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Larklight

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Newton's Choice:

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Media type:

Book

BfK Rating:

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Imagine that Isaac Newton had not only discovered gravity but also had a spectacular success with his experiments in alchemy, creating a source of power that could fuel interplanetary travel. Imagine, then, 200 years later, a British Empire that stretches far into space; and you will have arrived at the point where Reeve's new tale begins. Intended for a slightly younger audience than the 'Mortal Engines' quartet, it has the same playful inventiveness. Drifting somewhere in the orbits of Stevenson, Verne, Wells and Dr Who (the earlier incarnation), this is a tale of, among other things, space pirate ships, complete with barnacles; moustachioed British secret agents; the Victorian Great Exhibition; and a host of odd, but nevertheless recognisable, alien fauna. Its heroes, plucky Art Mumby, and his prim elder sister Myrtle, armed with the traditional British weapons of a stiff upper lip, an insistence on proper manners, and a sense of fair play, set about saving the universe from a monstrous arachnid conspiracy. The novel, fitting into the current vogue for Edwardian pastiche (see *The Dangerous Book for Boys*), is presented with yellowing endpapers featuring advertisements for such essential items as 'Whilkins Efficacious Linctus' and 'Egremont's Pens (for correspondence in low gravity)' and is rather splendidly illustrated by David Wyatt. Not many children may have the background in Victorian adventure (or history) to get this joke in its entirety, and there are places where perhaps Reeve spends too much time in working the conceit out on the page, but the story bulges with engaging incident and character enough to fill a bumper 400 pages.

Running Order:

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