

Not All Tarts Are Apple



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著者:Granger, Pip

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A first novel serves up an inimitable slice of British life from Coronation Summer, 1953, in a city not much different than that familiar to Charles Dickens and Oliver Twist. Seven-year-old Rosie lives happily with Uncle Bert and pillow-plump Aunt Maggie above their cafe on Old Compton Street. The Soho neighborhood is rife with tough and sinewy London life including pimps and prostitutes, thieves and con men, the bent and the wicked. One day at school Rosie learns her real mum's a tart. In fact, the Perfumed Lady is not only a tart, she's addicted to gin--but what's her real story? As Bert and Maggie bring in the clever nearby lawyer Sharkey Finn to draw up adoption papers, the motley group of grown-ups surrounding Rosie contribute in their own way to making the child safe from a truly surprising threat. Rosie is an entrancing narrator, sharing the cafe clientele's matter-of-fact attitude towards crooks and crimes, not to mention the puzzling mystery of identity that unfolds so convincingly yet so innocently that time and place will blur as you turn the pages.

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