



Double Cross

Books Reviewed:

[Double Cross](#) [1]

Issue:

[174](#) [2]

Reviewer:

[Caroline Heaton](#) [3]

Editor's Choice:

off

Media type:

Book

BfK Rating:

4

Double Cross is the fourth title in Malorie Blackman's powerful 'Noughts and Crosses' series. Events detonated in the past still continue to emit shock-waves for Callie Rose and Tobey. While Callie Rose attempts to reconcile her grief for her dead grandmother with her guilt over the part she unwittingly played in Nana Jasmine's death, Tobey struggles to carve out a future through education. If only graft, determination and 'keeping your head down' were sufficient, that future might be attainable. But Callie Rose and Tobey live in Meadowview, where 'your postcode could be your signature on your death warrant.'

Race is the key determinant in a volatile, barely maintained equilibrium, with the neighbourhood carved up into fiefdoms, controlled by gang leaders, McAuley and the Dowd family on opposite sides of the Noughts/Crosses divide. With lucrative deals to be brokered and territories to be defended, both sides are looking for recruits.

When his friend Dan inveigles Tobey into delivering some mysterious 'packages' for McAuley with the promise of some much needed ready money, it inaugurates a new phase in his life - one fraught with danger for both himself and his girlfriend, Callie Rose. As a messenger for McAuley, Tobey is fatally compromised and all too soon, he finds himself in the crossfire between McAuley and the Dowds. Callie Rose is seriously wounded and Tobey faces stark choices. Intent on his own revenge, he becomes deeper and deeper immersed in the murky underworld, interspersed with desperate visits to the hospital to see Callie Rose.

The subject matter and atmosphere of **Double Cross** may be that of a 40s Noir film updated to the 21st century, with every decision taken by Tobey leading him deeper into a moral quagmire, but the narration crackles with energy and fierce purpose. And the dialogue is relayed with a sparkling, gleeful humour - a constant, optimistic counterpoint to the bleakness of the action. Similarly the romantic skirmishings of Tobey and Callie Rose, relayed in alternating first-person chapters, are relayed with a mischievous, tender insight, which speaks volumes for the author's own affection for her characters, warmly transmitted to her readers.

I could have dispensed with the overly violent prologue, which has a two-dimensional feel at odds with the novel's nuances, but in a period when our own media brings weekly, sometimes daily, news of inner-city violence and continuing racial tensions, this is a timely, urgent novel. It deserves - and needs - to be carefully introduced to young

readers, with the emotional maturity to tackle its difficult issues.

Running Order:

2

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