



[Home](#) > Paper Avalanche paperback

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Books Reviewed:

[Paper Avalanche paperback](#) [1]

Issue:

[240](#) [2]

Reviewer:

[Nicholas Tucker](#) [3]

~~Editor's Choice:~~

off

Media type:

Book

BfK Rating:

5

Forget teenagers failing to keep their rooms tidy ? in this brilliant, if occasionally pulverising novel, it is Bonnie, the mother, who turns not just her bedroom into a tip but the whole house through her out of control hoarding. Her fourteen-year-old daughter Ro, short for Rosie, does her best to get by, haunted by the possibility of being taken away from home by Social Services should they ever discover the appalling nature of the squalour she is living in.

There are some welcome lighter moments too despite an absent father who is no use at all and a mother who remains hopelessly immature and childish. But Ro is eventually saved from on-going misery and fear by making a new and only friend Tanvi, an Indian fellow pupil recently recovered from cancer. Perennially cheerful and oblivious to rejection, she eventually breaks through Ro's obdurate defences by offering her a glimpse of the better sort of life they could enjoy together. There is also music, where Ro turns out after much encouragement to be a gifted singer, and the beginning of a romance with the nice boy next door. As for the Social Services, when they do intervene they do so with tact and sensitivity, with Ro wishing by the end she had contacted them sooner. No lazy stereotypes here!

This is Lisa Williamson's third novel, and like its predecessors scores highly for sheer readability. Compassionate and understanding, even where silly spoilt Bonnie is concerned, this is YA fiction at its most assured. I defy anyone not to be moved as well as richly entertained by this excellent novel.

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