



The Children of Castle Rock

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[Nicholas Tucker](#) [3]

~~Editor's Choice:~~

off

Media type:

Book

BfK Rating:

4

A boarding school in remote Scotland, a disparate group of friends gradually coming together, dangerous high jinks after lights-out, an end of term parents' day bringing the year to a triumphant end ? so many of the usual clichés but coming over here as fresh, captivating and, until a silly ending, utterly convincing. Eleven-year-old Alice, a remarkably controlled new pupil whose mother has died and whose father is hopeless, steadily makes her way as a new girl, well supported by sympathetic teachers, her own obstinacy and most important of all, by an author who clearly likes and admires her. Frequently addressing her audience directly in a manner familiar from E. Nesbit to Enid Blyton, Natasha Farrant writes like an angel and psychologically never puts a foot wrong.

So why only a four star recommendation? The reason: a bafflingly unlikely plot development, fortunately only towards the end of this story, involving jewel thieves, cryptic messages, pistol shots and a final huge reward. An author with such a talent to make the everyday seem endlessly enthralling really has no need of reaching for such ludicrously over the top heroics. This is not the only novel for this age group published recently that seems to think it is essential to end on an increasingly desperate note of high adventure. But more can also mean less, whatever the audience. Real life can always be made to seem quite interesting and diverting enough in the hands of a gifted novelist, and Farrant is most certainly one of those.

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