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# iBoy

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Not a Choice:

off

Media type:

Book

BfK Rating:

3

Brooks' reputation for edgy fiction with a cerebral tinge will be reinforced by **iBoy**. Herein the cerebral aspect is literal: the book opens as 16-year-old Kevin's skull is penetrated by an exploding iPhone flung at him from the top of the south London tower block he is about to enter. When he emerges from his coma, it is to discover that the girl he is fond of was being gang-raped in the block at the time of his injury, and that his brain has grafted itself around the iPhone shrapnel, affording him direct access to all the information in cyberspace. He has also been granted a protective force-field, the ability to throw taser-like thunderbolts, and a superhero livery that he can will his skin to switch on and off. The rest of this thoroughly unputdownable novel concerns Kevin's struggles to balance the demands of vengeance and forgiveness while hiding his secret powers from his traumatised girlfriend and from the powerful grandma who has reared him. He also has to protect his mind from rupturing under the onslaught of knowing everything, and his body from the truly terrifying gangsters striving to seek and destroy him.

**iBoy** is both hectic and reflective. Violence, some of it sexual and/or sadistic, is wreathed in toiling meditations on moral relativism and the nature of free will and consciousness; as in a frenetic computer game, the warfare wreaked amongst the stairwells and wastelands of iBoy's territory also rages inside his own head. The story culminates in a nerve-straining climax, then an almost Jackiesque coda incorporating a fairly jarring sequelising chord. I found these latter aspects particularly troubling in so compulsive a book. The world in which girls are raped by thugs to punish their disobedient brothers, and children like Damilola Taylor are murdered in sordid corners, is all too real, all too here and now, to be soothed by romantic tropes or redeemed by the return of a superhero.

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