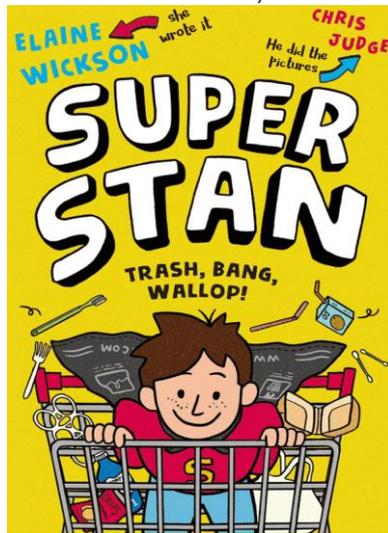


Super Stan

Elaine Wickson, illustrated by Chris Judge



At the end of my review for *Action Stan*, I said that if Elaine continued on her exponential trajectory of funny then *Super Stan* would be a proper belter. Well, newsflash: she did and it is. This book has everything existing fans will want and will – hopefully – win the hearts of many, many more. Mild spoilers follow, so you may want to skip to the last couple of paras for the summary. Or just go read the book. You won't regret it, and that's a solid Snort guarantee.

In this outing, Fred – a big fan of Dr Alice Feddup and her TV show *Plastic Planet* – is on a mission. The world should be made of world, not plastic and our small-aged cross between David Attenborough and a farting, bogey-smear, snail-herding tornado is out to save the planet. As per, Stan is dragged into his younger brother's mayhem. Together, they take on the local supermarket, and inspire the locals to take to the streets to protest the plastic clogging up the seas. Meanwhile – and it's Elaine Wickson so there are multiple storylines – Stan is desperate to win a flight on a private jet to witness a total solar eclipse above the clouds (and thusly avoid his potato-headed cousins' birthday party). Did you think that was enough plots? Ha, we're not done yet! Cake-punk Gran also makes a triumphant return, startling the Fox family with a new tattoo and an unexpected announcement. Flossie – gawd, I love Flossie – has been elected head of the school council and has become a semi-benevolent dictator, drunk with power.

As if all this wasn't enough there are new characters. For the first time, we properly meet vanilla Aunt Julie and Uncle Alan. Their odious twin sons, Jayden and Kayden, are Stan's spoiled, Brilliant Juice-guzzling nemisisis (is that right? Nemisisisises? Nemisii?). Gran's salsa instructor, Tony D'Angelo, shimmies into the story in Cuban heels and chest-revealing satin

shirts while eclipse-chasing celeb Roberta Macklin is pretty sure Stan is stalking her.

As always, Wickson weaves the plotlines together expertly. *Super Stan* is sardine-tin packed with action and characters but never confusingly so, and our cast of quirky eccentrics and outright loonies provide laffs aplenty. Without giving too much away, the King Prawn Vandal scenes are among the funniest I've read in a long time, and that's just the tip of the iceberg. Stan's wry, resigned-to-the-madness asides and observations help make him such a stand-out character and he has loads. "If my eyes could talk they would ask to be poked out with sticks because that would be preferable to the monstrosity they've just beheld," is a line I'll be quoting frequently.

Stan's graphs, diagrams and cake charts are, of course, his trademark and readers get an extra-generous helping of in Super Stan, plus pages from his notebook that will help translate Fredisms and much, much more! If anyone is interested my lame superpower is wrestling burps. What's yours?

If you want hilarity, *Super Stan* is the place to come, but it also has an important message and in Elaine Wickson's hands that message is beautifully wrapped in comedy so it never feels preachy. There's heart, too. One of the things that, for me, make the Stan books so brilliantly readable is the sweetness that runs through them: a sweetness that is nicely judged and never gets too syrupy. This time, Her Maj, Queen Elaine turns the dial up a notch. Honestly, Snorters? I read all three Stan books back-to-back and it's been quite a ride. It was a genuine, unexpected treat getting to know Stan, Fred, and the rest of the cast and I would have been sad for the series to end whatever happened. Even so, the final chapters of *Super Stan* made me properly well up, even as they made me laugh. I am NOT one of life's weepers. I don't fill up easily or often, so take my tears as a tribute to Elaine Wickson's writing. She says this is the last Stan book but I really, really hope she changes her mind on that, or at least writes a Flossie spin-off series. In the meantime, the Snort review in short: *Super Stan* is FANTASTIC. Buy it! Thanks to our queen for sharing these brilliant and hilarious stories. Truly regal writing!

Reviewer: Martin

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Full disclosure: You all know the drill. Thanks to OUP for sending me review copies and, yes, they also publish my books. No, it didn't change my opinion. I honestly adore these books.