



Opal Moonbaby

Books Reviewed:

[Opal Moonbaby](#) [1]

Issue:

[192](#) [2]

Reviewer:

[Rebecca Butler](#) [3]

Editorial Choice:

off

Media type:

Book

BfK Rating:

4

Primary schoolchildren Martha and Chloe are best friends who run a club called the Secret Circle and play games together. Then Colette arrives. She is ostensibly more grown-up, interested in fashion and boys. She woos Chloe away from Martha. Eventually Martha is forced to surrender her Secret Circle membership badge. So hurt and humiliated is Martha that she vows never again to make a friendship.

Martha's single parent mother is hard up. Her brother Robbie is at a loose end, since his best friend is away on holiday. When Martha's mother takes a job in a hairdressing salon, Martha and Robbie have to go and help. The work is boring and the boss Alesha puts on a phony Italian accent, as well as referring to hairdressing styles as 'head refurbishments'. Making too much noise, the children are expelled from the salon. They see a strange creature emerging from some unoccupied flats. The creature turns out to be the Mingle (or companion) of Opal Moonbaby. Opal is vaguely human-looking except for her purple eyes. She is from the planet Carnelia, engaged on a mysterious quest to Earth about which she is distinctly cagey. In the remainder of the book the reader must discover what the true nature of Opal's quest is, whether she can accomplish it and how Opal and Martha must change their preconceptions about life and people so that the quest can be accomplished.

With fantasy stories like this, the most serious critical question is whether the willing suspension of disbelief is sustained. Here the characters are believable and their actions and responses ring true. Many of the interactions are marked with genuine humour. Opal has superhuman psychic powers and uses them to strip pretensions from those human characters who ring false. The language used in the narrative is appropriate and consistent, with one or two daring insertions that work pretty well.

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Links:

[1] <http://booksforkeeps.co.uk/childrens-books/opal-moonbaby>

[2] <http://booksforkeeps.co.uk/issue/192>

[3] <http://booksforkeeps.co.uk/member/rebecca-butler>