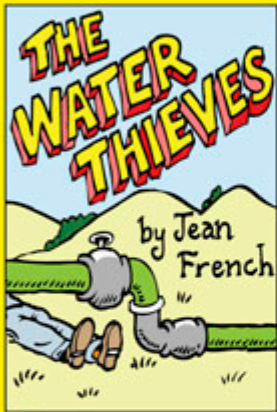


# Book reviews

by Jasmine Holly

from an arts supplement in a weekend newspaper



## **The Water Thieves** by Jean French

Hardback \$14.90

This book would have seemed improbable twenty years ago, but prolonged drought and climate change have caused people to take drastic action to make a living, and even to survive. In the Charles River Valley farmers have resorted to desperate measures to maintain water supplies. When old James McMann is found dead beside an illegal water-pump the police are called to investigate. They find that as the river dries up, currents in the valley run deep—more like a dangerous undertow than a dying stream.

This is French's tenth outback detective novel. New settings would be refreshing.

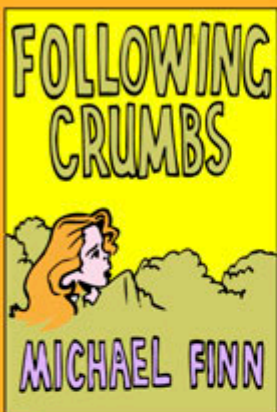


## **Mark the Note** by T. J. Hambly, illustrated by Akihiro Izumi

Paperback \$11.25

The hero in this small graphic novel is Joe Dunlittle. He is no superhero but he fantasises about being one. Collectors of such books will want to add this to their store of more serious publications. What makes the book enjoyable, and not just a childish romp, is the subtle inclusion of adult humour. It's hidden in the text and the graphics.

Oatsville may not be Gotham City but it will never be the same after a gang of dastardly counterfeiters, posing as a travelling circus, have their plot foiled by Joe—not quite how he had intended.



## **Following Crumbs** by Michael Finn

Hardback \$17.99

Given the title, the reader immediately thinks of Hansel and Gretel but this is no fairytale. It might not have the violence of that old tale (cooking children in an oven) but there is an ominous threat that something will happen. Finn makes our imagination work as we try to guess who is shadowing the small party of campers making their way to a deserted mining town.

Told in first person by Jill, the book allows readers to live with her fears and seemingly unfounded suspicions that the party is forever being watched. A fatal accident (Was it an accident?) to the group's leader builds up the tension as each member tries to remain calm—and alive.



## **The Ice Ring** by Daniel Flame

Paperback \$12.50, hardback \$18.90

Daniel Flame's first fantasy will appeal to avid fantasy readers. It is the story of a quest that traverses the cold wastes of a Siberian landscape to the high and icy Dragonback Mountains. The book is full of caves, flying creatures and fierce battles.

Flame's descriptions of his setting give realism to the story and lift it above most fantasies that flood the market, not only in print but also in film. This is a refreshing telling of a predictable plot. May we see more of Flame's work.