Chaotic represents a changed man. As the final twists were revealed in the book, I got the feeling that, they were all too sudden for the plot to make sense. I didn't accept the twists immediately as I had previously. Instead, I thought about Monkeywrench's original unwillingness to instantly reveal herself to Bright Boy. I connected to other stories about the mystery of people and how they didn't want their true identity to be revealed for certain reasons. I concluded that this scenery not only set up a mystery but also problems that remained to be solved, even though the story was ending.

In summary, my two readings of *Sidekicks* were quite different. On balance, the book was of the same quality in both times. With a more analytical perspective, the parts that previously seemed humorous now

seem unnecessary. The shocking twists proved to be a little frustrating and a bit sudden too. On the other hand, the villains were really shaped in this re-read, now that I understood the true meanings of the “dark chapters” rather than reading vague wordings and being confused. In addition, I connected to other literary pieces and went so far as to infer what an event symbolized within the book. Overall I would say I was glad I re-read *Sidekicks*. Even with its downsides, it still resembled enough of the original action film-style for me to enjoy the book thoroughly. Though the two “people” I “fought” were different from my first read to my re-read, both times were exciting and pleasurable experiences.

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### **Brandon says**

The book *Sidekicks* is about a child with an undefined destiny trying to find his way in a world of lies and mysteries. It is located in the near future. I would recommend this book to all people who like si-fi action books with a dash of romance. The only problem I found with the book is it has a slow start and complicated plot but, soon explains it's self near the end of the book. That is why I gave the book four stars.

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### **Reader says**

Why is it so difficult to write a good superhero novel? There must be dozens out there but most of them are like Ferraiolo's *Sidekicks*. Which is it to say, they don't quite make the grade. Scott Hutchinson has been a plus/plus (super speed and super strength) for years. Posing as Bright Boy, the sidekick to Phantom Justice, Scott's never had a problem with his job or his employer until an embarrassing moment with his yellow tights and a pretty lady end up on all the news channels. Determined to break away from Phantom Justice a little, Scott is ill-prepared when he unexpectedly falls in love with Allison, better known as Monkeywrench, better known as sidekick to the evil Dr. Chaos. But who really is the evil one in this situation? It's okay. Not great. The book would really benefit if it allowed itself to linger a little over a detail here or there rather than just plow ahead through the plot. A fun story but not one that sticks in the brain for very long. - B

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### **Mfly says**

The author's gift for dialogue was there again this time but I think the(very cool)cover did a disservice to the book. The audience seemed to be around an 8th grade reader but the cover looked more 4th grade. I bought it for my 11-yr-old nephew, thinking it would be the same audience as *The Big Splash* but...my bad. Great ideas in here, gotta say it, but it seemed rushed in spots. Regardless, I'm keeping my eye on Ferraiolo.

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### **Fabi says**

I loved it! I don't read too many books intended for the under 12 audience. I would never have heard of this one, much less picked it up to read, if not for a fellow GR reader review that caught my attention.

I would categorize this as YA PNR since I know the middle school crowd reads those as well. That way, adults might also take an interest. I barely put the book down once I started reading it. It grabbed me from the very beginning and took me on a whirlwind of action, teenage angst, and betrayals. WOW Fantastic. I

recommend this to anyone who reads YA.

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### **Ben Werchowsky says**

Ben Werchowsky

3/24/18

P.8

Play it Safe

Sidekicks by Jack D. Ferraiolo, 310 pages, 2011, science fiction.

This book is about a boy named Scott Hutchinson whose dad is a superhero and has a butler who is good at fighting. Trent his father teaches Scott how to be a hero and gives him the name bright boy. Bright boy and Phantom Justice (Trent) fight many villains with their superpowers like super speed and strength. He finds out that one of the villains he is facing actually goes to his school. He finds her and surprisingly becomes her friend. This book talks about Scott's struggle to understand his place and why a villain is actually his friend not for any gain.

4/5 because it was a very enjoyable book that had good plot and character development.

I would recommend this to kids who are interested in superheroes as they are the main characters.

