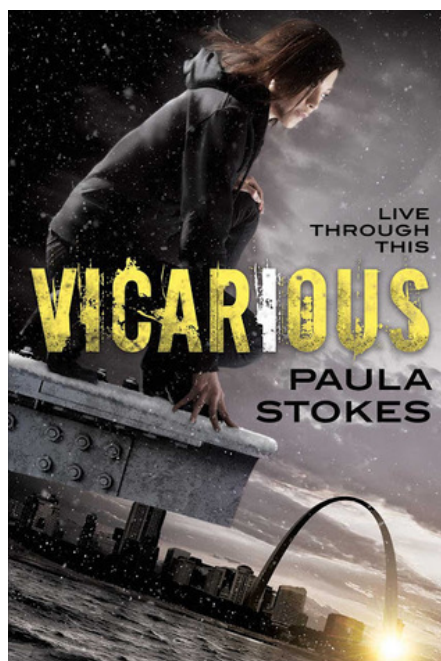




Vicarious

Paula Stokes

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Vicarious

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Vicarious Paula Stokes

Winter Kim and her sister, Rose, work as high-tech stunt girls for Rose's ex-boyfriend, Gideon, engaging in dangerous and enticing activities while recording their neural impulses for his Vicarious Sensory Experiences, or ViSEs. Whether it's bungee jumping, shark diving, or grinding up against celebrities at the city's hottest dance clubs, Gideon can make it happen for you—for a price.

When Rose disappears and a ViSE recording of her murder is delivered to Gideon, Winter is devastated. She won't rest until she finds her sister's killer. But when the clues she uncovers conflict with the digital recordings her sister made, Winter isn't sure what to believe. To find out what happened to Rose, she'll have to untangle what's real from what only seems real, risking her life in the process.

Vicarious Details

Date : Published August 16th 2016 by Tor

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Author : Paula Stokes

Format : Hardcover 336 pages

Genre : Young Adult, Science Fiction, Mystery, Thriller

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From Reader Review Vicarious for online ebook

C.G. Drews says

Well this was a wild ride with surprisingly dark undertones and a fantastic title that I can't remember for the life of me. I swear I can be staring at this book's cover and my brain will say "HEY LET'S READ VIVACIOUS." Because apparently I am an illiterate piece of lettuce. But *despite* my leafy drawbacks in life, **I thought the plot twisty finale was GREAT.** I did struggle to really stay invested/care for the beginning. And I feel a bit mislead by the blurb??? But, I mean, all over Voracious was such a satisfying read.

So the blurb kiiiind of indicates it's going to be about girls who do stunts. For this sci-fi thingie. Like they record it and then rich people get to "experience" the recordings in like a stimulation that makes it feel like *they* are having the adventures. Super cool when you think about skydiving or diving with sharks or doing karate. Super creeeeepy when you realise this is also for stuff like sex and drugs. Nice. **The real problem tho?** THEY DIDN'T EVEN DO THAT MANY STUNTS. The book was actually about Winter + finding out who killed her sister + growing fееeelings for coworker Jesse + struggling with PTSD.

Look, I totally think YA can be dark. In fact, I LIKE my YA to be dark. But I honestly admit I was super surprised at how sexually dark this was. Like Winter (and her sister Rose) are rescued sex workers, basically stolen from Korea and then enslaved. There's no like graphic sex in the book, but it's talked about a lot that the girls were abused. And they go into tons of clubs (now that they're free and working as these stunt girls) and it's all that kind of risky, shady sort of scenarios. It didn't exactly feel YA? But at the same time the WRITING was very YA. **So my brain sort of was just conflicting there and wires were sparking and I wanted to say "but why" several times.** WHY write a book that's all sexy/dark but keep it PG but yet it's like...not? Like why?

ANYWAY.

I really enjoyed the mystery/thriller aspect at least! I spent the WHOLE book thinking everyone was a super creepo and Winter should stab them all and run. (Hahah. I'm a nice person I swear.) And I loved the guessing game and piecing the clues. Winter is an unreliable narrator with her PTSD, social anxiety, and blackouts -- and it was interesting and a little feels-breaking watching her refusing to let her sister die unrevenged.

Although **some of the dialogue/characters reactions were a bit bizarre.** Like Winter discovers her sister is DEAD and then her boss/brother/family dude is like "Okay well I'll sort it out, kyou go finish your homework." MAAAATE, YOU DID NOT. **I actually spent a lot of time feeling the writing was forgetting to add in an emotional level.** I just didn't connect?

The cast is super diverse which is GREAT. Winter is Korean and Jesse is biracial Mexican. So basically all the main cast was POC! And there was a lot of food (and teeea) culture woven in which is great because now I want Korean tea and burritos together, thanks a lot.

ALL IN ALL: I enjoyed Vindictive a lot but it didn't quite suck me in like I'd hoped. I think it might've been the writing? It just wasn't hitting the feels levels. But the story was interesting and the ending was MARVELLOUS. The book sneaked into the dark side and ate all the cookies. I MUCH preferred the fighting/running/shooting scenes to the seductive stuff at the clubs. **And I also hate myself a little for not being able to remember the freaking title.** I blame my brain. I mean I spent the first 4 months of my niece's life calling her Jupiter (her name is Juniper) because, ya know, why read a whole world when you can be dyslexic. **ANYWAY! Definitely a good book if you like thrillers with a small sci-fi twist and a lot of**

knives. Definitely upper YA.

