

FICTION BOOK REVIEW

Boys Don't Cry

Malorie Blackman. London, UK: Corgi Childrens, 2011.
ISBN-13: 978-0-55254-862-5. Price: £6.99. Pages: 320
(hardback)

In this latest novel from Malorie Blackman, she tackles new terrain in the shape of teenage parenthood. But what makes this novel unique and really outstanding is that the teenage parent in question is the father. Dante is at home waiting for his A-level results to arrive and is planning on going to university and becoming a journalist. The doorbell rings, but instead of being the postman,

it's his ex-girlfriend whom he hasn't seen in over a year. She has a baby with her and after a brief catch up, she asks Dante if he minds watching the baby for an hour while she goes shopping. He's understandably nervous having never so much as held a baby, let alone looked after one, but agrees as it's only for a short while. Oh yes, during that brief catch up, she tells Dante that actually the baby, Emma, is his. Several hours later, the mother still hasn't returned and so Dante is literally left 'holding the baby'.

This is the dramatic opening chapter to *Boys Don't Cry*, and the drama doesn't end there. Dante has to put his university dreams on hold as he has to learn, in double quick time, how to look after a baby,

and how to love her too. Coupled with that, his relationship with his father is in tatters after his mother's death and his brother is keeping secrets about one of his best friends. This novel doesn't hold back on big issues for teens: parenting, sexuality and family relationships. But in true Malorie style, all the subjects are dealt with sensitively and maturely while still being very much in tune with teenagers and the issues they face.

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J Fam Plann Reprod Health Care 2011;**37**:164.
doi:10.1136/jfprhc.2011.0068