



The Lost Boys' Appreciation Society; The Defender

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News/Choice:

off

Media type:

Book

BfK Rating:

4

The year following their mother's death in a road accident is a period of very considerable stress for teenage brothers Gary and John Cain. Each reacts in his different way. Gary begins to mix with a gang given to drugs, alcohol and car thefts, while John (the older, the more bookish and the more thoughtful) assumes the role of protector of what remains of the family, including a father who works all hours and who is already experiencing the need for new female companionship. To these familial developments must be added John's first romantic entanglements and his forthcoming examinations. Gibbons has a sure eye and ear for the dynamics of family dissension, his dialogue between parent and child is, most of the time, convincing and his concluding note of optimism is just about credible in the context of what has gone before.

The day on which 14-year-old Ian Moore, in **The Defender**, begins to learn the truth about his parents' (and his own) past marks also the beginning of his own growth into early manhood. It is not the easiest of transitions, since it will involve an initiation into the complexities of Ulster's history, politics and sectarian strife. All of those, in his father's Belfast childhood and adolescence, had combined to form the man originally known as Kenny Kincaid, now known as Peter Moore, and to impel him on to the road which would eventually lead 'to blood, sacrifice and exile'. A member of the Protestant community, Kincaid had become one of Ulster's 'young defenders', part of a loyalist organisation with which, however, he was eventually to become disenchanted and from which he was to flee to England. Inevitably, the past catches up and it is with ensuing events in England that this novel is primarily concerned. Gibbons, particularly in his flashback chapters detailing the Belfast background, convincingly depicts a time and an environment where, as Kincaid's mother had once expressed it, 'the Troubles had stolen all the wee boys' childhoods.' The far-reaching consequences of that theft provide the subject matter for a powerful and very well written thriller.

Running Order:

8

Links:

- [1] <http://typo3.booksforkeeps.co.uk/childrens-books/the-lost-boys-appreciation-society>
- [2] <http://typo3.booksforkeeps.co.uk/childrens-books/the-defender>
- [3] <http://typo3.booksforkeeps.co.uk/issue/146>
- [4] <http://typo3.booksforkeeps.co.uk/member/robert-dunbar>