

[PDF] The Last Chance Texaco

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Books Details:

Title: The Last Chance Texaco

Author:

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Description:

From School Library Journal Grade 7-10--Lucy Pitt is 15 when she is sent to Kindle Home, a group home and her last chance at a semi-normal life. If she makes any errors, she'll be sent to the high-security facility known as Eat-Their-Young Island. Kindle Home is different from the other places she's lived, primarily due to the dedication of the counselors and the way in which they connect with the kids. Lucy realizes that she wants to stay there, and although she manages to weather the consequences of her own impulsive tendencies, she can't control the lack of funding that threatens the Home or the arson that is causing the neighbors to become even more leery of having such an establishment nearby. Readers will root for Lucy and come away with a greater understanding of the complexities of group homes and their inhabitants. Hartinger excels at giving readers an insider's view of the subculture, with its myriad unspoken rules created by the kids, not the system. There is a touch of romance and mystery, and while those elements may be a lure for less sophisticated readers, the memorable aspect of the novel is the way it takes readers inside a system most of them have never experienced.--*Faith Brautigam, Gail Borden Public Library, Elgin, IL*

From Gr. 6-10. Hartinger's first novel, *The Geography Club* (2002), was a poignant high-school story. Here the setting is Kindle Home, a run-down mansion in an upscale neighborhood that's used as a group foster home for troubled teens. Lucy lost her parents in a car accident when she was seven, and in her affecting first-person narrative she tells how she has screwed up ever since. This is her last chance before a punishment center. Hartinger clearly knows the culture, and Lucy speaks movingly (if occasionally too therapeutically) about her anger and grief as well as about the other troubled kids. But this is more than a situation; there's a deeper story, as Lucy falls in love with a rich kid in the local school (first they fight, then they kiss). Best of all, however, is the mystery: who is setting cars on fire in the neighborhood? One of the Kindle kids? A neighbor who wants the school closed down? A hostile therapist? The romance and realism sometimes knock heads, but the talk is lively, and the tension of the whodunnit will keep readers hooked to the end. *Hazel Rochman*
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