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The Great Galloon

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Not a Choice:

off

Media type:

Book

BfK Rating:

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What do you get when you cross a pirate ship with a hot air balloon? A great Galloon, of course. Masterfully manned by Captain Meredith Anstruther, the galloon is an airship the size of a city where the escapades are just as fantastical. The crew may seem a motley bunch, but we soon find that whether they are fighting off marauders or diverting a swarm of hungry BeheMoths, they take life in their stride. Well, maybe apart from Able Skyman Abel.

Tom Banks is a new talent in children's books and certainly one to watch. His first book ripples with hilarious anarchy as the feisty young crew members Stanley and Rasmussen solve all kinds of problems while waiting for the real adventure to begin. He has a whole cast of comic characters, each distinct and amusing in his own way, but there is a particular strength in his female leads ? Cloudier, the thirteen-year-old poet who shimmies down a pulley line to save the ship from near disaster, and Rasmussen, the future countess whose daring outshines the rest of the crew. ?Don?t you dare pretend you're too scared. You're no more scared than I am, which is a bit but not much,? she scolds her friend Stanley. ?If we meet wild elephants, we'll tame them. If we meet an artillery regiment, we'll rout it. If we meet another Brunt, we'll make friends with it, and if that doesn't work we'll catch it in a cage and drop it off in the snow. And you know all that perfectly well.?

There is a real joy in the writing, which is circuitous and as interested in comic detail as in the action. If there is any criticism, it is that the cover does little to set the book apart from the glut of pirate stories on the market, which perhaps suggest a younger readership. **The Great Galloon** is a real cut above ? slightly weird, but also wordy and wonderful.

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