



## Crosswind, Vol. 1

*Gail Simone , Cat Staggs (Illustrator and Co-Creator) , Simon Bowland (Letterer)*

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**Crosswind, Vol. 1** Gail Simone , Cat Staggs (Illustrator and Co-Creator) , Simon Bowland (Letterer)  
Goodfellas meets Freaky Friday in this mind-bending new ongoing series from Fan-favorite creators GAIL SIMONE (Wonder Woman, Batgirl, Deadpool, Secret Six, Birds of Prey) and CAT STAGGS (Adventures of Supergirl, Smallville Season 11, Wonder Woman '77).

A slick and ruthless Chicago hitman.

A smart but downtrodden Seattle housewife.

When an inexplicable event strikes these two random strangers, their bodies, souls, and lives are switched--to potentially deadly effect.

Collects issues 1-6.

## Crosswind, Vol. 1 Details

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Author : Gail Simone , Cat Staggs (Illustrator and Co-Creator) , Simon Bowland (Letterer)

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# From Reader Review Crosswind, Vol. 1 for online ebook

## Matthew says

Gave this a try because I admire Gail Simone's writing so much, and I'm glad I did. The premise itself is not novel----two souls switch bodes, in this case a gangster and a housewife. Not surprisingly, both use skills from their former lives to succeed in their new ones. What does make it work well is that Simone develops these characters so well and so quickly I don't really question at any point the choices the two make. I'd write more, but I don't want to give much away. This a great title for fans of crime-thrillers and don't mind a slight supernatural twist and some gender-bending explorations.

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## Stephanie says

the ending lost me just a little, but I enjoyed it overall

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## Geonn Cannon says

A really intriguing book. I read it almost like a novel, but it needed the visual element of a comic to really get across the bodyswapping angle. A little gory, but not terribly over-the-top considering the subject matter. And hey, it's Gail Simone. You know what you're in for there: great characters and an interesting story. Well worth checking out.

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## Shadowdenizen says

This title came out of nowhere and totally blew me away! (It doesn't hurt that Gail Simone is involved as I'm a huge fan.)

Sure, the premise has been done (many times), but it's the visual art and and execution (coupled with smart writing) that really drives and sets this apart.

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## NinjaMuse says

In brief: A housewife and a hitman wake up in each others' bodies. It's the best thing that ever happened to them. First in a series.

Thoughts: This is a weird premise handled well. Not perfectly, but well. Unlike a lot of body- and genderswaps I've read (mostly fanfic, to be honest), there isn't much in the way of identity crisis or personality switch. The hitman doesn't suddenly become super feminine, for instance, though he does embrace domesticity in his own way, and similar things go for the housewife. There's also not as much about orientation or gender as I'd expected—they are who they are and they own it—and in general, the switch is

treated believably and the writers make some good points about society and respect that I'm kind of surprised haven't turned up in bodyswap work before. And I was pleased to see a prominent trans lesbian character, who is awesome but also helps reinforce that the body swap stuff is not the same as actual queer experiences.

(That said, I'm not mlm, wlw, or trans, so I can't say for sure that this is all treated with the respect and care it requires or that it's totally harmless and inoffensive. It doesn't raise any red flags that I can recall, but ... yeah.)

In terms of the story itself, it was fun! Lots of action and character growth, though it took me a few chapters to wrap my head around what was going on in the hitman's (body's) life. Plenty of commentary, which I've mentioned and I think was my favourite part, but lots of empowerment and badassery in other ways, and very feminist to boot. There was cheering in a few spots. I'm looking forward to where things go next and was kind of disappointed the second volume doesn't seem to be out yet.

The body swap mechanism is probably my least favourite bit, but it's treated as the violation it is, the characters deal with it appropriately, and, well, it's essentially a MacGuffin so I can suspend my disbelief in any case.

Reccing this one but not too hard, because I'm not qualified to really vet this, and also, I didn't love it, just liked it quite a bit.

