STOPMOUTH AND HIS family know of no other life than the daily battle to survive. To live, they must hunt rival species, or negotiate flesh-trade with those who crave meat of the freshest human kind. It is a savage, desperate existence. And for Stopmouth, considered slowwitted hunt-fodder by his tribe, the future looks especially bleak. But then, on the day he is callously betrayed by his brother, a strange and beautiful woman falls from the sky. It is a moment that will change his destiny, and that of all humanity, forever. With echoes of Tarzan, Conan the Barbarian, and The Truman Show, Peadar Ó Guilín's debut is an action—and idea-packed—blockbuster that will challenge your perceptions of humanity and leave you hungry for more.

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My Personal Review:
Run, Stopmouth, run! Stopmouth's stammer makes his tribe think he's dim-witted, but he compensates by being a very fast runner. In his kill-or-be-killed world, speed is at least as valuable as intelligence. But Stopmouth's no dummy, as he gradually comes to realize when his familiar world, terrible as it is, begins to crumble.

Stopmouth has always idolized his brother Wallbreaker, a great hunter. Things begin to fall apart when Wallbreaker is captured on a hunting trip. Stopmouth's fleetness serves him well, and he escapes capture, but then, against all reason--by the standards of his tribe--he goes back to save Wallbreaker. In the process he kills three Armourbacks, an impressive feat. But Wallbreaker runs off, leaving Stopmouth to fend for himself, tells the tribe that Stopmouth is dead, and claims the kills for himself. Their relationship deteriorates from there. We watch Wallbreaker becoming increasingly erratic in his behavior, thwarting his brother at every turn, until finally Stopmouth finds it necessary to leave the tribe.
There's plenty of action here, and lots of gory killing, as the various species in this strange place follow the dictates of "eat or be eaten." But over and above the fighting, the killing, the cannibalism, is the mystery. What is this strange place, with its ruined buildings housed under what is obviously some sort of artificial dome? Who built it, and why? How did all these different species, all apparently intelligent although unable to communicate with each other, come to be in a situation where their only food is each other, where there is no edible vegetation, and no domesticated animals? What are the lights in the "sky" and who are the people in the sky ships?

As O Guilin alternately tantalizes and doles out tidbits of information, we come to realize that the title refers not only to Stopmouth's supposed standing compared to his brother, but encompasses all the warring beings of this place in comparison to the sky people. And perhaps the label is mis-applied there as well.

It's a fascinating riddle. I'm anxiously awaiting further revelations.

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