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Just in Case

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~~Editors Choice:~~

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Media type:

Book

BfK Rating:

5

The precariousness of existence is driven home to the reader from the opening pages of Rosoff's stonking new novel when 15-year-old David only just catches hold of his baby brother in time as Charlie launches himself out of an upstairs window in an attempt to fly. That seconds can stand between one and disaster is a theme that is returned to again and again (a plane crashes on the very spot at the airport where David has just been standing) in Rosoff's deadpan narrative laced with black comedy, tenderness and despair. <!--break-->Taken up by 19-year-old Agnes, a fashion student photographer who exploits his melancholic state ruthlessly for her own ends, David changes his name to Justin, invents himself an imaginary dog and takes up running in an attempt to outwit the doom laden fate that is pursuing him. In a breathtaking finale he is struck down by meningococcal meningitis and it appears that fate is going to have the last laugh ? or will David/Justin turn down its seductive call?

Rosoff's playful inventiveness ? Justin's friends have a large male rabbit called Alice, quite apart from Justin's imaginary dog, Boy ? effortlessly enlarges with the richness of its symbolism, the inner turmoil that surges turbulently in Justin. The preoccupations of the male adolescent as the transition is navigated from dependence to independence with its attendant anxieties about masculinity, sexuality and potency not to speak of control and the lack of it have rarely been so wittily and sharply chronicled. Every teenage male should have a Boy.

Rosoff is unlikely to be made an Honorary Citizen of Luton, given her unrelentingly grimy, uninspiring, suburban portrait of the town that is Justin's home. That such high drama is played out in this dreary location (Reader, I have never been to Luton myself) will only serve to endear her more to all those teenage readers overwhelmed with ennui in the back of beyond. RS

Running Order:

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