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# Furious Thing

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~~Editor's Choice:~~

off

Media type:

Book

BfK Rating:

4

Nearly sixteen years old, Alexandra Robinson, known as Lexi, lives with her mother, her mother's boyfriend John and her half-sibling Iris aged six. John and Lexi's mother are planning to marry. But John for no apparent reason despises Lexi and the feeling is mutual. John has a son named Kass by his earlier marriage. Kass and Lexi have known each other for years. Lexi has a big crush on Kass. Can this family unite? Or is there something more significant and more dangerous at work?

Despite this reviewer's habitual avoidance of spoilers, it is necessary to explain that domestic violence and coercive control form the substance of this novel. The importance of this novel lies in its rarity value. There are few books in which domestic violence and bullying are candidly depicted, and even fewer in the catalogue of children's literature.

A central feature of this book is Lexi's unreliability as a narrator. Her behaviour is often difficult to defend. At school she throws a chair through a window because she objects to auditioning for Caliban instead of for Miranda in *The Tempest*. There is nothing good that can happen to Lexi that she cannot spoil. Her anger makes it hard for the reader to untangle any dependable elements in her narrative. By the end of the book however the reader has come to grasp, understand and sympathise with the complexity of her world view.

The book poses another problem to which no obvious answer emerges. On two occasions John uses the word 'retard'. This word is no longer part of the permissible vocabulary, if it ever was. Of course it can be argued that John's use of such a term is a valid indicator of his extreme mental and emotional condition. Nevertheless it can also be argued that any use of such prejudicial terms increases the risk of their attaining currency in the vocabularies of young readers

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