

[FREE] Less Than Hero

Less Than Hero

S.G. Browne

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S.G. Browne : Less Than Hero before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Less Than Hero:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Brilliant Originality from S.G. BrowneBy C.W. SpoonerIn Less Than Hero, S.G. Browne returns to New York City, the setting of his second novel, Fated. His background

descriptions are perfect for this tale of a group of guys who earn a living by participating in pharmaceutical tests. Browne is the most inventive and original writer in the business. His story lines never fail to amaze me. From *Breathers*, to *Fated*, to *Lucky Bastard*, to *Big Egos*, and on into *Less Than Hero*, his originality is unmatched. *Less Than Hero* is a good read, a story told in the voice that I loved in *Fated*. I can't wait to see what Browne comes up with next.^{3 of 3} people found the following review helpful. One of my favorite authors and I loved it so much that I ...By RachaelOne of my favorite authors and I loved it so much that I ended up rereading *Fated* too which is my favorite of his work^{0 of 0} people found the following review helpful. Great Read!!By JessiSuch a great book! I've loved everything S.G. Browne has written so far, and this is no different. The story is interesting and kept me turning the pages until late into the night. I finished the book in about two days (reading between work and sleep). If you're a fan of Chuck Palahniuk, I would recommend anything by Browne.

With the razor-sharp satire that earned him rave reviews for *Big Egos* and *Lucky Bastard*, among others, S.G. Browne delivers another irresistible read, about an unlikely band of heroes who use their medical complications to gain fame, confront villains, and bring their own unique brand of justice to New York City. Faster than a spreading rash! More powerful than dry heaves! Able to put villains to sleep with a single yawn! Convulsions. Nausea. Headaches. Sudden weight gain. For the pharmaceutical soldiers on the front lines of medical science—volunteers who test experimental drugs for cash—these common side effects are a small price to pay to defend your right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of antidepressants. Lloyd Prescott, thirty-year-old professional guinea pig and victim of his own inertia, is the first to notice the bizarre, seemingly implausible consequences of years of testing not-quite-legal drugs: his lips go numb, he becomes overwhelmed with exhaustion, and instantly a stranger crumples into a slumbering heap before him. Under cover of night, Lloyd and his guinea pig friends band together to project their debilitating side effects onto petty criminals who prey upon the innocent. When a horrible menace with powers eerily similar to their own threatens the city, only one force can stop this evil: the handful of brave men who routinely undergo clinical trials. “One of America’s best satiric novelists” (Kirkus Reviews), S. G. Browne fills the prescription for a hilarious and biting commentary on our overmedicated society. Citizens, rest assured that tonight, no matter your ailment—anxiety, depression, super villains—there’s a pill to save the day.

