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They're Only Human

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~~Not a Choice~~

off

Media type:

Book

BfK Rating:

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'Any heart holds the seeds of everything; the worst villains or the finest heroes are only our possible selves. To do evil no help is needed; but good requires courage.' This quotation from Amiel begins Grieve's elliptical and vivid novel which presents his characters with a range of possibilities within which lie heroic or demonic possibilities. The central character, English teacher Harry Larmour - his name perhaps a sinister bilingual pun? - betrays his young female students' trust by seducing them. In a double betrayal he irretrievably smashes their lives by changing them utterly. It is after the suicide of his 13-year-old pregnant sister that Mark Lonsdale determines to hunt down and punish Larmour for his sins. By this time he has selected two other young victims - 13-year-old Lysistrata and 15-year-old Suzanne, through whose eyes events are seen. Suzanne's emotional decline from innocent delight in Larmour's attentions to obsessive longing for a continuation of the sexual activity to which he has introduced her memorably and subtly conveys loss and irreversible change. The topic of animal rights is interwoven with this grand deception and Grieve cleverly examines our ability to let our passions blind us to the truth - which is often a less comfortable reality than high-minded principles will allow. Accomplished and tenacious readers will enjoy this book - its slow, tense unravelling is perfectly handled and Grieve's often cinematic imagery gives both a sense of urgency and a focus among the complex interplay of narrative strands.

Running Order:

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