



[Home](#) > Flyaway

Flyaway

Books Reviewed:

[Flyaway](#) [1]

Issue:

[182](#) [2]

Reviewer:

[Rebecca Butler](#) [3]

~~Not a Choice:~~

off

Media type:

Book

BfK Rating:

4

Isla and her father are both fanatical bird watchers and they go together to witness the arrival of the migrating Whooper swans. On this occasion Isla's father experiences mild chest pains before they set off. At the bird reserve they witness an avoidable disaster. The local council had promised to mark the power cables with fluorescent indicators to warn the birds. They have failed to do so. Some swans fly into the cables.

Isla and her father wade out into the water to save some of the birds. They spot a young cygnet isolated from its flock. Isla's paternal grandfather is a retired vet. Isla and her father take some of the rescued birds there and he rather reluctantly tries to help.

Back at the reserve, trying to follow the swans, Isla's father suffers a heart attack. At the hospital where her father is having a heart valve repaired, Isla meets a young leukemia patient named Harry Brambling. Facing their different challenges, Harry and Isla strike up a close and powerful relationship. By sheer chance, the young cygnet Isla helped has made its way from the reserve to a pond near the hospital, seeking its flock. Harry and Isla undertake to help the cygnet fly and find her flock.

This is a book rich in detail. The medical details are meticulously researched and conveyed. The emotional reactions of all the members of Isla's family ? she has a mother and brother as well as her father and granddad ? are recorded with similar care as is the roller-coaster of Isla's relationship with Harry. This detailed treatment draws the reader into a close understanding of and sympathy with all the characters. The cygnet's quest for flight serves an allegorical purpose, mirroring the search of all the characters for reparation after trauma.

For some reason Christopher has elected to divide her text into dozens of tiny chapters, many no more than two pages in length. My personal preference would have been for longer chapters, allowing more development. If this book has a weakness, it lies in this reader's inability to share the all-consuming interest of the protagonists: I am, I confess, only modestly interested in the life and times of the Whooper swan. Occasionally I found the ornithological detail verging on the excessive.

Running Order:

45

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[2] <http://booksforkeeps.co.uk/issue/182>

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