



Fat Kid Rules the World

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~~Editor's Choice:~~

off

Media type:

Book

BfK Rating:

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Try this. 'Continue a novel which begins, "I'm a sweating fat kid standing on the edge of the subway platform staring at the tracks. I'm seventeen years old, weigh 296 pounds, and I'm six-foot-one..." You're right, it's set in the States - New York City. And yes, an obesity novel was about due. And, right again, he *doesn't* jump - suicide would make it a short short story and anyway, he's the narrator. An unlikely opening and, in an off-putting way, it might well grab a reader's attention. It's Troy Billings speaking and he's got a nice line in self-deprecating humour, often telling his tale in third-person headlines: FAT KID MESSES UP or FAT KID'S BACK IN THE GAME. That way, he keeps his pain at a distance. Troy doesn't jump partly because Curt MacCrae starts talking to him; an unlikely saviour, slumped on the platform floor: "stringy unwashed hair...the guy is so filthy I can hardly look at him. I mean, he's caked - looks like an old war victim from some black-and-white film." What's more, "He's the skinniest person I've ever seen." Curt has a food problem, a drugs problem, loads of health problems, a homeless problem and a money problem. He's a loser - yet he's also a living legend at W T Watson High School, plays the guitar so that women lust for his skinny body, and bands like Smack Metal Puppets beg him to play with them. And he's wise beyond his years. You might just find his friendship with Troy - Big T, he calls him - difficult to believe in, but if you can you'll take a ride on a story which careers through T's rigid home life with his ex-marine father and Dayle, his jock younger brother, through drumming lessons, through steamy fantasies with waitresses *et al*, through catastrophic concerts (FAT KID THROWS UP) and a final triumphant gig. For Big T becomes Curt MacCrae's drummer. From Fat Kid with no talent, no previous experience, no obvious charisma to Local Hero in just a few weeks. And, in the process - here's the old-fashioned bit - T's Dad sees and accepts his son, Dayle sees and accepts his brother and T sees and accepts himself. And Curt finds some roots. Respect all round. I didn't believe a word of it, but once I'd bought the ticket I did enjoy the ride. More importantly, those readers who don't often find in books what they'd like to be their world, would enjoy it too. It's witty, slick, feel-good and it's got a street-wise, kind of truth to it. The language helps that (FAT KID GETS HARD-ON); and no flinching from the 'fuckings'. A teen-age soapy carrying an 'Adults Keep Out' warning.

Running Order:

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Links:

[1] <http://booksforkeeps.co.uk/childrens-books/fat-kid-rules-the-world>

[2] <http://booksforkeeps.co.uk/issue/149>

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