



# Rules of Summer

Books Reviewed:

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Reviewer:

[Clive Barnes](#) [3]

[New to the Choice](#):

off

Media type:

Book

BfK Rating:

5

A little boy and a slightly bigger boy, they are brothers or just very close friends, are pictured in a landscapes and situations that nearly always have a link, even if somewhat tenuous, to a recognisable world of Australian suburban streets, electricity pylons and water towers, but which are more or less fantastic, eerie and perplexing, peopled otherwise by strange creatures. Some of these figures are relatively straightforward, such as a giant red rabbit, a human sized cat in a suit, or a mob of hawks in dinner suits. Others could have migrated from a painting by Hieronymus Bosch. Some are junkyard robots and others have the suggestion of childhood toys, with jointed limbs and the occasional clockwork key. The rules of summer appear as single enigmatic and apparently unconnected sentences as if typed on an old manual typewriter accompanying or opposite each picture. Sometimes the rules appear on almost blank but subtly coloured or textured pages with occasional crayoned strokes and smudges as if they are discarded sheets from an artist's table, perhaps having lain beneath a fully formed picture or perhaps alongside it as they do in the book itself. We can assume the rules of summer are being imparted from bigger child to smaller, since the first picture shows the older whispering to the younger, and we can speculate that these strange and compelling images of heightened reality and fantasy comment on or characterise the boys' play and their relationship from the point of view of the youngest. It's a world of apocalyptic highs and lows: catching stars in jars from the top of the water tower or unleashing a whirlwind by stepping on a snail. The illustrations capture the fascination, excitement and danger to which the older boy admits the younger, but always bounded by the older boys intimidating control, which frequently locks the younger boy out ? never forget the password?. At its darkest - and it gets very dark towards the end - this is about the teasing, bullying and victimisation that, more often than not, can be part of such a relationship. But only part, and, be reassured, the book ends very differently. Five stars don't seem enough for this. I have offered some characterisation of it. I have attempted an interpretation. It's a book that even has its own website and app. But each picture is a knockout, by-passing conscious thought and driving straight into the unconscious: disturbing, exhilarating and magnificent.

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