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### **Alamdar Meghani says**

This was a great book. An amazing job by Jack D Ferraiolo. The book was nothing like i thought it would be like, it was full of twist and turns that i personally did not expect at all. It is about a boy, Scott Hutchinson, a.k.a. Bright Boy that is having ;its of problems. In school their is this girl that happens to be his nemesis, Monkey Wrench. He is also having trouble at home with Phantom Justice. He hates his costume, which is very tight and small. Phantom Justice is his guardian and his superhero. He starts dating monkey wrench. When Phantom he lashes out into a tirade . He continues to date her and they become a superhero team together. They get new costumes. When both of their guardians find out, boy do they get yelled at. Behind their backs, phantom and his own enemy Dr.Chaotic, monkey wrench's dad, plot to kill them both. For reasons i do not want to spoil. This a very interesting book, and i recommend it to people who like a mix of humor and seriousness. Just to warn u this book has some parts that are not so PG

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### **Gatorgal21 says**

My sister and I just recently picked up some arcs, and Sidekicks was one of them. Masked by a couple young adult novels, I definitely was expecting it to be more of a sidekick (no pun intended) to what I thought would be the "better" books. I was so wrong. I picked it up after one of said "better" books disgusted me so much I had to put it down (Misfit, see my review). Thinking I'd just start it quickly and then go to bed, I was totally unprepared for the kick Sidekicks had. It was amazing! The main character, Scott, aka "Bright Boy" was adorable. He was smart and capable enough that I didn't get impatient or frustrated with him, but he also had a very young, untrained, not perfect side to him as well, so I wasn't bored with him either. There was a nice, unique spin on the whole "superheroes in our midst" idea that added a lot to the story. All good things, but by far the best thing about this book was the plot, for one thing it was perfectly paced. mAdn for another, the twist were totally unexpected, I don't think I saw one of them coming! Which, maybe I was just off my game or something, and I'm definitely not some fantastic predictor anyways, but that's still pretty impressive, the

author did a great job. A very well-rounded book over-all, the only criticism I can give it is that I think the main character, and his girlfriend should have been in highschool, their relationship was a bit old for mid-school, and well, as with most good books, I wish it would have been longer. But, that's not really a criticism. So yeah, if you pick up *Sidekicks*, prepare for a wild ride that doesn't need any help at all, not even a *Sidekicks*. Ha ha, another cheesy pun made by Kathryn.

Reviewed by Kathryn Taylor

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### **Becky says**

I put off reading this book because, being about superheroes, I suspected that it was totally a GUY book. Fantasy is not my favorite genre either, but my Mock Newbery guys loved it so much (and the girls are starting to weigh in positively too) that I knew I HAD to read it. WOW!! I was immediately drawn into this amazing adventure of modern kids, Scott and Allison, who are typical middle schoolers by day and Bright Boy and Monkeywrench, sidekicks of the warring Phantom Justice and Doctor Chaotic by night. It's hard to review this book without spoilers, so I'm just going to say that this book has it all...fantastic fights between the "good guys" and the "villains," bullying challenges at school, and even romance! Ferraiolo has built in so many unexpected twists and turns in the plot and the characters that you are always caught unaware and shocked at the turn of events right down to the satisfying ending. This is definitely on my Newbery short list for uniqueness of plot. The beginning caught me off guard with its references to Bright Boy's discomfort with his budding manhood (can't wait to see what my students thought of that ;-))but that is an important part of the plot, handled well, and will draw preteens right in (though it makes this a YA book!). I read this book in audio CD.

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### **Cara says**

Do you think being a sidekick to a superhero sounds like the best job ever? If you answered the question (any answer will do), then this book is for you. Scott aka "Bright Boy" has been a sidekick for Phantom Justice aka Trent (his mentor and adopted dad) since he was 7. Unfortunately Scott is starting to outgrow his sidekick status, and he has definitely outgrown his tights. Since an awkward incident involving the aforementioned tights made 'Bright Boy' a laughingstock, Scott has started to rethink his job. He has no friends, he gets picked on at school, and worst of all, he is starting to question whether or not 'good guys' and 'bad guys' are as black and white as he once thought.

