



The Deviants

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News/Choice:

off

Media type:

Book

BfK Rating:

4

There are five young people, namely Estella known as Ella, Corey who has hearing problems and cerebral palsy, Max who is Ella's boyfriend and who has a wealthy father, Fallon who is a girl who loves nature, and Zane who seems to be a bully. These five had been friends at the age of thirteen. Five years later they have drifted apart, except for Max and Ella. At that point Max's sister Jessica dies. Ella is an accomplished athlete, reaching county standard. She is sponsored by Max's rich father Neil. She and Max would like to become close but Ella has a phobia about sexual relations. She spends her life in an angry mood. All five of these young people believe they have been wronged by various people. They decide to exact revenge. Skuse's novel tells the story of these vengeful campaigns, the secrets that emerge and the harm done by the exposure of these secrets.

This is a problem book. The first two thirds of the novel are unrelentingly dark in tone and far from easy to read. No reader is likely to feel any liking for the characters for the first 200 pages. Next we come to Corey's disabilities. He is said to have cerebral palsy. Occasionally Skuse remembers to give him a limp. But his impairment comes across as a literary device rather than a genuine condition. When Corey's cat dies, he wants to get time off work. He instructs his friend to 'play the cerebral palsy card'. It is hard enough getting young people to form positive and constructive views of disability and disabled people without putting such destructive images on display.

The first two-thirds of this book are disappointing. It is thus a huge relief to find its last 100 pages electrifying. The reasons for the behaviour of the quintet come tumbling out and make all kinds of sense. This last phase of the narrative also casts a telling light on the adults surrounding the young people. That is as much as a reviewer can state without letting out spoilers.

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