"Wickedly sharp and wildly entertaining. S.G. Browne is one of today's very best writers." (New York Times bestselling author Jonathan Maberry) Readers with a certain seasonal sensibility—one that renders zombies appropriate fare no matter the date on the calendar—will be shouting Ho! Ho! Ho!" (USA Today) "If your idea of 'heart-warming' involves an organ roasting on a stick, *I Saw Zombies Eating Santa Claus* is the perfect holiday tale." (WashingtonPost.com) "Hilarious, horrifying...a must for anyone who can't get enough of the undead." (San Jose Mercury News) "An endearing storyline...Get out your wallet and secure *I Saw Zombies Eating Santa Claus* for your nearest and dearest zombie freaks." (SF Weekly) "Dark, bizarre, very funny, and yes, with a bit of sentimentality thrown in, *I Saw Zombies Eating Santa Claus* is the perfect Christmas read for those who like VERY black comedy in their holiday reading." (Feathered Quill) "Springboarding off a traditional noir framework, Browne delivers an insightful, intriguing tale....With twists aplenty, this fast-paced adventure succeeds as both a hard-boiled homage and a paranormal romp." (Publishers Weekly (starred review Pick of the Week)) "Browne hits the funny bone hard....Smartly constructed fiction...that sets it apart from the crowd." (Kirkus s (starred review)) "Full of witty writing and hilarious adventures...I laughed out loud many times. Read the book: it will be your good fortune." (New York Times bestselling author Kevin J. Anderson) "Lucky Bastard is wonderful San Francisco noir, full of humor, irony, hot women, and cranial trauma. What more could you ask for in a book? The titular bastard may be in for a very bad day, but Browne's readers are the lucky ones." (New York Times bestselling author Christopher Golden) "A very clever novel....Nick [Monday] is a likable narrator...and the story's lightly noirish feel gives the proceedings an evocatively gritty texture. This one will appeal equally to readers of mysteries and fantasies." (Booklist) "[LESS THAN HERO] wittily and winningly mixes commentary on the state of the pharmaceutical industry (and American healthcare in general) with a tale of C-level superheroes...it works equally as a critique of a broken and corrupt pharmaceutical industry, one in which medicines often exacerbate the problems they're designed to cure while introducing new ones." (Publishers Weekly) "[LESS THAN HERO] is a social-satire-meets-amateur-superhero saga that deftly skewers the money-grubbing slickness of the pharmaceutical industry—as well as American culture's propensity to pop a pill for absolutely anything that ails us, regardless of how outrageously unpredictable the side effects may be... This is a funny, inventive exploration of the dangers inherent in our overmedicated culture. Readers who enjoy a dash of sharp wit with their comic-book shenanigans should enjoy tagging along on Lloyd's everyday-superhero exploits." (Kirkus s) "Browne, the author of such satirical novels as the very clever *Lucky Bastard* (2012), tackles the superhero genre in this hugely entertaining story of a bunch of regular guys who find out they have rather bizarre powers. These guys probably wouldn't know each other at all if it weren't for their unusual way of earning money: doing drug trials for pharmaceutical companies. Over time, it seems that the side effects of the various drugs have mutated our heroes. Now one of them can make other people go into violent convulsions; another can make people throw up; another—the

