



# The Tragedy Paper

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~~Not a Choice:~~

off

Media type:

Book

BfK Rating:

2

This literate novel promises much but finally delivers little more than a damp squib. It is set in one of those American private boarding schools designed to provoke British readers into paroxysms of envy, what with the abundant and delicious locally sourced food, the massive wardrobe every pupil possesses and the easy acceptance of extreme affluence as a normal way of life. Into this co-ed paradise, though curiously enough sexual relations between pupils never seem much of an issue, comes Tim, an albino adolescent who never for one moment lets up in silent self-denigration. He falls for Vanessa, a pleasant and pretty pupil who is attached to classmate Patrick, who looks as if he should be the villain of the piece but fades away in the last few pages. Tim leaves his story behind on discs for another pupil, Duncan, to read one year later. It had ended in tragedy, leaving Duncan determined to make better use of his time there than poor Tim ever managed.

The air of masochism hanging over this story soon becomes oppressive. There is also almost no questioning of the school itself and the acceptability of all the self-imposed conventions that make it so great in pupils' eyes but which to an outsider seem more than a little questionable. The author writes well, but ultimately her young characters need to stop moaning and enjoy the life of privilege that they are lucky enough to have in contrast to so many others of their age in America and elsewhere.

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