Warnings: Gore and violence. Spousal abuse, sexual harassment, and misogyny. Some gender stuff that could've gone a bit further.

6.8/10

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## **Václav says**

Before I started reading this one, I completely forgot what it is about. And until the "crossing" happened I was wondering what story it would be. And I started to enjoy it. Swapping bodies is nothing new. A man with a woman, a boy with a girl, a young with an old, a poor with a rich. And mob hitman with the housewife. Despite it's (gentle) campaigning for transgender people here and there (especial with single issues "bonus material") it is a well-written story, with few (unsurprising) twists and a decent ending. But I have a major problem with Crosswind too. It tries to look like a TV show a lot. by the scenes and style of panels, by the art, by the dialogues (and inner dialogue), it all evokes TV show's extremely detailed screenplay. And the art - it works here, but honestly - it is messy, sloppy and, well, frackin' ugly. I needed to read fast because when I started to look into panels, it usually ended with the thought "Geez, that's hideous!" What can I say - the Crosswind is not bad comics. It is actually good comics, but with the style which was a bit annoying to me and, for me, hideous art.

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## **Adam Stone says**

A body switch story about an abused and objectified housewife who ends up crossed with a foul mouthed hitman is somewhat conceptually funny. Unfortunately, the over-the-top language and the art made this

nigh-unreadable to me.

Cat Staggs seems very talented at their art style. Unfortunately, it's one I can't stand. It looks like highly photoshopped pictures dipped in mud. It definitely takes talent to create this type of art, but it also takes talent to write limericks about licking Donald Trump's head but I don't ever want to be exposed to the work of someone with that talent.

I usually love Simone's storytelling, but this one missed the mark, as I could hear her giggling as she wrote some of the dialog the hitman (and later the hitman trapped in the housewife's body) used, but it was far too over-the-top for me.

The idea of exploring the false gender binary through these characters and their circumstance is theoretically interesting, but I just didn't believe a single character in this book enough to dwell on the social implications.

I recommend it for people who wish Quentin Tarantino wrote a Freaky Friday movie directly after he fell down a flight of stairs, people who fished their prized family photos out of a swamp and decided the pictures looked better that way, people who can't climax without using the Grunge effect on photoshop, people who like hitman stories where the writer focuses more on shock value than character development.

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### **Colleen says**

Really fun book and can't wait for the 2nd part to start up again. The blurb of "Freaky Friday meets Goodfellas" is pretty much on the nose. A downtrodden Mormon housewife and Cuban hitman switch bodies at horrible times for both of them (in the midst of cleaning up a huge crime scene and trying to get dinner ready for the overbearing husband's boss)--but what was meant to be a punishment works to both their advantages. And I loved how both Juniper and Cason are both relieved and manage to extricate themselves from their problems (no matter how improbably they do so). Least this is supposed to be coming again this year--and rumors of a TV show too, which this would be good, if they kept the same humor and sensibility.

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### **Wendy says**

It's not a big secret, I will buy pretty much anything Gail Simone writes. At least a few issues, because I love her humor and empathy. I actually read this in single issues as it came out, but I reread recently because I wanted to review it. I didn't see a lot of people outside of the comics community talking about it, and I wanted to give it some love.

June Blue is housewife in a suburb of Seattle. Cason Bennett is a hitman in Chicago. When an inexplicable event strikes, they swap lives. Yep, this is a body swap book, which is not really something that I have ever been particularly keen on. But I love this. It takes some unexpected twists, and the ending was a surprise.

One thing that was really interesting to me was an interview included that Simone did with a trans man she met when he was a moderator on trans issues in comics. He brought up the latent (or blatant) transphobia inherent in body swap stories, and it gave Crosswind a way to avoid those tropes or deal with them in a more

sensitive way. It gives the story a layer of depth that I would love to talk about with people.