story's narrator, Lloyd Prescott—can make people fall asleep. But will these admittedly offbeat abilities be enough to stop the unknown villains who are robbing ordinary citizens of their memories and causing them to suffer hallucinations? Can Lloyd reveal his superpower to his girlfriend without causing her to dump him? Will Lloyd ever give up being a guinea pig? It's fair to say that you've never read a superhero story quite like this one; it's also fair to say that readers who enjoy good, weird fun will love [LESS THAN HERO]." (Booklist)About the AuthorS.G. Browne is the author of the novels *Less Than Hero*, *Big Egos*, *Lucky Bastard*, *Fated*, and *Breathers*, as well as the eBook short story collection *Shooting Monkeys in a Barrel* and the heartwarming holiday novella *I Saw Zombies Eating Santa Claus*. He lives in San Francisco.Excerpt. © Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved.*Less Than Hero* I'm sitting on a chair in an examination room with a disposable thermometer in my mouth and a blood pressure cuff around my upper left arm. On the walls around me are posters of vascular systems and reproductive organs. Fluorescent lights wash away any shadows. A clock ticks away the afternoon. Outside the closed door, someone asks for a breath mint. My lips have gone numb. This has never happened to me before. Usually I don't get anything more than cotton-mouthed, drowsy, or light-headed. Occasionally I develop rashes or feel like I have food poisoning. More often than not, I'll get a headache. Nothing major. We're not talking migraine and vomiting. That would be serious. What I get is pretty typical, nothing 400 milligrams of ibuprofen won't fix. But numbness in my lips? That's definitely a first. The medical technician sitting across from me removes the thermometer and the cuff, then records my temperature and my blood pressure on a chart attached to a clipboard. The technician is male. Mid-thirties. Prematurely gray. He has a zit coming in on his chin. His breath smells like nachos. "How are you feeling today?" he asks. "Good," I say, though my lips feel like they're made of rubber. "Any problems with your vision?" he asks, looking down at his clipboard. I shake my head and say no. "Cognitive functions?" No. "Speech?" No. "Numbness or tingling in any of your extremities?" Technically my lips aren't my extremities, but I tell him just in case and he writes it down in his notes. "Have you experienced any nausea or flu-like symptoms?" he asks. No. "Memory loss?" No. "Hallucinations? Seizures? Rashes?" Sometimes just hearing the word rash makes me want to itch, but I answer in the negative three more times. "Any bloating or rapid weight gain?" he asks. No. "Are you feeling dizzy or light-headed?" Most of the time, the questions are the same. Nausea. Headaches. Dizziness. Frequently they'll throw in night sweats or loss of appetite, with an occasional sinus inflammation and the odd sexual-performance question. But I've never been asked about an irregular heartbeat. Or renal failure. "No," I tell him. "No dizziness." The tech takes a few more minutes to run through the rest of his questions. By the time he sends me off for my blood and urine tests, my lips have returned to normal. In another room, a phlebotomist wraps an elastic tourniquet around my arm and sterilizes the soft flesh just inside my left elbow. The phlebotomist is female. Early forties. Blond with frosted tips. She's had Botox injections around her eyes. Her breath smells like peppermint. I'm not a big fan of needles. Even after more than five years, I still have to look away. So I take a deep breath and stare at the wall as she draws half a dozen blood samples into evacuated tubes. Normally before drawing samples, she's supposed to ask a list of questions and record my answers on a form: Am I on anticoagulation therapy? Do I have a history of fits? Do I have any bleeding disorders? Have I fasted? Instead, she asks me the questions while taking the samples, except for the one about fasting. This test doesn't require me to fast. I'm not a big fan of fasting. I'm not Baha'i or Buddhist, and I've never spent forty days and nights on a mountain with God, so abstaining from food and drink has never been my strong suit. After the phlebotomist draws my blood, she hands me a sterile plastic specimen container and points me to the bathroom. "Try to catch the urine in midstream," she says. "It makes for a cleaner sample." I nod as if this is something I've never heard before. As if this is my first time. Urine samples are standard procedure. While I'm not always asked to give blood, I almost always have to leave a sample of my urine. I've heard some guys have a hard time peeing on command into a cup. I've never had a problem, so I provide a midstream catch, deposit the specimen container in the cabinet, grab my backpack, and head to the waiting room—not a waiting room in Brooklyn with soft-cushioned seats and diffused lighting and copies of *Rolling Stone* and *National Geographic*, but a waiting room in Queens with hard plastic stacking chairs and fluorescent overhead lights and copies of *Us* and *People*. Randy stands at the front desk, hitting on the receptionist. The receptionist is female. Late twenties. Jet-black hair. She's wearing too much foundation. Her breath smells like cloves. "Cardio is my nirvana." Randy clasps his hands behind his head and flexes his biceps. "I run every day. I love working up a good sweat." Randy is a six-foot-tall, two-hundred-pound walking erection. In the three years I've known him, I've never seen him pass on the chance to chat up a woman. "I hear sweat's a big turn-on for women," I say. "Lloyd, my man!" Randy gives me a bro shake followed by a pound hug, even though we've seen each other almost every day for the past week. Randy may not be subtle, but he wears his affability, like his muscles, for everyone to see. "Where's Vic and Isaac?" I ask, looking around the otherwise empty waiting room. "Totally Eagles," Randy says. Randy likes to make esoteric references to song and album titles by classic rock bands, leaving out the titles and figuring everyone knows what he's talking about. "Already gone," he says, with a wink to the receptionist. "Thank you for coming in, Mr. Prescott." She ignores Randy and hands me some discharge literature and an envelope with my name on it. "We'll see you for your follow-up on Tuesday." "What about me?" Randy asks. "I'm free Friday night." "I'm sorry, Mr. Ballard. I don't date patients or clients. Plus I have a boyfriend." "What if I wasn't a patient or a client?" Randy asks. "I'd still have a boyfriend." "Que sera, sera." Randy shrugs and turns to me, his face lighting up

with a smile as big as Long Island. “Hey, wanna grab some grub?”