

Niagara's Superhero 'Celine Bower' is Ready to Kick Butt

Paul Sawchuk
Special to The Observer

A new superhero has arrived. She is a new avenger. No, not one of those Avengers. She fights for women who have felt trapped and hurt all their lives. She has supernatural powers and a bone to pick. And she is from Niagara.

Carly Brown's first novel, "The Celine Bower Story" is the first chronicle in a trilogy about Celine Bower, a woman who finds herself supernaturally equipped with abilities after a traumatic event in her life. She's driv-

en by the trauma to avenge her attackers, and her newfound abilities allow her to help other women who have been similarly downtrodden, beaten and in search of a way to fight back.

"I actually didn't set out to write a superhero story," she says, "I happened into one."

Brown's "Celine Bower Story" has travelled across Niagara to be published, but Brown's journey has taken her across the world before settling down to write back home. Carly grew up in Niagara Falls and studied

at Stamford High School. From there she travelled to Hong Kong to teach writing and drama. While teaching, she continued her own writing, winning eight awards for her play, "Let's Rock." When you're writing, she says, it is the "only time you can say whatever you want. You have a voice and imagination."

Carly returned to Niagara after several years with an itch to continue writing. The genesis of Celine Bower lay in her mind, but she needed the right inspiration and environment to tell it. On a peach farm in Niagara-on-the-Lake she began her first draft. It was a four-month exercise with Carly and a pencil; "I re-wrote the first chapter six times," she laughs. Carly now resides in Ridgeway while promoting "The Celine Bower Story."

"This type of book doesn't really exist for women," she says. Though female superheroes exist aplenty, such



*Chris Marrasso/
Special to The Observer*

Carly Brown and her novel, "The Celine Bower Story - Chronicle One"

as Wonder Woman, Black Widow, Captain Marvel, and many more, Celine Bower is described more akin to The Bride from Quentin Tarantino's "Kill Bill", or female versions of crime thriller heroes from Jonathan Kellerman, Lee Child, and even classic crime literature from Arthur Conan Doyle. "You

wouldn't have crime fiction today without 'The Hound of the Baskervilles' and Sherlock Holmes," one of her largest inspirations.

It's tempting, with Brown's female hero and alignment with the male-dominated crime fiction genre, to associate her fiction with feminism – especially considering the prevalent #metoo environment that we're living in. "I wrote this long before that movement," Brown points out. "It's convenient timing, but I don't see myself as a feminist. I'm a global citizen, and I've seen the world through my own eyes, so my main character is a woman by default." Celine Bower's story is rooted in the crime fiction genre, not the politics of the day.

"It's just a story. It's not about any '-ism,' it's about the thrill of the read and the satisfaction of getting the bad guy at the end." It just happens to coincide with #metoo, where we're seeing powerful, exploitative men "get what they deserve" in the public and media spotlight.

Writers and creatives like Tarantino, Kellerman, King, and Child are "perceptive" to the effects of crime on the world, she says, but that still leaves a gap for women writers to tell women's stories. The traumatic event that

sets Bower's story in motion – her rape – is a catalyst for her to become an avenging angel. But Brown focused more attention on making sure her fight scenes were "up to par" with her influences and "in the moment and entertaining" than she did on acclimatizing her story to #metoo.

"What about the next book?" She laughs, recounting another interview where she was asked, "you're not going to make us wait 11 years for the next one, are you?" Trilogies are commonplace in genre fiction, but Brown is ready to put us at ease. "The next one is near ready to go, and the third is drafted. Don't worry, this one ends."

Interested readers can find a copy of "The Celine Bower Story" at the Fort Erie Public Library, as well as Lakeside Books in Ridgeway.

Carly Brown will also be doing book signings, the first at Lakeside Books and Art on April, 26 from 5 p.m. to 7 p.m. The second signing will be at Chapters in St. Catharines on May 18, from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m.

For more information, and to keep up with the progress of Niagara's home-grown female superhero visit www.thecelinebowerstory.com.

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