

## You've Got Something Coming

**Jonathan Starke**

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One winter, Trucks, a damaged boxer in his forties, takes his deaf daughter, Claudia, out of a children's home in Wisconsin. In Jonathan Starke's *You've Got Something Coming*, they hitchhike west for a fresh start. This bittersweet social novel concerns Trucks's guilt about his failings and Claudia's eroding innocence.

As Trucks and Claudia cross through South Dakota and into Montana, strangers help them, including June, who lets them stay at her hotel, and Gerald, a perceptive widower who reserves judgment. Poetic vignettes, punctuated by clear images, examine how Trucks's mistrust of people's kindness isolates Claudia. When she tells him that she no longer wants him to be her home, it's unsurprising, but shattering because of her candid weariness.

From gas stations to thrift shops, a picnic table that doubles as a bed to perfume that's a talisman of better moments, every place and image is tactile and lean. Amid the grit, implicit moments of natural beauty are a respite. Graceful lines and cumulative, emotional punches echo Trucks's ongoing reflection of his boxing past. Though his monologues are frequent and transparent in their sense of unfairness, they convey his coiled frustration.

Memories of Claudia's drug-addicted mother disturb Trucks. His belief that he's only fit for boxing, and that he just needs a few more rounds, conflict with Claudia's fears about the "bruisey brains" that result from his matches. When Trucks's violent outburst at a shelter causes him to flee, leaving boxing as his only avenue for money, it results in an abrupt, desperate act that leaves him disoriented and injured. His and Claudia's uncertain future underscores the bleakness of poverty.

*You've Got Something Coming* is a commanding novel that makes a haunting impression as it explores the fallout of a father's relentless, flawed love.

KAREN RIGBY (March / April 2020)

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