But this is one that the art sold me even more than the story. I don't think I have seen a lot of Cat Staggs work, but she does exquisite work here. (Can we talk about how annoyed I am that goodreads calls her an illustrator? She is the co-creator. Comic artists are more than illustrators, they are as important to the story as the writer, sometimes more important. OK rant over for now). The body language that differentiates between June and Cason is absolutely fantastic. It is clear looking at how each character stands who is in the body. The difference in facial expressions is another area that is utterly perfect. The body language overall from all the characters is amazing. The page layouts are interesting, chaotic when needed and claustrophobic at times. No separate colorist is listed, so I am assuming that is Staggs as well. Use of light is particularly effective, especially outdoor lighting. The opening page, a splash page in a remote wooded area during a snowstorm, is stunning. I have spent lots of time thumbing through the pages and looking at the art.

Content warnings. This is a violent book, lots of gun violence. Cason is a hit man, after all. And there are some really gross boys that live near June who are creepy and verbally assault her more than once. In fact, a lot of the men are really asshats in a variety of ways. June's husband is verbally abusive. Lots of misogyny.

This probably isn't going to be for everyone, but the story was good and the art was perfect for it. I really loved it. (Now y'all need to read it please so I have people to discuss it with)

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## **Rod Brown says**

I have seen several blurbs referring to this mess as a twist on Freaky Friday, but I think the gonzo Nic Cage/John Travolta action flick Face/Off would be more apt. As in that film, so much of the plot of this book relies on the main characters not acting as reasonable people would. Instead of delving much, the creative team just goes for the cool quip or moment of violence as they send their body-switched duo up against a couple of over-the-top bad guys.

I had to keep reminding myself this was written by a woman as the male character in a female body just slam dunked the change while the woman in a man's body floundered about helplessly for much of the story. He rocked the suburbs again and again, while her one big victory early on was cleaning up really well. I know this was driven by their one-note personalities - stud hitman and doormat housewife - but it still comes across as a negative signal to be transmitting.

The art bugged me too, as it seemed at times to be based on digital alteration of photographs like that Richard Linklater animated movie, Waking Life. Or perhaps the awful mottled coloring just made it look that way. Regardless, the pictures struck me as distractingly ugly and kept throwing me out of the story.

If not for the amazingly effective use of the word "transphobe" late in the book, I might even have gone for a one-star rating. That moment, and the end-matter interview with Charles Battersby made me realize how more interesting this story would have been told mainly from the point of view of the vastly underutilized transgender supporting character. I want to read that book, not this loosey-goosey action trash.

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## **Dakota Morgan says**

Solid idea, poor execution. A mob hitman and a harried housewife switch bodies because...well, the reason doesn't matter. There are some fun moments where the hitman-as-wife toughens up her son and takes charge of her cruel husband. There are some baffling moments where wife-as-hitman pretty much instantly decides that she's okay with killing people. Like, I'm fairly certain the housewife would go straight to the police, so the whole thing stretches credulity.

I think I would have been able to put up with the hard to fathom nature of the tale if there had been a better story. The few issues where the swapped characters essentially just have a good time in their new bodies - that was fine and fun. But when wife-as-hitman travels across the country to defend her old body from a different mob hitman...the story gets pretty thin. And the ending is completely meh. At least the art is largely decent, although I was a bit baffled why the harried housewife is so attractive, yet consistently belittled for her lack of looks and charm. Odd art choice there, like you can't sell comics without a hot girl character.

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### **Roy says**

I was really surprised with this graphic novel. Its exactly like the blurb says, freaky Friday mixed with Goodfellas. Great storytelling, cool artwork, not the most original of stories but I was hooked. I loved both the male and female leads, especially their transition as the other character or body. Hopefully the team releases new issues soon.

