



Pound for Pound

Author F X Toole
Publisher Harvill Secker
Out August 3, p/b
Rating ★★★★★

Read This!

FX TOOLE IS best known for penning short story **Million Dollar Baby**, which was adapted into an Oscar-winning film. Toole, however, died before the film was completed – leaving behind the unfinished manuscript of **Pound For Pound**. As the tome was shaped by his agent and a freelance editor, it's anyone's guess whether the finished result is exactly what Toole imagined, but it's certainly a work to be proud of.

Having lost all of his family to accident and illness, ex-boxer Dan Cooley lives for his grandson Tim Pat; when the boy is also tragically killed, Cooley goes off the rails. At the same time, Hispanic teenager Eduardo is making a name for himself in the dangerous amateur boxing world. Yes, it's obvious that the two will collide, but Toole's hard-hitting and believable prose – the fact that he himself was a boxer is evident in every hard-won triumph and crushing defeat – washes over the predictability and results in a surprisingly emotional final novel.

THE VERDICT A novel that's tender, despite its brutal subject matter. **NSB**