PS. Is the sisters being called "Winter" and "Rose" a reference to the fairy tale?!??

Maja (The Nocturnal Library) says

4.5 stars

There really aren't that many YA books that embrace the harsh realities of the world we live in. Even when writing a sci-fi thriller, Paula Stokes is courageous enough to do so. She doesn't embellish, she refuses to sugarcoat, and she throws the ugliest bits right in our faces. While I wouldn't debate its appropriateness for younger teens (I still struggle with determining the lines for my kiddo), I applaud Stokes for taking us where so few YA authors have gone before.

Vicarious isn't easy to put into words. Anything is a potential spoiler so it's best to go into it blindly. Nevertheless, several things can be safely pointed out. First and foremost, Stokes' characters are tiny works of art. Winter Kim is as serious as they come, severely damaged by her traumatic childhood. She is focused, driven, and slow to trust. She trains hard, not only for her job as a digital stuntwoman in her guardian's company, but also to keep herself safe and make sure that the past traumas never happen again.

With a Korean protagonist that actually spent her formative years in Korea, I assume that Stokes had to tread carefully. However, even with my limited understanding of Korean culture, I felt that the spirit of it was captured perfectly. The magic was in the little things like Winter's worldview, her respect for her elders, her absolute devotion to family. During her work hours, Winter breaks into heavily guarded company headquarters, bungee jumps and swims with sharks. In her private time, however, she prefers solitude and is rather conservative, unlike her sister Rose who is a social butterfly prone to risky behavior.

Many of you will be curious about the romance, and I can only tell you that it's complex, heartbreaking and that it works. Through Winter's connection with Jesse, Stokes explored some of the psychological consequences of sexual abuse, the inability to achieve intimacy and the reluctance to trust anyone. Jesse's tentative approach was sometimes healing and sometimes damaging and finding the balance was incredibly hard for them both. This is where Paula Stokes shines, with her profound understanding and sensitivity, but also openness and direct approach. There is no tiptoeing in her writing and nothing is left unsaid.

As mentioned before, it's best not to talk about the plot except to say that it's lightning fast and full of twists that will make your mind explode. It's been ages since I'd held such a page turner in my hands and it will likely be ages before I find another one that can measure up. The light science fiction elements were blended in smoothly, the Vicarious Sensory Experiences being something our culture definitely strives for.

Vicarious left me reeling, struggling for hours to return to the real world. I feel very comfortable recommending it far and wide, knowing it will turn all its readers into ardent fans. The only thing left is to count down the days to the next book, hoping not to die of suspense in the process.

Debby says

Beta read: August 2015

Reread: July 2016

4 stars

Let me start by being completely upfront with you guys. I first read this book last year as a beta reader, and I am now writing my review after having read an advance review copy, so I'm familiar with this story and have seen it develop over time. Paula Stokes is a dear friend. But my blog is nothing if not honest, and I am not lying when I say that this book blew me away.

I'm not a typical mystery/thriller reader, and a simple whodunnit is not something that attracts me. But **Vicarious is definitely different**. I would still describe it as a mystery/thriller, but there's a strong sci-fi action-packed element and a heartbreaking emotional element to the point where I think this book is suitable for a broad category of young adult readers.

Perhaps my favorite part of it is the sci-fi aspect. I love the ViSE technology. It's new and different, and in that sense, it's a sci-fi element that takes this story into our near future - but it definitely doesn't seem that far away considering the rise of virtual reality tech at the moment. I totally see this happening: people recording exciting adventures and activities and others getting to live through those recordings. I had a pretty big geek moment about that, not gonna lie.

And the characters, particularly Winter, are what take this story to the dark and emotional route. Yes, Winter was a victim of human trafficking and was forced to be a sex worker. But please note that that's not what this story is about at all (and parents - you don't need to worry about particularly explicit or R-rated content). This story is about the aftermath - the mental effects and the consequences of living through such traumatic events. Winter definitely suffers from PTSD, but it's also interesting because you see how different people react to the same situation and the same trauma. Winter is scared of men, crowded places, and intimacy. She learns a variety of martial arts and self-defense techniques, and she doesn't let anyone get really close to her. Meanwhile, her sister is sexually active with multiple partners because that lets her feel like she's back in control. Paula's research shows in the complexity of her characters.

What I felt a little less excited about was **the romance between Winter and Jesse**. He's a great, sweet guy. He's patient and kind, and given the events of the story, he's arguably exactly what Winter needs. But it's just the sweet kind of romance that I don't get very many butterflies for. And at times, it felt a little forced. There was so much going on with Winter's own character growth and development and the mystery of her sister dying, which she obviously isn't in the best position to cope with. So to switch between all those things and keep getting pulled back to "budding feelings" and "omg do I like him, well yeah, but I'm scared", it made this book more typically YA. On this rare instance, I feel like this story would have worked better with less (or no) romance.

