



Orangeboy

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~~Not a Choice:~~

off

Media type:

Book

BfK Rating:

4

This explosive novel set around vicious London boy gangs peddling drugs is not for the faint-hearted. Sixteen-year-old Marlon, its narrator, starts as an innocent caught up in an ongoing legacy of escalating violence handed down over time by older family members. Early on he has enough evidence to go to the police who might have got at least some of all this settled. Instead he chooses to sort things out for himself, a decision that leaves him, his home and his long-suffering mother prey to more violence. From Enid Blyton onwards telling the police early on about suspicions is not a popular thing to do in fiction, with young sleuths anxious not to spoil the fun they hope to be having themselves following up clues or apprehending villains. But gangland London is no fun place to be, and the author while sympathetic to Marlon's inadequacies does get the message across that he is signally neither cool nor clever enough to be acting on his own like this.

It takes Marlon a long time to realise this himself, perhaps a little too long. The beatings-up he keeps receiving meanwhile get nastier and nastier and the patience extended towards his general obduracy at home and by his contemporary companion Tish living opposite become increasingly hard to believe. This girl and lifelong friend remains the voice of tough common sense throughout, trying usually without success to make Marlon see the error of his ways. He does survive, but it is a close call and some of the violence he experiences is little less than sickening. But readers with strong stomachs can expect to be entirely hooked into a story that is well written, pacy and within its own terms horribly convincing.

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