



A Web of Air

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~~Editor's Choice:~~

off

Media type:

Book

BfK Rating:

5

To begin with, things are pretty quiet; domestic, even, since sometime Engineer Fever Crumb (eponymous heroine of the first prequel to the **Mortal Engines** quartet) is very much at home as stage technician to Persimmon's Electric Lyceum, a travelling theatre newly arrived to play a season at Mayda-at-the-World's-End. Fever, for whom rational thought is all, finds a complementary spirit in Arlo, a native of Mayda. Unlike his superstitious fellow citizens, Arlo is both pragmatist and dreamer, with skills bequeathed to him by his ship-building father. He's close to creating a flying machine and once he learns to trust Fever, he sees that her technical expertise can develop the engine he needs to power his new airship. Such a breakthrough, though, with its implications for exploration, trade and military supremacy, would render obsolete all the work going on back in London to transform the city into the greedy juggernaut familiar to readers of **Mortal Engines** and its sequels.

And then, suddenly, Fever is bundled into a sedan chair on a dark street, her kidnapper is assassinated, and she herself squirms out of a toilet window and goes on the run from a deadly killer. London and its ruthless agents cannot allow the aircraft to fly. The novel takes off and never lands again, twisting through the dangerous alleyways and out to the islands off Mayda where murderers, spies and double-agents lurk. Reeve readers will relish the edgy mix of violence, danger and mystery, tempered by humour. His ingenuity is there in the language as well as the artefacts - especially the buildings mounted on water-driven funiculars, ascending and descending within the volcanic crater which is the heart of Mayda. Reeve's adventurers rarely win through without cost. Fever has only just admitted to herself that her emerging love for Arlo transcends her rationalism when circumstances and misunderstandings drive them apart. The closing pages find her watching from the harbour wall as Arlo's ship shrinks into the huge emptiness of night and sea and sky?, knowing she will never see him again.

Well, maybe. Let's hope a third prequel to the mighty quartet will confound her fears.

Running Order:

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