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# Hostage Three

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~~Not a Choice:~~

off

Media type:

Book

BfK Rating:

5

Within ten lines, Amy Fields has 'a gun pointing right at my head'. The finger on the trigger is that of a Somali pirate. Amy is 'Hostage Three', so it's a fair guess that she'll be executed before the more valuable Hostages One and Two, her banker father and her new stepmother. Since all the characters 'hijacking pirates and hostages' are anchored aboard the enclosed world of a luxury sailing vessel for most of the book, Nick Lake has quite a challenge on his hands if he is to sustain the tension of that opening.

In fact, the book's tension stems from more subtle sources. By the time she is telling us her story, Amy has some perspective on who she was when the adventure began. Then, she mourned a mother who took her own life. She resents a father she sees as emotionally stunted and remote; and she despises his new young bride. She's just messed up her A-levels and fought against all the disciplines and values of her private school. Her one joy, her saving talent, has been her music; but, 'after Mom, I didn't listen to it any more', or play the violin. So, with some reason, she is sullen, resentful, and a determined teenage pain.

The round-the-world sailing trip is her father's naïve attempt to make a new family, spending 'quality time' together. Ironically, it is through the terrifying pirate hijack, not the affluent tourism, that Amy finds ways of looking beyond herself. The catalyst for this is Farouz, the young translator among the pirates, for whom Amy feels an electric physical attraction. As things develop into a more searching and mutual connection, and as she hears Farouz's story 'the desperate poverty of his country, the political chaos, the brutal treatment of his brother (Nick Lake spares us little here) - she understands his journey into piracy. His motivation is selfless. Amy's horizons slowly and credibly expand.

How to end such a story? Here Lake plays some literary games which young readers might find anything from exasperating to fascinating by way of confusing.

You fear, all through the book, that the end is likely to be bloody. Now though, the concluding section is written by an Amy who knows that the legacies of others' lives endure within us, that their stories shape our own. She knows that 'if you get lost, it's possible that a light will come dancing, on the horizon, to lead you home.' To this point we have had to make our own sense of Amy - now she has the ability to look beyond herself and we can trust her. That kind of change happens too glibly in much YA literature; and, incidentally, the book differs from almost all of that genre in that it might

well attract both genders as readers. Here Nick Lake has taken a situation which could easily have married melodrama with cliché. In avoiding that, he has charted a shift within his narrator which is entirely believable. An achievement to admire.

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