

Queen of Kenosha

Howard Shapiro

Erica Chan, Illustrator

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Queen of Kenosha introduces Nina Overstreet, an aspiring performer in the 1960s Greenwich Village music scene who becomes intimately involved in the covert world of Nazis and secret ops.

The first book of Howard Shapiro's Thin Thinline Trilogy, *Queen of Kenosha* begins with Nina—raised in Kenosha, Wisconsin—singing at a New York City club. One of the onlookers is Nick Ladd, a secret agent who's tracking an underground Nazi group. Nina soon finds herself witnessing, and participating in, a back-alley melee. Impressed by Nina's self-defense skills, Nick believes an agent with a cover as a performer would be a great asset, and he recruits Nina into his group.

What follows is a deadly adventure that offers spy thrills with a twist, as Nina and Nick tentatively explore the possibility of a romantic relationship and Nina continues to advance her music career. Shapiro clearly loves music; his enthusiasm infuses the book, especially in chapter title pages, each of which features a recommended listening list with two real songs and one fictional one written by Nina Overstreet. Shapiro takes the conceit even further, with full lyrics to all of Nina's songs included at the back of the book, along with an album cover.

Erica Chan's art is excellent. Though there's an overall similarity in her construction of faces, characters are easily distinguishable. Complex emotions are captured, like a wordless page-long sequence in which Nina and Nick simultaneously consider calling each other, but don't. Spies and music might not be the most obvious pairing, but *Queen of Kenosha* does it with gusto.

PETER DABBENE (September/October 2018)

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