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### **Luana says**

Satisfying, utterly satisfying, is my best description for how this story of a hitman and a bullied housewife's body swap soon plays out. Case, the hitman, may be starting to feel a bit trapped by his life's circumstances that sees him having to carry out duties he would rather not, like shooting an old friend on his mob boss's orders, but generally life is good and he gets respect. Juniper on the other hand seems to be near to cracking. In a few pages we get snapshots of her daily routine that portrays the regular sexual harassment, bullying, and infantilisation that she gets variously from her neighbours, community members, and her husband. Juniper is not respected and this is reflected in her submissive/defensive body language.

But then the body/life swap happens (with an intriguing premise behind it that comes to light later and also touches on people's dynamics with others) and the artist cleverly shows the new personalities coming to grips with their respective bodies. And with the new persona in each body comes the anticipation with how each character will navigate their new circumstances and oh my was it rewarding. Juniper in Case's body slowly grows in confidence while Case in Juniper's body is a joy as he deals out some retribution to her harassers the next time they attempted to attack her - that was just glorious to behold. Additionally, Case's taking Juniper's self-hating, stepmom-hating, stepson under their wing as their consigliere was kind of adorable.

The other element of this graphic novel, that also focuses on respect, is the portrayal of transgender characters. Not only is there the element of this when it comes to a body swap characters (well done and avoiding cheap transphobic jokes) but one of the neighbours is MtF and her portrayal is both beautiful, and kickass and as well rounded as it is possible to be with just a few pages (also her initial walk away throwaway line made me grin)- it is impressive how much nuance you can portray in a couple of panels and I think the very realistic style of art here helps.

In an interview, at the back of the book, Gail talks with Charles Battersby, who has been out as transgender

for 25 years, about transphobic themes in body swap and about getting the portrayals right, for instance: "...a man who body swaps into a woman isn't experiencing life as a cisgender woman but as a transman who hasn't transitioned yet!"

Thoroughly enjoyed this from beginning to end and the only reason that I did not give it a 5 is that initially I found the gender portrayals, confident vs weak, a little bit cliché and simple. Also the realistic style of art while very effective is not my favourite - I tend to be more partial to the beauty of works like *Monstress* - though that may not have worked so well for this storyline.

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## **Lenny says**

Gail Simone and Cat Staggs create an exciting, fresh, and groundbreaking new twist on the body-switching genre with *Crosswind*. I reviewed the first issue last year, (but don't read it, my writing was terrible back then), loved it and chose to wait for the trade – reading as once complete arc rather than single issues definitely paid off.

In *Crosswind*, the body switching targets are Cason Bennett, a Cuban-American hitman in Chicago who shoots his best friend in the opening pages, and Juniper Blue, a miserable wife and stepmom in Seattle who is verbally abused by all the men in her life (and it seems that she has only abusive men in her life), including a cheating, ungrateful husband. Cason and Junie find new freedoms and new challenges once they wake up in each others' bodies, but as they try to figure out who they are and how to switch back, things become even more complicated with Cason's dangerous associates on their tails.

First, an admission: I will read anything Gail Simone writes, from my favorite childhood superhero (Batgirl) to villains I never thought I'd love (Secret Six) to a horror book I would never pick up otherwise (Clean Room). And just like those books, in *Crosswind*, Simone once again displays her mastery of voice, humor, and of course, the dark and twisted. A "Mature" rating works very well for Simone, with well-placed profanity, and some necessary adult themes considering the abuse and violence.

The rating also works for Cat Staggs, who brings an interesting realist style to the *Crosswind* title (she is an unbelievably talented artist). Unlike Simone, this is the first of her work I am seeing in an ongoing series (as opposed to a cover.) Sometimes her art – heavy outlines and a bold, almost watercolor like look but without much gradient in the colors- feels almost like painted photos. People's limbs or sometimes whole characters burst through the panels, which is sometimes disorienting but often keeps your eyes moving. There are some nice visual moments that Staggs uses to enhance the story – such as the way Carson, in Junie's body, pulls open Junie's purse, or how each of the characters all have different positions as they struggle to sleep in their respective beds. I did notice in other reviews that Staggs' art is very love-or-hate.