But the main question is: do you like getting your mind blown?

If so, you need this book. Honestly it has **one of the most thrilling and heart-stopping twists** that I've read in basically ever. I did not see it coming. And it damn near broke my heart. I sat with my jaw dropped for a good 10 minutes. And on that rare instance that I do venture out and read a mystery thriller, that's exactly the effect I want the book to have. I had a great time rereading this book and catching the foreshadowing - so yeah, there's definitely reread value in this - but the first time I didn't pick up on that at all. That just means the concept and its execution were masterfully done.

I won't say much more, because **this is a book you need to experience for yourself**. Any extra information about the plot will pull you this way or that and mess with your expectations. But know that this is a story

with great (lite) sci-fi elements, excellent pacing, action-packed scenes, deep and heartfelt character arcs, and a shocking ending. There's something here for everyone.

Summing Up:

With *Vicarious*, Paula Stokes really shows off her versatility. She can write amazing fluff and heartstopping thrillers, because every story from her starts with her characters. She does spectacular research and adds so much depth to them that they definitely become 3-dimensional characters that flow naturally within the story *and* draw in the reader. In *Vicarious* it's diverse, dark, and extra deep. This excellently paced thriller will keep you on your toes and leave you feeling breathless. It can stand on its own, but I'm pretty excited that there will be a sequel.

GIF it to me straight!

Recommended To:

Fans of (psychological) thrillers and character-driven novels.

**An advance review copy was provided by the author in exchange for an honest review. This does not affect my opinion of the book or the contents of the review.*

Keertana says

Paula Stokes is full of surprises. When her debut, *The Art of Lainey*, burst onto the scene, ticking off all the right boxes for Contemporary YA, I thought for sure that I had discovered a new go-to author for the genre. Imagine my surprise when her sophomore novel, *Liars, Inc.* was full of mystery; a thriller featuring diversity in multiple ways. I knew her next contemporary novel would be stellar, but *Girl Against the Universe* surpassed my wildest expectations. So, when *Vicarious* fell into my lap, I knew only one thing: I would not be disappointed. And I was absolutely right.

Stokes's latest is a far cry from any of her previous novels. And, I suspect, to a large degree it's wildly different from most other YA novels out there, even within its genre. Winter, our heroine, owes everything to her older sister, Rose, and foster brother, Gideon, who helped her escape North Korea and, later, trafficking in California. Now, Winter works for Gideon, recording dangerous activities to create ViSEs. With a ViSE, not only can you see from the eyes of the recorder, watching as they bungee jump or escape the cops, but you can feel their neural impulses--the adrenaline, the fear, the excitement. While Rose spends her time in clubs, dealing with her past the only way she knows, Winter trains, making herself impenetrable and working her body to withstand even the most deadly of actions. But when a ViSE of Rose's murder turns up in Gideon's office, Winter is determined to find and avenge her sister's death--no matter the cost.

Winter is a completely bad-ass protagonist. She's focused and no-nonsense, so while some may dislike her serious nature, I appreciated her upfront honesty about her own personality. Her past is a vicious monster--and not just the fact that she escaped from North Korea. There's also the immense debt she feels she owes to both Rose and Gideon for making sure she escaped the trafficking situation they were caught up in in

California. The combination of these two make Winter's past a depressing part of the novel. But, Stokes is careful to accompany Winter's darkness alongside plenty of action, not to mention lighter scenes and even humor from other, secondary, characters. Winter's relationship with her sister isn't perfect--after all, Winter doesn't understand why Rose uses her sexuality and is constantly seen with different men--but she adores her older sister as well. Even though Rose dies early in the novel, I still felt as if I knew her character, and most importantly her relationship with Winter, very well.

One of my favorite aspects to this story, though, is the romance. It takes a backseat throughout the novel but it's a slow-burn that utterly won me over and had me swooning from the beginning. Jesse is a friend of Winter's, someone who also works for Gideon and has had a tough past of his own. But he genuinely cares for Winter and watching as he breaks down her barriers and convinces her of his affection, despite her past and the demons she carries, is a highlight of the story. Their friendship is rock-solid, the trust between them a pillar for Winter to find support upon in the face of her sister's death. I also love that their relationship isn't always easy--not for Winter and certainly not for Jesse. But it's so rewarding and I'm really looking forward to seeing how it develops in the sequel.

Vicarious is a thriller from start to finish. I found myself flipping these pages, wondering at who could have killed Rose, where she was at the time of her death, and the people she spoke to. As Winter interrogates those in her life, she uncovers secrets about her sister that she never even suspected and the influx of clues and leads, not to mention dead-ends, makes for an exciting read. Add in the complex personalities of Winter--and Jesse's utter charm--and I'd have been sold. But Stokes also has another trick up her sleeve--the ViSEs. And, damn, they are *cool*. I love how the ViSEs were an integral aspect to Rose's death but, also, we get to see them filmed and in action later in the novel. Clearly, they're going to be playing an even bigger role in the sequel and I loved the futuristic tint that the ViSEs provided to this world, which is otherwise identical to ours.

