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Framed

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~~Not a Choice:~~

off

Media type:

Book

BfK Rating:

5

Framed is a welcome addition to the great tradition of British comedy that deals in the impact of life-changing events on small communities. The house and garage owned by Dylan's family is at the far end of Manod, a village in North Wales so small and anonymous there is no sign from the A496. After Manod, there is only mountain. The prevailing colour is slate grey and the weather, as Dylan's diary makes clear, is a thousand varieties of wet. To make matters worse, after an exodus of families looking for work elsewhere, Dylan is left the only boy in the village, doomed to wait seven years for his baby brother Max to be old enough for a game of football. But it all changes when the National Gallery moves its paintings out of London for insurance reasons and houses them in the disused galleries of the mountain's mine. Through an understandable misunderstanding involving the Teenage Ninja Mutant Turtles, Dylan obtains privileged access to some of the Nation's greatest art treasures. At first, this doesn't concern him as much as the fact the garage is bankrupt, his father has disappeared, and his mother won't get out of bed; but the scene is set for Manod's very own renaissance through the redeeming power of art. Framed is a cunningly constructed comic tour-de-force. It entertainingly introduces eleven masterpieces, matches them with local characters and, like the paintings themselves, plays with the reader's expectations, sets up mysteries, slyly invites predictions, and springs constant surprises. It touches lightly, but movingly, on everyday tragedies, like absent fathers and a butcher's fear of liver, and the bigger questions of life and death. Reading it was sheer pleasure. I shall be looking hopefully for the new sign off the A496. CB

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