In this case, there were a few misses for me – some panels felt awkward, and occasionally a few characters looked expressionless – but otherwise I really enjoyed the different look. The realism, as opposed to a more cartoonish look, might have been intentionally chosen due to the book's other metaphors.

A writer who has worked on all sorts of gender-forward books, Simone also plays with gender in *Crosswind*.



Cason and Juni start off as 60's stereotypes: the coldblooded hitman and the abused, lonely housewife. However, when they switch into each others' bodies, the stereotypical body humor doesn't come up (Cason in Juni's body especially), aside from one moment, but with Juni in Cason's body. When we see them sleeping in bed, in each others' bodies, there is no cheap sexual joke here. That feels very refreshing. (Though there could have been other humor – each of our bodies have weird quirks and preferences, and we grow accustomed to them – but perhaps it didn't fit the tone of the story.)

Case fully nosedives into Juni's life without any grumbling about becoming a woman – in fact, he rather enjoys cooking his mom's Cuban recipes every night. Unfortunately, Case still uses what he knows as an assassin and a toxically masculine man – using violence and profanity as strength – to get his way, and worst of all, uses it as a teaching moment for Juni's stepson. But also, thankfully, he raises hell against the men who are so abusive to Juni, including her husband. Unlike Juni, he takes zero shit from them.

But most importantly, Cason never once says that he feels weak for being switched into a woman's body. He never questions his masculinity, his strength or essential self worth, and the reasons why Case enjoys being Juni are not sexual at all. If anything, he is the one who expresses relief about the switch rather than Juni. In a world full of toxic masculinity, this is really something.

Similarly, Juni unexpectedly finds herself in Case's body; after she panics, she gets her act together and cleans up a dirty crime scene, trying to avoid violence whenever possible. But, unlike Cason, when she actually has to interact with his associates – and in a mysterious phone call, she is reminded to use her imagination from the scifi books she loves – Juni consistently freezes. It's a disappointment that for a majority of the book, she likes Cason's status but she still often reacts with shock or passivity. There's no enjoyment of the thrill, or even being the manipulator for once, rather than the manipulated. Even if it was twisted, I wanted to see her enjoy the power. It was unfortunate that none of her beloved books actually came up in her creativity or choices. Of course, she does, ahem, grow a pair at the very end, when everything is on the line, but it feels unearned.

I think the book is more about Cason than it is about Juni – and that's so okay. More on that later.

These stereotypes feel heightened when a lot of the book feels like it takes place in the 60's – Juni and Cason's respective occupations; hints of dialogue such as the type of verbal abuse Juni endures and phrases like “stepping out” and “having a dance”; even Staggs' art to some degree. (It doesn't, of course, with GPS and cell phones, but it almost had an Archer feel with that mix.) Perhaps, in Simone and Staggs' brilliance, this further reminds us of how little has changed between then and now. (Side note: I'm reviewing this the night before the Kavanaugh hearing with Dr. Ford). And yet, the fact that Case and Juni are immediately comfortable in each others' bodies, reminds us how socially constructed and ridiculous the concept of gender really is. And even as we move forward in our society, we still deeply and subconsciously hold on to many of those conceptions.

These were my initial impressions. But how impressed I was of Crosswind skyrocketed after reading an interview sandwiched between extras in the back of the book that I almost didn't read. I REALLY wish it was easier to find.

It's between Simone and Charles Battersby, a transgender writer/actor who moderated a panel at NYCC about trans inclusion in comics. In this fascinating interview, Battersby explains that body-switching actually invites the characters – and invites readers – to experience the feeling of being transgender. In the genre, usually two cisgender people of the opposite sex switch, and the man/woman learn about being the other. But actually, they aren't! Their involuntary switch, their physical and emotional discomfort – they're a man in a woman's body and vice versa...they're learning about being trans. And yet, Battersby mentions, they have to seek that magical way to return rather than seek out the methods that trans people are forced to use (which are not so quick and magical).