The best part about *Vicarious* are all the twists and turns that you won't see coming. I was shocked and reeling by the end of this novel and though it is a part of a duology, with this portion of the story wrapped up, I want the sequel--*now*. Yet, for all its seeming perfection, I will say that I had a few sliiight issues with *Vicarious*. Namely, that I found it to drag a little in the middle. There are a lot of back-to-back sequences with lots of action, whether it be Winter tracking down her sister's body or haunting the places she frequented or visiting people that only Rose knew. There are also a lot of really intriguing ViSEs that we get to see--ViSEs that Winter finds of Rose and her adventures. But then, somewhere in the middle, I found myself flipping the pages and wondering when the action would pick up again. I think that with so many fast-paced scenes, the slower moments feel a little *too* slow. Thankfully, it doesn't seem that way for too long and Stokes regains her momentum, stunning readers with more action-shots, ViSEs, and plot twists.

Thus, all-in-all, I'm totally impressed and utterly in love with this book. It is clear that Stokes's research is impeccable and her incorporation of diverse characters, their heritage and their struggles, is admirable. Even if you're not looking for more diversity in YA, the mystery, the plot twists, and the thrills will keep you glued to your seat. And for fans of deeper connections, complex personalities, and tough relationships--Stokes delivers on that as well. *Vicarious* has something in it for everyone--read it, at least so that I'm not counting down the days to its sequel by myself. ;)

Pre-Review:

Vicarious boasts a diverse host of characters alongside a thrilling mysteries that is absolutely chock-full of plot twists that will leave you reeling. Though this book doesn't end on a cliffhanger, I want--desperately!--to know what happens next. Needless to say, this was *good*.

We have a heroine who is basically Black Widow:

A romantic interest who (I imagined) looks something like this:

And then there are scenes of this:

And this:

And even this:

So...if you're not pre-ordering this one yet or adding it to your TBR or rushing out to buy it, I don't know what else I can do to convince you that this is so, so different from anything Stokes has written before and it's *fantastic!*

In the end, you'll be like this:

Crystal (Bookiemoji) says

OMFG SOOOOOOOO GOOD!!!!!!! There was so much I did NOT see coming and I stayed guessing what the heck was going on until the VERY end, and boy was I all :-O whaaaaaat???? This is definitely a MUST READ!!

Jen Ryland says

Interesting futuristic thriller. I've seen this plot twist before, but I think it was set up pretty well. On to the sequel!

Full review to come.

Rashika (is tired) says

5 Reasons Why You Should Read *Vicarious*

1. The main character. Stokes' always writes great characters and this book is no exception. Winter is a complex character with a backstory that will make you want to shelter her from the world. Winter is BADASS but her past has left a mark on her and it does affect how she functions as a human being. I guess what I am trying to say is that Winter is a flawed character but in a realistic and understandable way and her flaws don't make her any less badass.

2. The secondary characters. Omg, there are so many secondary characters to love. From Gideon (MY FAV) to Jesse (the love interest) to Rose. All of them are complex characters who are capable of doing the wrong thing but still admirable as human beings. Their relationships with Winter are also super interesting

intricate.

3. How the book deals with mental illness. While I do think that there could be a little bit more finesse with some revelations, I think Stokes does a great job of being respectful while dealing with mental illness. It's a hard thing to do, given the things Winter has suffered through but Winter has a good support system even if her own relationship with her mental health is complicated (DOES THIS EVEN MAKE SENSE? IDK. I feel like I am rambling.)

4. The sci fic elements. VISEs allow people to experience things vicariously. You name it, a VISE exists for it (except for the really horrible things.) Do you want to vicariously experience swimming with sharks? Do you want to experience the feeling of running away from the police? VISEs exist for most things. Winter is one of the few people who are part of a team of recorders. They record experiences that you can vicariously experience.

5. The plot. This book is Intense (with a capital I.) There are lots of twists and if you are an anxious reader like me and always jump to conclusions, trust me, there will be a surprise or two waiting for you. The book is set up really well though so the twists aren't random. The pacing is also fantastic and the tension builds at just the right pace so that suddenly you are freaking out because THINGS are happening and YOU JUST WANT ANSWERS.

Overall, this book was absolutely worth the read and I would definitely recommend it if you love thrillers that will keep you on the edge.

Paula Stokes says

Things you might want to know:

This is a duology, but both books have complete story arcs and endings.

I wrote this book from mid 2012 to early 2013, but then Life happened and Publishing happened and so Vicarious is actually being published three months later than the book I wrote in late 2014 (Girl Against the Universe). Spending so much time awaiting the fate of this story and tinkering with it off and on means that I've become very emotionally attached to these characters. Because of that I likely won't read many reviews, so if you want me to see yours email it or tweet it at me.

Vicarious features multiple Korean main characters and I'll be blogging about why I did that, my research methods, and my personal connections to Korean culture--family members, living and working in Seoul, etc.--closer to publication. [ETA: Here's the lead off post and schedule for my blog tour, which includes a five-post series on writing outside my perspective.]

