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TITLE INFORMATION

SUPERGAL VS. GOD

Hynson, Lori

Broken Shoe Press (370 pp.)

\$13.95 paperback, \$7.99 e-book

ISBN: 978-0989079006; June 18, 2013

BOOK REVIEW

A woman's faith is sorely tested in this sprightly, tragicomic novel of redemption.

Lori is a middle-aged working woman and mother who prides herself on riding to the rescue of everyone around her. Alas, she also leads an unfulfilled life in a loveless marriage—a problem that not even her “Supergal” persona can fix. However, she gets her groove back after she joins the choir at an ebullient new Baptist church, dumps her disapproving lump of a husband, and meets a handsome tenor named Ben. Lori, resplendent in her trademark cute pumps and frilly pink boa, thinks that she's engineered these triumphs on her own, due to her own nobility, so God decides to teach her the meaning of “blessing.” (God is an embodied character here, along with his emissary the Holy Spirit and his foil Satan, who are all forever whispering competitively in Lori's ear.) Soon Ben is stricken with an epic, terrifying illness that proceeds from gallbladder problems to gastrointestinal collapse, a drug-resistant staph infection and kidney cancer. In full Supergal mode, Lori struggles ever more frantically and impotently to manage Ben's deteriorating condition until the ultimate question—“Why me, God?”—shakes her belief in a benevolent deity. Hynson's drolly feminine update of the story of Job, based in part on true events, conveys lessons about swallowing pride, being honest about one's feelings, abandoning delusions of control and self-sufficiency, and putting oneself in God's hands while giving him glory. As a theodicy, however, it's no more satisfying than Job; God can seem downright callous when he plans out spiritual edification via misery, heartache and astronomical hospital bills. Still, in Hynson's deftly comic prose, Lori is a charming protagonist—good-hearted but a bit conceited, her hubris deflated by self-consciousness and punctured by pratfalls. As readers watch her do battle with God, they may not be able to help siding with the underdog.

A winsome, entertaining and occasionally inspiring story of bad things happening to pretty good people.

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Kirkus Indie, Kirkus Media LLC, 6411 Burleson Rd., Austin, TX 78744
indie@kirkusreviews.com

LORI HYNSON | author | speaker