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Books Reviewed:

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Reviewer:

[Rosemary Stones](#) [3]

~~Editor's Choice:~~

~~New Talent~~

Media type:

Book

BfK Rating:

3

How can Ludlow Fitch trust anyone with parents like his? This debut novel gets off to a cracking start as Ludlow's gin-soaked parents, desperate for money to buy drink, sell his teeth and hold him down for them to be extracted by the loathsome (and aptly named) Barton Gumbroot. As Barton begins to pull the first tooth, Ludlow, wild with rage and fear, manages to knock down his tormentors and escape.

An encounter with Joe Zabbidou, a mysterious pawnbroker, provides Ludlow with a job and shelter. Unusually, Joe invites people to pawn their secrets and part of Ludlow's work is to note them down in the Black Books of Secrets. Everyone, it seems, has a secret to confess? But can Joe be trusted with them? And what about the terrible secret that prevents Ludlow from sleeping?

Higgins has created a tempestuous world of body snatchers, money lenders and cornered, desperate victims and conveys it with gusto and a relish for intriguing detail. Joe Zabbidou promises change and how this comes about takes time? perhaps the narrative flags a little at this point? but Higgins has a sting in her tale that leads to a satisfactory conclusion. A first novel that promises well. A sequel is certainly on the cards.

Running Order:

75

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