



Thirteen

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~~Not a Choice:~~

off

Media type:

Book

BfK Rating:

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On paper Tom Hoyle's debut, **Thirteen**, sounds to have the makings of a sure-fire hit. It centres on a concept filled with promise, intrigue and definite dramatic imperative. From the outset, however, that intrigue and promise wanes under a host of peculiar plotting contrivances, a lack of sympathetically drawn characters and leaden prose.

Adam is born on the stroke of midnight at the turn of the new millennium. This caprice means he is a target for a cult wanting to kill all children born on that precise date and time prior to the end of their thirteenth year. Readers are instantly transported into the world within which the cult operates and witness the death of the children prior to the attempts on Adam's own life. These are told sparsely but each child is portrayed so sketchily that it becomes difficult to distinguish one from the other, much less to care about the grisly demise that befalls them. Admittedly this is scene setting, but nonetheless it feels uncomfortable and, if attempting to achieve the lightning fast pace of the best action thrillers, this is held up by exposition around the cult and its system of beliefs and around the rationale behind Adam's adoption.

Short chapters in the books means that progress in reading is made quickly and makes it suitable for less confident or keen readers. As a whole, however, the novel never quite positions itself either as a thriller or as a gritty, thought-provoking ideas led novel. In more experienced hands the concept might have delivered, but here a fascinating premise dwindles and dies.

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