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Bluebeard's Castle

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~~Editor's Choice:~~

off

Media type:

Book

BfK Rating:

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Prefaced by an extract from Perrault's 'Bluebeard', this is a remake in a thoroughly modern idiom of the story of the young bride whose curiosity leads her to discover the gruesome fate of her husband's many previous wives; she escapes a similar end when her brothers rescue her. In Kemp's version, film director 'Blue Stubble' entices the narrator's sister into marriage, and carries her off to his new venture, a theme park attached to a castle. Her brothers and sisters are invited to visit the castle, where they uncover nasty goings-on in the form of bondage movies starring young women who end up as the victims of murder, their bodies concealed in a waxworks show. The book is episodic and fast moving with the feel of a dream (paralleling the narrator's many revealing night-mares) or of a computer game, when anything might happen, and in any order. There is not much description, background having to be supplied by the reader. My tester thought it 'good - very modern'. Rather too modern, perhaps: Perrault adds a 'moralit?' to his version (admittedly more concerned with the behaviour of the women than that of the killer) whereas here we are presented with ugly events which are kept at a distance and passed over coolly with little comment. No moral is drawn - unless that a midnight feast is more fun than a film director's party. I would give this a 'PG' rating - while children are exposed earlier and more thoroughly to information about serial killers such as Dr Shipman, and may have seen more explicit movies than I have, we should still be careful not to normalise behaviour which is evil or exploitative. There are many possible responses to this story, depending on the personality and experience of the reader, and if it is to be more than 'five solve a murder mystery', a deeper engagement with the text is needed than Kemp appears to ask of us.

Running Order:

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