



# Adam and the Arkonauts

Books Reviewed:

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Reviewer:

[Ruth Taylor](#) [3]

Editor's Choice:

off

Media type:

Book

BfK Rating:

4

This engaging comedy-adventure opens with an arresting prologue of high adventure which establishes just the right note of intrigue to lead the reader into the story. It then comes as a surprise when the story proper adopts a leisurely knockabout style, with large parts of the text given over to comic dialogue. This dialogue is highly amusing, although it might sometimes play better on the screen than on the page. Yet the story also has some meaningful points to make about growing up and family relationships which are all the more effective for being introduced relatively casually.

Will Forest, a scholar-adventurer in the Indiana Jones mould, has learnt how to converse with animals, but his secret is coveted by Professor Scabellex, an eccentric villain worthy of a James Bond story. Ten years previously, Scabellex kidnapped Forest's wife. Subsequently, Forest, with his teenage son Adam, has spent the boy's childhood searching the world for her on his 'Ark of the Parabola'. They are accompanied by a boat-load of comical creatures including Simia, a monkey with a complex about Darwin; Malibu, the Hollywood cat; and Pozzo and Gogo, a pair of vaudevillian cross-talking parrots. The confrontation with Scabellex takes place in Buenos Suenos, a Marx Brothers caricature of a banana-republic complete with officious police-chief, lethal politics and rife nepotism. As the adventure develops, Adam is openly proud of his upstanding father but less certain about his grandfather, a freebooting ex-criminal who is a master of disguise. Not unexpectedly, the talking animals play a large part in saving the day, in ways that are as humorous as they are heroic.

The book clearly reflects Dominic Barker's former careers as stand-up comedian and school-teacher, glorying equally in music-hall humour and adventure-yarn traditions in a way that is knowing without being ironic. It also shows young Adam coming to terms with the adult world through his family and friends, who include the ever-resourceful and daring Anna, who is deaf. The broad but good-natured humour, together with the action set-pieces, should appeal to children from a wide age-range. At the end, the door is held open for a sequel, which promises to be just as enjoyable.

Running Order:

36

**Links:**

[1] <http://booksforkeeps.co.uk/childrens-books/adam-and-the-arkonauts>

[2] <http://booksforkeeps.co.uk/issue/183>

[3] <http://booksforkeeps.co.uk/member/ruth-taylor>