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The Boy Who Flew

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Reviewer:

[Diana Barnes](#) [3]

Editor's Choice:

off

Media type:

Book

BfK Rating:

4

Athan Wilde lives with his mother, his fierce Grandma, his gentle older sister Polly, and his younger sister, Beatty, who was born without the use of her legs, in what seems to be Regency Bath. He dreams of flight, and works for Mr Chen, an inventor, until Mr Chen is brutally murdered, and he realizes that he has to find the plans for a flying machine they were working on, before someone else does. His friend Tod is very useful on the practical side, and together they prowl at night on the rooftops of the city and plan their future. His mother's new suitor, Colonel Blade, shows a less charming attitude to Athan than to her, but surely he can trust Mr Katz, with whom he hopes to get a job so that his mother doesn't force him to become a nightman, collecting the 'night soil' from the local population?

Athan's mother and Polly are dressmakers, also running a shop selling fabric and ribbons, and their domesticity is contrasted with the violence that Athan encounters outside. Grandma is a very strong character, superstitious and deeply suspicious of anyone foreign, especially Mr Chen, and Beatty, although unable to move without being carried about, is intelligent and perspicacious: wondering about one particular customer why they really came into the shop. Athan is fiercely devoted to her, which means that her life can be threatened to make him do what his enemies want. The characters are credible, and the story is a real page-turner as Athan and his friend Tod try to keep ahead. A female character proves extremely useful in finishing the kite, and the title does give away the ending, but the reader will want to know how it all happens. There is danger and quite a lot of violence, mostly reported (or, in Grandma's case, wildly exaggerated), as well as the death of several characters. The classification given by the publishers on the back cover as 9+ is perhaps a little low, so your reviewer has acknowledged this in placing it in 8-10, but also assesses it suitable for 10+.

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