Like with LIARS, INC., I made a lot of tiny changes to the ARC. Over 100 in fact, most of which just tighten up the writing or give Winter more agency/urgency, a few of which correct errors with the usage of Korean honorifics or Romanization of Hangul. For more info, see the discussion threads below.

This book is darker than anything else I've written. The main character is emotionally volatile and there are allusions to and flashbacks of self-harming behavior. If you know me at all, you know I'm not a fan of dark books that just get darker and darker until the reader is emotionally destroyed ;) I worked hard in revisions to lighten this up a bit, and I think both this book and the duology end on hopeful notes. Just don't go into it

expecting something like The Art of Lainey. If you want that, read GATU instead :)

Shelley says

Source Library

Genre Young Adult, Science Fiction

Rating 3.5-4

My Thoughts

Vicarious is the first installment in author Paula Stokes new series by the same name. Per the author, this is actually a duology, which means the final book, Ferocious, will be released sometime in 2017. Vicarious is told from the perspective of 18-year old Winter Kim (aka Son Ha Neul). Winter was dumped at a Korean orphanage by her mother, and later brought to America, along with her sister Rose, by a Sex Slave Trader named Kyung. Three years ago, Winter and Rose were rescued by Gideon Seun and brought to St. Louis. Gideon acts like a landlord, employer, and older brother, while promising to keep them safe.

Full Review Posted @ Gizmos Reviews 08/29/2016

<https://gizmosreviews.blogspot.com/20...>

Published August 16th 2016 by Tor

Alyssa says

Review posted on The Eater of Books! blog

Vicarious by Paula Stokes

Book One of the Vicarious series

Publisher: Tor Teen

Publication Date: August 16, 2016

Rating: 4 stars

Source: ARC sent by the publisher

Summary (from Goodreads):

Winter Kim and her sister, Rose, have always been inseparable. Together, the two of them survived growing up in a Korean orphanage and being trafficked into the United States.

Now they work as digital stunt girls for Rose's ex-boyfriend, Gideon, engaging in dangerous and enticing activities while recording their neural impulses for his Vicarious Sensory Experiences, or ViSEs. Whether it's bungee jumping, shark diving, or grinding up against celebrities at the city's hottest dance clubs, Gideon can make it happen for you, for a price.

When Rose disappears and a ViSE recording of her murder is delivered to Gideon, Winter won't rest until she finds her sister's killer. But when the clues she uncovers conflict with the neural recordings her sister

made, Winter isn't sure what to believe. To find out what happened to Rose, she'll have to untangle what's real from what only seems real, risking her life in the process.

What I Liked:

What a twisted, mind-blowing novel! Part sci-fi, part thriller, this book was exceptional from start to finish. There were so many layers to the story, and to the protagonist, and I couldn't stop reading. I can't really pick out a "favorite" Stokes book, but this one is in my top two!

Winter and her older sister Rose have escaped the orphanage in South Korea, and human trafficking in L.A. Three years after Gideon took her and her sister away from the trafficking, Winter has adjusted well to her life. She suffers from PTSD, but she's better. Gideon has created technology to capture neural impulses, which enables the ViSE (Vicarious Sensory Experiences) user to experience the physical feelings of something, like bungee jumping, or kissing another person. Winter has been doing stunts like jumping off bridges, and running from the police. Rose does something a little different... and one night, she doesn't return home. A ViSE is found in their home, and it's of Rose dying. Winter is determined to find the killer, but the clues are strange. Something isn't adding up, and Winter isn't sure what is real and what is not.

I'm going to be honest - I wasn't sure I wanted to read this one. I've seen the author talk about the conditions that Winter struggles with in this book, such as PTSD, and more. I don't usually like to read books with "tough issues". Books dealing with addiction, rape, prostitution, and so on... I prefer not to read (it's too real, and I'm all about the not-so-real escapism!). But I've read Stokes' other six books, so I figured why not keep going (especially when the publisher drops a galley in your lap. Thank you, Tor!). I'd also like to thank my friend Pili, as this is my June '16 Pili-Pushed choice!

Let's start with Winter. On the outside, she seems like an intense, somewhat cold/distant Korean girl. On the inside, she doesn't like to be touched, and she represses a lot of bad memories from her past. She and her sister have had terrible pasts, going from an orphanage to human trafficking, used as sex slaves. Winter is living with PTSD, and she blacks out and sleep-walks and represses memories subconsciously, but she's been doing really well recently. She lives with her sister, and Gideon (her sister's ex-boyfriend, like a brother to Winter). Jesse Ramirez works for Gideon, and he's Winter's friend. He and Winter record stunts for Gideon.

My heart broke for Winter over and over. At one point, I honestly wanted to stop reading. This really isn't the type of book I personally like to read, especially since Winter's conditions were brought so heavily to the forefront of the book. BUT. It's incredible how well-written everything about Winter's condition and life is, how PTSD affects her in every aspect of living. It blew me away and broke my heart, and I have got to tip my hat to Stokes. What an incredible and powerful story to write.