Suddenly, it's even clearer how Simone's story subverts the body switching genre not only to make it a fresher, more interesting story, and more sensitive to a trans audience – and subverting said stereotypes creates a positive metaphor for the trans experience. In fact, a major supporting character, one of Juni's neighbors, Maizy, plays an important role in the story – and, I didn't realize until after reading the interview, essentially represents the conversation between Simone and Battersby.

First of all, Maizy is a kickass, very positive trans character and excellent dog trainer. (She and Petrichor from Saga would definitely be friends.) Positive trans characters are becoming more mainstream, but it's still unfortunately rare in comics and so Maizy's inclusion deserves serious props on its own. And perhaps I'm dense, but I soon realized that a key moment in the book is when Case (in Juni's body) visits Maizy and her partner Lilly. The first time, Case asks for makeup help – okay, he wants to fit in as a woman. But then he returns, and it's not about physically fitting in – it's a different, deeper, and truer question:

Remember how I said earlier that the story is actually about Case? I think this is why. Juni seems to eventually like being Carson because of the respect and being listened to. But Case – he actually asks the question. And he, a man who switched into a woman's body and feels right about it, asks a trans woman.

It's FREAKING BEAUTIFUL. How did I not notice this before?!

And Maizy's response, that he is always Case no matter what body he is in, is just a beautiful allegory for the trans experience. Your body doesn't define your soul. And it's fitting that Case and Juni are clearly more comfortable as each other, and not for sexual reasons at all. (Does that make them bigender, or gender queer? Or just human?) While it might not have been the story Simone wanted to tell, I wish Maizy and her partner Lilly could have had a larger role in the story and had made that metaphor more clear – again, maybe I'm the dense one, but I would not be asking myself these questions without having read that interview. (Gail, if you're reading this, first of all hi you're the best, and second of all, please put that interview right after the variants!)

**SPOILERS THIS PARAGRAPH** The biggest stretch of the story is Vox, the coordinator of Juni and Case's body switching. What is unfortunate is that not only does the existence of Viziers (people who can switch bodies) seem far fetched, but so too does his reason for targeting Juni and Case specifically. Seriously dude, what are you doing a whole flight away from your cancer-ridden wife in the first place? Did you seriously only ask two passengers for their flight? How is this a viable reason to ruin their lives and kill lots of other people in the process? At the end of the day, it made me raise my eyebrows, but it doesn't take away from my enjoyment of the book. Case and Juni could have switched for no reason at all and the book would have been just as good – but the idea of viziers hidden throughout the world, who might be able to switch

Case and Juni, and others, into other bodies – now we see potential leads into the series.

Crosswind is on hiatus, as is usually the case with Image-published comics in between arcs, but I can't wait to pick up volume 2. Bravo, Gail Simone and Cat Staggs. And thank you.

Please check out more of my reviews at Reading Art!

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### **James DeSantis says**

So take Freaky Friday, killers, foul mouth little kids, and some crazy shoot outs and you have Crosswinds.

This is the story of two characters, one is a killer assassin, the other is a housewife, and they switch bodies. You can only guess how out of place them seem once they do that. However, they begin to fit in to their roles the best they can. As the story ramps up, more and more people die, and it becomes a crazy roller-coaster of action and adventure.

Good: I actually loved 90% of the stuff with the mom's side of things. Her raising her step-son, dealing with her soon-to-be ex-husband, kids being assholes around her and more. All of that was great. I also thought the first half was fast paced and a ton of fun. The dialog also is very funny at times.

Bad: I didn't love the assassin's storyline (sorry name is slipping) I just thought it was okay and kind of cliché. I also didn't love the ending, it didn't feel well put together. I know there's supposed to be more, so maybe it'll work better once more comes out, but as it stands I wasn't super impressed. Also the art didn't really do it for me.

Overall this was a fun little book. It didn't blow my mind, and I think Gail has written better, but as it stands if you want something that's often funny and charming this is one to check out! A 3 out of 5.

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