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Dead Man's Cove

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~~Not a Choice:~~

off

Media type:

Book

BfK Rating:

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If there is a children's equivalent of the airport novel or an undemanding read on the beach, then this might be it. The title and the retro cover image self-consciously hark back to the Secret Seven and, more appropriately, Nancy Drew, because this is the first in a series featuring a British girl detective, 11-year-old Laura Marlin. This is the kind of parallel storytelling universe, neither fantasy nor reality, familiar from Blyton. Laura can begin the story in an orphanage run by a matron (Tracy Beaker might never have been written), and criminal masterminds unaccountably choose to unload their cargo into a secret tunnel liable to be flooded by the tide when they might safely use a deserted beach. The usual ingredients are here; the Cornish seaside setting ? St Ives, with recognisable street names and landmarks, barring Dead Man's Cove itself; a set of characters with something to hide or who are not what they seem; a faithful animal companion, in this case a dog with three legs; and a plot that fits together reasonably well, although it starts slowly, has some trouble keeping together in the middle and rushes pell-mell for the last few pages. There are some fresh elements. The mysterious new shop keepers in town are Indian, and their son, Tariq, looks destined to be Laura's companion in subsequent adventures. The skulduggery involving Tariq that Laura uncovers is certainly bang up-to-date, if unconvincing in detail. Whether the series might take off is difficult to judge. It stays well within the comfortable conventions of children's mystery adventure, which are now more than 50 years old. I would think it might need more invention and humour to appeal to a generation of Rowling, Wilson, Higson and Colfer readers.

Running Order:

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