While this book shows a lot of Winter's struggle with PTSD, it also follows her struggle to find out what happened to her sister. After seeing her sister murdered from a ViSE, Winter is determined to find out more. She and Jesse visit various clubs that Rose used to go to, and they try to hunt down clues and follow Rose's original recordings, before her death. As far as mysteries go, this one was a good one.

I was in NO way prepared for the ending, the final twist. I knew that certain things had to do with the ending and what really happened to Rose... but the way it happened, how Stokes brought it about... wow. My mind was totally blown. I think I had chills at one point. I was and wasn't expecting it - mostly wasn't. I wasn't expecting that magnitude of how-crap-ery. I have no idea HOW Stokes is going to top that twist, in book two!

There is romance in this book! It's not terribly important to the book, but it becomes a bigger part towards the ending, both in a good and bad way. I wanted to shake Winter just a little, at the very end, but then I

reminded myself that she had every right to react the way she did. In general, the romance is sweet. And a little sad - Winter had and has a lot going on, but I felt bad for Jesse. It's complicated! As is practically everything in this book.

I am zipping my lips! There are a ton of things that I feel like I could accidentally spoil, which I don't want to do. You'll WANT to have your mind blown by this book and it's ending, trust me. Maybe it's just me but I was so bug-eyed, reading the rest of the book after the big climactic twist.

I didn't mention anything about the world-building or genres - this novel as science fiction and thriller elements. Science fiction, because of the ViSE tech, which is pretty cool. It's kind of like virtual reality? But not really? Basically you can experience the real feeling of bungee jumping while viewing it, but it feels real because someone actually did it, and recorded his/her neural impulses as he/she was doing it. If that makes sense? And then this book is somewhat of a thriller too.

Overall, I liked this book. Yes, I'm not a fan of YA books with such a big tough-issue focus. They're just not for me, and yet, I still enjoyed this book very much. And a high-five to Stokes for the diverse characters who didn't seem like they were simply filling an archetype/role!

What I Did Not Like:

Ehh, little things niggled at me, nothing to make me feel negatively towards the book. I've already mentioned that I'm generally not a fan of books with tough issue concepts - but I still liked this book, and thought Stokes did a great job writing the "tough issue" aspects.

I didn't like that Winter didn't apologize (or get the chance to apologize) at the very very ending. This won't make sense to you since you may not have read the book, but I personally think the author could have ended the book with a short scene including Winter apologizing to a certain someone. She NEEDS to do this, and I really hope she does, in book two. Part of me wants to make excuses for her behavior because she's been through a lot, but then I also remember that she is a teenage girl and overreacted. A lot. Issues or not, she crossed a line. But I'm hoping this is addressed in book two.

Just a general thought - I hate it when a guy messes up and has to beg and grovel and basically die before the girl forgives him, but if the girl messes up, she doesn't have to apologize or grovel. This is wrong, and romanticizes the idea of relationships. Boys do NOT magically forgive you without you apologizing or talking about it. Nope. This is a pet peeve of mine in fiction, both in YA and adult novels. It drives me crazy!

Would I Recommend It:

I'd recommend this book! It's worth the read, especially since it felt like there was a part of the story that would appeal to this crowd or that crowd. Sci-fi fans, thriller fans, tough-issue fans, etc. The issues I had with this book are fairly minor (ignore the fact that the previous section seems long), and pretty much specific to me/my preferences.

Rating:

4 stars. I'm excited about the sequel for several reasons - I need a sequel to this crazy ride, and it's the conclusion to the series! I do love this duology trend in YA. Less annoying waiting and forgetting-all-of-the-details-of-the-series-by-the-time-the-next-book-publishes!

Lindsay Cummings says

killer plot with a wickedly good twist ending :) :) yall don't even know what's coming.....

Tabea Vanessa says

Wow!! So much trash in one book.

I read this because someone on Instagram said if you loved Ready Player One, then you will love this. Well, no! There is not a single RPO vibe going on EVER!

Also: the story is so, so boring. It tries way too hard the entire time.

The characters suck. Like big time! The protagonist loses her sister and she's sad for like 1 hour and then she's totally fine and starts dating a friend a day later. Sure thing. I'd react the same way if my sister, who was established as my anchor and only family I have left, that I went through hell with and only survived because of her, died.

And don't even get me started on the whole „plot twist ending explanation“ thing. Holy shit was that a mess. The protagonist being Korean feels so embarrassingly fake. The entire time you just know it's a white chick writing this that is obsessed with Korea. And then you look at the author's profile and sure thing, that's exactly what it is.

I highly recommend you not read this book as it is not worth your time.

Monica says

Great story, suspense! Would love more of these characters

Lola says

3.5 stars.

Well that was... immensely intense.

I just can't believe human trafficking is something that exists and everywhere in the world at that. Not only is it illegal, but the thought of someone claiming another person's life the way they want is absolutely repulsive and enraging and scary and it shouldn't exist.

Luckily, Winter escaped the men who kidnapped her and her sister. Now, she works for Gideon as a "recorder." In this futuristic world, experiences/situations can be recorded with a headset for other people to buy and experience. They can, for instance, swim with sharks vicariously through the ViSEs (Vicarious Sensory Experience).

