



2019

You Owe Me a Murder

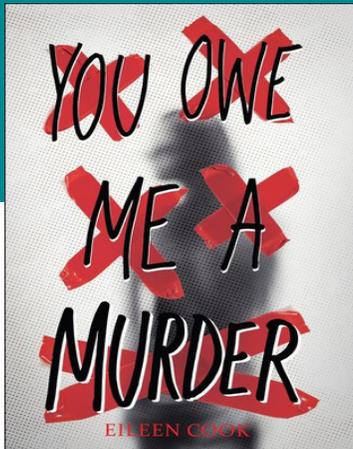
Katharine Davidson

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Book Review

You Owe Me a Murder

Author

Eileen Cook

Illustrator

Reviewer

Katharine Davidson

Rating

Dependable

Level

Intermediate, Young Adult

Pages

368

Year

2019

Publisher

HMH Books for Young Readers

ISBN

9781328519023

Seventeen-year-old Kim is about to embark on a two-week study abroad to London. But Kim's ex-boyfriend, Connor, and his brand new girlfriend are also coming on the trip. Things start to turn around when Kim meets Nicki, who seems smart, worldly, wise, and full of excitement and adventure. Kim and Nicki become fast friends and, after the plane eventually leaves, Kim tells Nicki all about how much she hates Connor—and why he deserves to die. Once Kim arrives in London, she loses track of Nicki, and a new boy, Alex, starts to take her attention off of Connor. The next morning, tragedy strikes and Connor is killed by oncoming subway train. Nicki soon reappears and tells Kim that she has fulfilled Kim's "wish" of having Connor dead, and now Nicki needs a hit done in return. Kim has to decide whether to commit Nicki's murder or to sit back and watch Nicki tear her world apart.

You Owe Me a Murder is a successful thriller novel in that it drives the reader to keep turning the pages to reach the resolution. However, the book's strengths end there. The suspense in the plot is based almost entirely on extremes, and the characters are one-dimensional, underdeveloped, and predictable. The descriptions of Nicki's evildoing are graphic but lack nuance. Explicit descriptive imagery of a mangled body and potential murder weapons color the book's pages. Instances of sexual activity are stereotypical and, again one-dimensional. There is little creativity in the characters' intentions or motivations despite their extreme reactions. Finally, Cook's London setting feels like a directory of tourist hotspots rather than a realistic or effective utilization of the city as the location of the plot. Additionally, readers should be aware of some instances of severe language. Overall, the plot and characters of this book feel heavy-handed, and the book relies on sensationalism rather than true mystery to keep the reader engaged.

*Contains severe language, mild sexual content, and moderate violence