



Since Dad Left

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~~Editor's Choice:~~

off

Media type:

Book

BfK Rating:

5

Binch has established herself in the last ten years as one of the finest children's book illustrators. Her naturalistic style is instantly recognisable and she has few equals in her handling of gesture and expression. A Binch illustration can convey, with astonishing subtlety, not only the moods of her individual characters but the relationship between them; and never have her skills been employed to such effect as in this, her latest work. This is her own text, about a child coming to terms with his parents' separation: and the added interest is that Sid's father is a New Age Traveller and lives in a bender. The Travellers' life shown here is perhaps more idyllic than the reality --- rarely do they use a horse and cart rather than a van or have the opportunity to range so freely through the sun-drenched countryside. But the essence of the book is the portrayal of Sid's loneliness and confusion and his parents' efforts to reassure him of his father's continuing love. You watch the pain distort his features --- suddenly sullen or wistful --- a preoccupation broken only by his concentration on his beloved drawing or the excitement of a rough and tumble in the river with dad. And you see his parents' patience and concern as they struggle to explain the situation to him. Binch's technique is photographic and some of the illustrations in her earlier books seemed posed. There is less of that awkwardness here; but where she strives to be more impressionistic --- as in the night scene with dad's friends --- she is less convincing. For the most part, however, her watercolouring is detailed, delicate and luminous, and carefully characterises a supporting cast of children and adults: so that the illustrator's faith in the resilience and dignity of Sid and his mum and dad shines through as strongly as the summer light in these pages. A must for all primary schools.

Running Order:

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