This is a creative idea. The execution is well-done, though I did find a lack of action when there should have been quite a lot of it. The beginning and ending are actually my favourite parts, because of how action-packed and interesting they are. What is in-between is way slower, but still worth reading since the mystery took over the action and that, too, is an attention-grabber.

I liked how the author developed a mystery case in this science fiction book. It worked quite well, although I must admit I'm still unsure of how I should feel right now, knowing I've been played with super hard. Really, really hard. I mean, that revelation. *Damn*.

Winter is such a strong heroine. Not only that, she is also extremely likeable and somehow soft in the right places. She is broken, and I know usually broken characters turn into clichés, with the “not able to love” thingy, but in this case it made so much sense and it was so greatly developed that I didn't mind it.

However, I didn't find the secondary characters as enticing as Winter. They're okay, and they do have their little back story, but it wasn't enough to make them memorable to my eyes. Something was missing. In my opinion, the plot could have benefited of another point of view, though that would have messed the revelation up, probably.

Original story, fabulous heroine, good writing and mind-blowing twist.

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Kami says

This is a pre-review of the 100 page sampler from NetGalley!

So far I am super into Vicarious! There has been lots of action and I can't wait until it is published and I can finish it. I would still like to know more about Winter and Rose's past but I guess that's later in the book. Overall, these 100 pages are great!

UPDATE!

I finished Vicarious! And what a cliffhanger ending. I'm not really a big fan of how Winter acts but the story is interesting and I am excited to read Ferocious. It reminds me of Vanishing Girls by Lauren Oliver. I'm not super impressed with the ending or explanations but I never expected that plot twist. I love that it has a little bit of Korean culture in it and I hope we see more of that in the next book!

See you in Ferocious ???!

Stacee says

Wow. Wow. Wow. I don't even have words.

There were parts that I didn't care for {the human trafficking history, obviously}, but it was handled well and this story was amazing. I had no idea what was happening the entire time.

You guys are in for one hell of a ride.

Carole (Carole's Random Life in Books) says

This review can also be found at Carole's Random Life

I liked this book but not nearly as much as I had hoped I would. I live in the St. Louis area, so when I saw the

cover of this book, I just had to read it. I put all of my other books aside when I picked this one up from my library and starting reading it right away. It turned out to be an okay read for me. I am glad that I read it but I wasn't blown away by it.

One of the reasons that I read this book was the setting and I do have to say that I was a bit disappointed by the parts of St. Louis that made its way into the book. There is talk of some St. Louis clubs and to be honest I have no idea if they are real or not since my days of hitting the club are long over. There are a few other things mentioned but with a few changes this book could have really taken place anywhere. That's probably actually a good thing for most readers but I wanted more of St. Louis.

I never felt invested in any of the characters. Winter Kim just didn't feel real to me and that made it hard for me to relate to her on any level. I should have been feeling her pain since she has been through a lot of terrible things that she is still having to deal with but I just didn't feel it. Jesse was probably the character that I liked the most in the story but I still can't understand how he could be as perfect as he seemed to be.

The mystery was pretty good. There was a lot of stuff going on in the story so there were not any boring moments. I did guess the big twist pretty early on in the story even though I had hoped that something else would happen to prove me wrong. Books are really just more fun when you are not able to guess how everything will end.

There were a lot of things that worked well for me in the book and there were a few things that didn't work as well. I was entertained by the book but I found it pretty easy to set aside. I do realize that I am not the target audience for this one and I am sure that my teenage daughter would probably like it a bit more than I did. I am not sure at this point if I will pick up the next book in the series or not.

Initial Thoughts

I am going to need a day or two to think about this one before I can write any kind of review.

Eileen (BookCatPin) says

Vicarious was a surprisingly dark read but Ms. Paula Stokes sure knows how to write a thriller that keeps you on your toes. This book was such a riveting experience. So chock-full of unexpected. It was one shock after another towards the end.

So I had a bit of a hard time getting into Vicarious at the beginning. That started to change as I had a chance to understand Winter better. The darker content of the story definitely set the mood for a sobering one. Add in the search for a killer, I couldn't wait to find out what this book had in store. It's also awesome to see an Asian culture depiction done right. I may not be Korean but trust me when I say, from my experience (binge-watching K-dramas, socializing with Korean friends, etc.), Paula does a wonderful job.

I cannot imagine the horrors Winter went through but knowing she always had her sister by her side made it much more bearable. Their bond was unbreakable. Having sisters myself I understood that. Their support means the world to me. I also loved seeing Winter's unwavering belief in Gideon. Even with no blood relations, she treated him with respect and trusted him with her life.

The romance was quite a driving force in the story. For obvious reasons, Winter shies away from intimacy. This doesn't stop Jesse as he genuinely cares for her. It was sweet even if they hit some rough patches. He always had her back.

This ViSE technology is amazing. Just imagining the possibilities is mind-blowing. While reading the book, I felt like it was truly a real thing in our world. I applaud Paula for her thorough research and detailed explanation. Another instance where Paula's accuracy shines through is when Winter goes Snuba-ing. Having tried Snuba myself, I can say Winter's experience is very authentic. It was exactly what I experienced.

