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How It Works

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~~Editor's Choice:~~

off

Media type:

Book

BfK Rating:

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'Everyone gets the angel they deserve' announces the subheading on the cover, which has a marvellous image of a trainer-wearing, cigarette-smoking angel/teenager, sitting on the ground, all in white against a black background. We've had good guardian angel stories before but this one is different. Told in gritty terms, it opens with the aimlessness of Seb's life, 'another bloody day', as he drifts through the final stages of A level and small scale drug dealing. There's further to go downwards yet, with the help of stolen money, a visit to a prostitute, an initial beating and then another, so bad he has to be rushed into intensive care. His life is saved there but by the mysterious stranger who stopped his attacker. The book from here on is partly a quest for that man, Jay Brill, a quest for the answers to his identity, with always the possibility of his being an angel (Jay Brill, Gabriel, Jabril?) and more and deeper questions. Seb pieces his life together, forging integrity out of the imperfections of his past, with an interesting art project based on a da Vinci human figure, a determination to say 'No' to an insistent drug dealer and a relationship with the prostitute which ought to be sentimental, but which, like the whole book, strikes a strongly human note of the everyday. The book succeeds so well because it grounds, in the solid details of being this kind of a teenager, a demonstration of taking control of the here and now while becoming alert to a series of increasingly intriguing questions - which are largely left hanging. So clever this mixing of the ordinary and the extraordinary and how it works.

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