I really liked the pace of this book. (view spoiler) I did not love the ending. The last couple of chapters felt pretty rushed to me, but overall the story was great.

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### **Rosie LaJenky says**

what even was this? it's so ridiculous whyyyy . . .

Mr. Scotty, our main character, is a bratty jerk. Monkeywrench is almost kinda good.

that romance? wha? they just kiss and jump around and mock-fight? cute i guess? haaaa there's more stuff you can do ya know

"plus intelligent is SO RARE there's like only one of them!" 300 pages later . . . "oh look! like, four or five plus intelligent supers! and most of them are on the same side!! :DDD" but like,,,the "intelligent" pluses aren't even all that intelligent. apparently intelligence = doing well in school, inventing stuff, and talking via minds? there aren't other types of intelligent?

where were the helicopters, the news media, all those people following supers around fighting--where were they at the end? when all de supers were punching each other in public? no one? else? was? there? for? some? reason????

"WordGirl" on PBS kids is better than this book, gosh. at least that doesn't have dopey romance.

i couldn't tell if this book was supposed to be middle grade or YA. everything felt MG--the poor writing style that tried to be witty and repeatedly failed miserably was a factor in that, except that's an insult to some MG's i've read--except for all the kissing and "perv" stuff.

that "perv" thing yeah really annoyed me. it got old the minute scott got to school and everyone was chatting about it--but the author wouldn't let it DROP. maybe instead of getting angry all the time scott could show some CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT and grow up and get over it. DO something about it, not just mope and get angry until finally letting his archnemesis buddy buy him a flippin costume.

he got? so? angry? for? no? reason? all? the time? like yikes dude chill a little. don't be mean to your butler. you should get some help if you wanna beat up the kids at school. you should talk to someone. or, you know, make a friend. yeah why didn't he do that. he had that entire table of quiet kiddos at lunch--TALK to them. you know someone's gonna be awful at relationships if he's mean to his father-figure, hasn't even tried to make a friend all his life, and immediately jumps to making out with a girl with muddy morals. i guess scott forgot to pick up his common sense the day it was being given out at wal-mart--must've been busy . . . getting . . . "put ellipses everywhere . . . for no reason" . . . instead.

k but that last scene where he finds monkeywrench again and discovers addison was with jake and everyone else the entire time. and he says "i need time." and she's crying and like "i'll wait forever." and he dramatically leaps away. THEN FLIPPIN COMES BACK IMMEDIATELY THE FLIPPIN JERK I CAN'T EVEN YOU MADE HER CRY YOU UNFORGIVING PIECE OF TRASH I CAN'T EVEN--PULL YOURSELF TOGETHER GROW UP ALREADY I'M SICK OF YOUR BRATTINESS.

yeah the two big moods of this book is "smh" and "lol what"

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### **Leigh Collazo says**

6-word summary: Shy teen superhero falls for archnemesis.

Summary:After an embarrassing super-sidekick wardrobe malfunction, Bright Boy (a.k.a. student Scott Hutchinson) begins to question the motives of his superhero partner, rethinks an old enemy, and prepares to step out on his own.

The Good: I definitely think the tween set will like this one. It has numerous martial arts fight scenes, criminal masterminds, betrayal, secret identities, and first love. It is easy to read and moves fairly quickly. In the uncorrected proof copy I have, scenes of plotting villains play out on black pages with white font, a

format that will appeal to young readers. I do hope the final published copy will continue using that.

The bad: The erection stuff in the beginning is overplayed. It's not the fact that it is included (certainly young teen boys will sympathize); it is that it is discussed, thought about, shown on television, and used as fodder for school bullies for about the first half of the book. It just gets old. Also, the plot moves slowly at times, but I do not think the youngsters will notice that as I did since it picks up again fairly quickly.

Content:

Language: mild (friggin, freakin, damn)

Sexuality: multiple references to an unfortunate and ill-timed erection; some kissing

Violence: non-bloody superhero fighting; a man is murdered (also non-bloody)

Drugs/alcohol: brief mention of steroids

Overall rating: Recommended for middle school libraries, *Sidekicks* is a relatively clean, fun read for superhero-loving preteens. Give it especially to sixth grade boys.

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