There's a huge plot twist in Vicarious that I cannot say anything about. Not a peep but just know I had a "holy s**t, no way" moment. It was elaborate and remarkably well-executed. A gamer changer that pivoted the book in another direction.

The ending provides a satisfying conclusion, wrapping up all the loose bits but at the same time presenting you with more to look forward to in the future. I'm dying to know what will happen to these characters. For now, I'll settle for guessing the title of the sequel. Does it also start with a V?

Ari says

Let's make things clear from the beginning.

I loved The Art of Lainey, it was romantic and cute and so much fun.. but this one here, this is even better. So dark, so twisted, so amazing! Such a fantastic read, I can't wait for book two and I can't recommend it enough! I love, love, love it!!

In the beginning I felt a bit of confusion, there was a point when I started wondering if this wasn't in fact the second book in the series, because there was so much talk about past events I wasn't yet aware of, but that might've been only my tired brain trying to sabotage me (I'm in desperate need of sleep), as I got over it soon after and I simply couldn't let go of this book until the very ending (and long after as I kept thinking about it).

WHAT I LOVED ABOUT IT...

The revelation and the steps the reader has to take in order to reach it.

It was twisted, it kept me on the edge of my seat, it made me wonder, contemplate; finding new pieces in the puzzle was both frustrating and exciting, and the bigger picture amazed me, though also filled me with dread.

The romance.

It is subtle, but sweet. It is not demanding, though it is always there, at the reach of their fingertips, one kiss away from flourishing.

The VISE (Vicarious Sensory Experiences,) technology.

In Romanian 'vise' means 'dreams', and I guess it's only fitting for this virtual reality concept. I liked what Winter and Jesse had to do for a living (yes, I am aware it's not quite legal), all that adrenaline rush, how their experiences translated to other people. I liked what these VISEs also meant for the reader, like a door to the past, how they helped uncover the mystery, how they revealed other mysteries in the process.

The impact those old, horrible experiences Winter (and Rose) had to get through left on her mind.

The deep wounds. Her mental struggles. The physical struggles even. Again her relationship with Jesse seen from this particular point of view. The ties between Winter and her sister. There are some other things I loved, I just can't explain them to you as they might imply minor or major spoilers too, so I guess I will leave them to you to discover.

CONCLUSION...

I loved everything about VICARIOUS. It is dark, enigmatic, action-filled, insanely beautiful to top it all off. I've had a blast reading this book and I can't recommend it enough!

Read the full review at: [ReadingAfterMidnight](#)

Bentley ★ Bookbastion.net says

See this review and more like it on www.bookbastion.net!

This was my first Paula Stokes novel and I'm happy to report that she's found a new fan! I found her writing style surprisingly engaging, especially when it comes to plotting and keeping those pages that fall between the beginning and end interesting. Sometimes the premise of a book can totally hook you, and while the beginning and end has great movement, the middle parts suffer to keep the pace up as characters work through whatever plot has enslaved them to its rhythm.

Comparatively, **Stokes excels at keeping the pace moving with lots and lots of action and chapter endings that left me reeling.** Seriously, this an author who is skilled at laying down some plot points that end up more important than you think they might be later and each time it happened I was left wanting more.

Thankfully, I had this book with me when I was on a long ride out of town yesterday, so I got to move through most of it at a fast clip that let me hold onto my sanity. I just cannot deal with being kept in suspense! Nothing makes me devour a book more quickly than wanting to know what's going to happen next.

While speaking of pace and action, **I have to commend Paula Stokes on her ability to write action scenes.** Not all authors who attempt it can do it justice, but Stokes has got a knack for it. They move quickly, yet remain vivid and well detailed. Lots of the higher-stakes scenes and action sequences moved like action sequences out of movies, which I definitely appreciated.

I did have a bit of trouble feeling emotionally connected to the characters, especially to Winter and Rose's relationship. **I felt like what happened to Rose was too quickly glossed over, and Winter's reaction to it lacked the punch I thought it should have.** I think I would have preferred a time jump or something between Rose's disappearance and Winter's investigation into what happened to her, because it was difficult for me to buy that Winter was actively grieving for her while she was searching for answers. I know that human grief is a very difficult and complicated thing, but sorrow was an emotion I think this book could have used a touch more of in the earlier parts.

Also, the ending totally threw me for a loop. I definitely did not see it coming! **On one hand, being surprised by a psychological thriller is a very good thing.** On the other hand though, I couldn't help but

feel like it was tiny bit manipulative both to the reader and the characters because of just how out-there it ended up being. **The sci-fi aspects of the book were quite fascinating though and I felt more than adequately made up for that feeling near the end.** I was reminded a bit of Black Mirror in some parts, which is one of my favorite shows so I found myself quite engrossed in the story.

Those looking for diversity in their YA fiction should set their sights here. Just be warned that some of the content is a little bit darker than a lot of YA I've read, so I'd classify this book as best served for upper-YA readers who enjoy that bit of darkness in their stories.

4/5 Sci-fi/action packed stars!

Thank you to Tor for providing me a free copy for review, which has not affected my review in any way!
