



The Highland Falcon Thief (Adventures on Trains)

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~~Not a Choice:~~

off

Media type:

Book

BfK Rating:

5

Stolen jewels, Scottish castles, stowaways ? **The Highland Falcon Thief** has them all, but key to the success of this hugely enjoyable adventure story is the Highland Falcon itself, a gloriously described steam locomotive (an A4 Pacific if you want to be really precise, and by the end of the book you definitely will). Young Harrison ?Hal? Beck is a reluctant passenger on the Highland Falcon as she makes her last journey ever, from Kings Cross up to Scotland and then back down the west coast before crossing east again to steam into Paddington. He?s a guest of his journalist train-obsessed uncle and their fellow passengers are a wonderful bunch of larger than life characters, from the bullying self-made millionaire to the glamorous actress and, on the home journey, a prince and princess no less. Hal initially deems trains ?boring?, but his attitude changes, particularly when he meets Marlene (aka Lenny), daughter of the driver and an absolute train buff. Before long the two are working together to solve a crime that has to have been committed by one of the passengers.

The crime is expertly plotted, suspicion falling on each of the passengers ? even Uncle Nat is in the frame for a while ? and a desperate rush to identify the true culprit leads to all sorts of adventures for Hal, including a death-defying scramble over the roof of the train as it rumbles through the Somerset countryside.

It all makes for first-class reading. Hal and Lenny are thoroughly engaging central characters and authors M.G. Leonard and Sam Sedgman do a terrific job capturing the romance of steam trains and the amazing feats of engineering they represent; there?s a terrific scene in which the two lucky children get to witness the train take on water from a water trough for example. Traditional though the setting and plot are, it?s thoroughly modern in tone and approach and should deservedly become a real favourite with readers.

Watch out for an interview with **M.G. Leonard** and **Sam Sedgman** in **BfK241**.

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