



The Wind in the Wall

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Editor's Choice:

off

Media type:

Book

BfK Rating:

3

?Wishes are such sweet profanities, they fall so carelessly from the mouth...?

If you had one wish, how would you use it? You might think you'd be wiser than the narrator of this picturebook for older readers ? but under the same pressure, you too might find yourself wishing for something you did not intend.

In the cold climate of Northumberland, an eighteenth-century Duke orders his gardener to grow a pineapple ? a feat that is almost impossible to achieve, as this newly-fashionable fruit is ?sun-obsessed? and must be given very special treatment. The gardener does his best, but his pineapples do not thrive. The Duke, anxious for the prestige that such a novelty will bring, employs a Mr Amicus from Brazil who arrives with a mysteriously shrouded birdcage and moves into the hothouses, where he proceeds to grow a perfect specimen.

The ousted gardener suspects that Mr Amicus isn't Brazilian - or indeed the expert that he claims to be. Spying on him, the gardener discovers the magical secret in Mr Amicus's birdcage ? a feathered fairy-wife, capable of granting wishes. The gardener wants to help her, but it takes a summer storm to free the fairy-wife. She spends the night with the gardener before granting him a wish that must be used ?wisely? if he wants to see her again. But the gardener is attacked by a jealous Mr Amicus and finds himself in a dead-end corner by an enormous wall. He forgets the fairy-wife's advice. ?I wish it would hide me,? he thinks - and the stones part. The gardener is trapped.

?On good days when the wind doesn't moan down from the moors, I think she will come back to free me,? he says. But the gardener is still waiting inside the wall?

The Wind in the Wall was written when Sally Gardner was writer in residence at Alnwick Castle, and although some of the site-specific details add depth and context to her story, there's a sense that it doesn't wear its research as lightly as it could. That said, it's always a pleasure to welcome new picture books for older audiences and there is much to admire here, from Rovina Cai's atmospheric artwork to the gothic flavour that permeates Gardner's historically-inspired text, evoking classic ghost stories and inviting readers to view their surroundings with new eyes.

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