



Almost True

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Editorial Choice:

off

Media type:

Book

BfK Rating:

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In this cracking sequel to David's debut novel, **When I Was Joe**, teenage murder witness Tyler is still in hiding from the ruthless killers who seek to silence him. The police have moved Ty and his mother to a quiet seaside town, away from the friends he made during his time as 'Joe', and Claire, the girl he fell in love with. But then a bullet intended for Ty kills his mother's new boyfriend, and Ty is forced to flee for his life again. No longer trusting the police, his aunt takes him to stay with a wealthy older couple who know a surprising amount about him. Soon, Ty is being asked to embrace a whole other family he never knew about. And, with the murder trial at which he must testify fast approaching, Ty, uprooted and confused, is quite literally haunted by the prospect of being asked to tell the whole truth and nothing but the truth.

Keren David is an intelligent writer whose careful research into the legal aspects of a case like Ty's is evident, helping to give this affecting story a real stamp of authenticity. The character of Ty is outstanding: David has managed to place herself in the skin not just of a teenage boy per se - no mean feat in itself - but of a teenage boy traumatised by the horrifying events he has witnessed; tormented by notions of truth and deceit, and with scant sense of who he is anymore. David is also very good on the gaps - the unspoken untruths - in what adults tell their children, and how children seek to fill those gaps by jumping to painful but wrong conclusions.

Almost True is not without its flaws. The fast-paced plot occasionally stretches credulity, and I found myself losing a geographical sense of Ty's flight across the country, though those in pursuit seemed to track him down easily enough. Another minor irritation: that Ty's estranged dad is revealed to be a former rock star turned celebrity photographer. Why do long-lost dads in fiction never have ordinary jobs: teachers say, or taxi drivers? These are quibbles however. Ty's dad and his other new family members are well-drawn and David provides an all too convincing and moving explanation for their long absence from Ty's life.

The book's title is a quote from 'An Arundel Grave' by Philip Larkin, a poem which speaks of 'our almost-instinct, almost true/What will survive of us is love'. **Almost True** is certainly a book about big questions: truth, lies, violence, identity, and ultimately the love of others that sustains us when the going is tough. Perhaps Keren David's biggest achievement however is that these issues play second fiddle to the psychological authenticity of her troubled hero, and the longing she rouses in the reader for Ty's ultimate redemption.

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