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Warehouse

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~~Not a Choice:~~

off

Media type:

Book

BfK Rating:

4

The warehouse of the title is a hidden place of refuge for the young homeless. Its story is told from three different angles. We begin with Robbie, who's on the run from his brother's violence. Then there's Amy, the middle-class daughter, ashamed of her dependence on her suffocating parents. Finally, there's Lem, the mysterious 'king' of the warehouse, who lives alone on its highest level. In form and content, this is 'school of Junk', although the use of thriller plot elements, the exclusion of drugs from the warehouse, and the upbeat ending distance it from Burgess's unflinching treatment of young people surviving on the fringes. Sometimes the motivation of the characters is difficult to credit, as is the central premise of a secret hideaway. I wasn't convinced by the chain of events that brought Amy to the warehouse. But it's strong story that surprises the reader. It is a fourth character, Canner, who emerges as the most significant figure. His name derives from his ability to get hold of anything, mainly by stealing, and his daring, resourcefulness and sense of justice and community are at the centre of the book. This is a book that poses difficult moral questions in dramatic forms that young people will readily recognise. It carries a warning that it's 'unsuitable for younger readers'. This is an orange lozenge that looks like the 'hazardous substances' warning you see on spray cans and tankers. This should go down well with some readers, although the violence (several incidents) and the sex (one loving encounter) are not going to disturb anyone who watches Eastenders. The book also boasts several recommendations from other authors who, presumably, have been sent pre-publication copies and have been persuaded by the publisher to add their endorsement. This practice is catching on, and strikes me as having the same weight as actors' reassurance of each other at the post-performance party: a literary equivalent of 'You were simply wonderful darling!' Or do the publishers want us to assume that new books that don't come with these puffs have no virtues?

Running Order:

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