



The Island

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~~Editor's Choice:~~

~~New Talent~~

Media type:

Book

BfK Rating:

4

?I am Medusa Girl. Cold as rock, hard as stone?. This is how Fran armours herself against a world that in her eyes offers nothing but betrayal. The only brightness in her life, her step-brother, Monkey. Then even he is taken away, and Fran finds herself on a plane heading for a survival boot camp in Indonesia. She doesn't get there; instead, she is washed up on an island, the only survivor it seems when the plane crashes into the ocean.

The survival novel has a long history from Defoe to Morpurgo and Martel. Here, Olivia Levez in her debut takes familiar ingredients but through the medium of her feisty, contemporary main protagonist gives them fresh vigour. Fran is a very recognisable teenager; rebellious, intractable, unlikeable - but a survivor; she is a girl determined to beat life at its own terms whether in the city or on a deserted tropical island. And this island is as much of a character as Fran, a beguiling paradise - and a hostile battleground. Levez does not make the mistake of providing Fran with everything she needs; survival is a harsh battle. However, the reader is in no doubt that Fran can be her own worst enemy, but it is also clear that determination and imagination are all important. This would not be a teen novel without romance. And here it comes in the form of the gorgeous Rufus. Then Levez adds a twist that is both unexpected, contemporary and satisfying.

This right-of-passage story has a vigour that will grip the reader from the first page and carries on to the last. Told by Fran as she faces present dangers while remembering the circumstances leading this point, the narrative has a powerful immediacy. It will not be easy to forget Fran, and Olivia Levez is a talent to watch.

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