



The Stuff of Nightmares

Books Reviewed:

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~~Not a Choice:~~

off

Media type:

Book

BfK Rating:

4

Perhaps the best format for tales of horror is the short story. At least that was the form often chosen by some of the masters of the macabre. Here Malorie Blackman tries her hand. She gives us a dozen nightmares wrapped up in one enveloping immediate nightmare as the central character, Kyle, on a school trip, is the only one left conscious in a train crash. While panicking over how to help his friends and about when rescue will come, he finds he can escape into the minds of the other people in the carriage and experience their worst fears. Some of these excursions involve the supernatural or demonic, most are psychological horror, with shocks and twists disturbing enough for an adult collection; and there is an extended tale of dystopian chaos in which ecological warfare, social anarchy and sexual violence explode on the page. Kyle's own story is much more than a frame on which to hang these other tales. In fact, before I realised how the book was developing, I resented being taken away from what I saw as a real life-threatening predicament into the by-ways of other people's fantasy terrors. But, with Kyle revealing more about himself between the other nightmares, I gradually settled into the rhythm of the book, which exorcises his particular demons in a surprising and satisfying conclusion.

Running Order:

15

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