



The Gingerbread House; Billy the Squid; Screw Loose; Kick Back; Virtual Friend; Wartman

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Editor's Choice:

off

Media type:

Book

BfK Rating:

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This new publisher claims its books 'will fill a gap in the market - books for the reluctant reader' - books for the reluctant reader' - which seems to me to be the equivalent of the alchemist's claim to have found the philosopher's stone. Anyway there has been plenty of work put into these books with their 'easier on the eye' cream pages and specially designed font but despite this and the strong authorial line-up they are a curiously mixed bunch.

In **Screw Loose** Year 9-ish Roddy (14-years-old) enjoys unscrewing things around the school. Some nicely observed scenes of mildly disaffected kids and a lingering question - did Roddy really become Head for a day and begin to sort out the school's problems?

Kick Back also has an older secondary age main character. Josh is a nobody at school until Dad buys him a drum kit when he attracts the attention of some pretty unpleasant girls who form a band, use him and drop him. I am not sure how much we should encourage 'the ends justify the means' philosophy of the last few pages.

Ben in **Virtual Friend**, like Josh, is a social isolate with a busy single father - but next door lives Vince Riggs (VR) with a garden shed full of virtual reality equipment. Ben creates a virtual friend who then mysteriously appears in school bringing the obvious complications.

Dilly in **Wartman** is only nine. The appearance of a wart on his knee causes him no end of problems - especially from older brother Jim - until it is charmed away by Mr Ben.

The Gingerbread House is the most original of the stories. A gang of kids rename Farradale Drive as Fairytale Drive and begin to fantasise that the residents are characters from the tales. All harmless fun until the Hansel and Gretel story seems to be coming true. Nicely ambivalent ending - seriously strange illustrations.

Billy the Squid is an oddball, underwater cowboy story. Readers of considerable verbal dexterity are required to cope with stuff like 'The fish of Driftwood were simple soles. Shrimps were shrimps and folk knew their plaice'.

Running Order:

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