



Sticky Ends

Books Reviewed:

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[Clive Barnes](#) [3]

~~Not a Choice:~~

off

Media type:

Book

BfK Rating:

5

For those of us used to enjoying Willis and Ross as a single picture book treat, this is a real lip smacking banquet. There are nineteen cautionary verses (curiously not the twenty six promised by the cover) which offer some gruesome modern warnings, in the vein of Belloc and Dahl, as to what might happen to little girls who refuse to wear the clothes selected for them, or pinch their friends at nursery; and boys who think they know best about everything or will not blow their snotty noses. If we have met children (and adults) like this, and many children will recognise themselves and their friends with a mixture of glee and embarrassment; the disproportionate, disgusting, horrendous and hilarious fates that befall them, we would not wish on anyone. Both Willis and Ross are in top form, witty and rude, and judging the line between black humour and real horror perfectly. Not all the tales are cautionary; the collection begins with a school dinner menu that features, among other delights, Stew and Dumplings: 'It's odd because Stuart's gone missing/ And so have the dumpling twins.' There's also Vince, the butcher's dog, a dog whose appearance in Tony Ross's illustrations would be enough to put you off meat for life but unexpectedly is himself a vegetarian: 'a great big softy and he wouldn't hurt a fly/ Unless you undercook his sprouts. In which case, you will DIE!!!' Willis's invention, humour and command of the comic verse form never falters, and Ross, as ever, keeps pace: witness the pitiful, guilty look of the blackmailed Santa, caught on camera illicitly using the toilet on Christmas Eve. This is a stomach-turning, rib-tickling delight that, at this price, is an absolute bargain.

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