



The Survival Game

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~~Editor's Choice:~~

off

Media type:

Book

BfK Rating:

4

Naught for your comfort in this searing novel, and nor perhaps should there be. It is set in a not too distant future when global drinking water is running out and those more fortunate nations are ruthlessly defending their borders against increasingly desperate migrants. The author has previously visited Sudan, from which fourteen-year-old Mhairi sets out after her parents, committed to working in the Third World, have been brutally murdered. Her goal is the Isla of Arran, where a grandmother lives. On the way she picks up Mo, a six-year-old Sudanese orphan. Mute as a result of his own personal tragedies, he is also resilient beyond his years. The two finally make it to Scotland, now a fiercely defended independent state. Those living there must 'take the needle' at the age of 75 in order to conserve limited resources for everyone else. Those thought to have entered the country illegally are promised instant death. So a happy ending among so much cruel bureaucracy could seem out of place and readers are not allowed this luxury.

Nicky Singer is a bold, uncompromising author. She writes with authority, displaying an impressive knowledge of basic survival techniques as Mhairi and Mo make their long journey against all the odds. But she does make this tough story even tougher by the way she writes. Too often words are as if sprayed on the page in staccato rhythms as Mhairi endlessly questions herself and her past history. The philosopher Theodor Adorno is reported to have once said that 'Poetry is impossible after Auschwitz.' Perhaps Morgan is saying here that a normal succession of paragraphs has no place in a future world disintegrating to a stage where order or any sort can no longer be taken for granted. This brave novel deserves an audience and leaves behind it a lasting impression. But prepare for a very bumpy and often extremely distressing passage along the way.

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