



Only the Ocean

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~~Editor's Choice:~~

off

Media type:

Book

BfK Rating:

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This book is narrated from the viewpoint of Kel Crow, a troubled teenager who comes from the Swamps, a slum in an unidentified country. People from the Swamps are usually criminals and are in all cases not highly regarded as contrasted with the elite population of the Towers. The two worlds of the Swamps and the Towers never mix. Kel's family, the Crows, are the most notorious criminals in the crime-ridden Swamps, a family of drug runners. Kel has a medical problem, namely an enlarged heart. She needs treatment and must find the necessary money. To raise the cash, she undertakes a dangerous mission, agreeing to kidnap the daughter of a notorious arms trader. The daughter, despite her sordid origins, is an inhabitant of the Towers.

When Kel and Rose, the kidnapped daughter, are in a stolen boat, they find themselves shipwrecked and must cooperate to save their lives. The novel poses two questions. Will Kel and Rose survive? If they do, how will their relationship change?

Carthew's characters are strong and convincingly depicted. The reader becomes genuinely attached to Kel and Rose. The novel also touches on some critical issues such as rape and incest. There is however a purely practical difficulty in reading the book. The story is told in part as a Joycean stream of consciousness. Punctuation is rare. It is too easy for a reader to become disoriented and lose track of the narrative. If this is true of an experienced book reviewer, imagine how much more dislocating the reading experience will be for a young teenage reader. It is possible that some young readers might find the task of reading the book too onerous and abandon it, a fate which Carthew really does not deserve.

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