



Sky Hawk

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Editorial Choice:

off

Media type:

Book

BfK Rating:

5

?Nothing prepared me for seeing her right in front of me. It was as if the lochs and the mountains and the sky were folded deep inside her, as if she was a small piece of this vast landscape and none of it could exist without her.?

?She? is a rare osprey who has nested in a pine tree on the loch. The loch is above the farm belonging to Callum?s family in the Scottish Highlands, but it is fey, gypsyish Iona who has discovered the osprey and then reveals her whereabouts as a precious secret to Callum. Iona is an outsider in village society, left with her eccentric grandfather by a ?feckless? mother. But Lewis reveals that sometimes it is the ?outsider? who sees most. In this moving story, Iona is the one who is deeply in tune with the natural environment, able to stalk a red deer to within a hand?s breadth and catch trout with her bare hands. She leads the already sensitive Callum to see his own world more vividly, but the initial price is his friendship with his old laddish gang.

The two children name the osprey, Iris, after the Goddess of the wind and sky, and Iona?s watchfulness helps to save her when Iris is caught by fishing wire. This involves revealing Iris? existence to Callum?s parents and Hamish at the local nature reserve. As part of a project to monitor ospreys, Hamish tags the bird with a transmitter so that her migration pattern can be tracked. Then events take a tragic turn and Iona falls victim to meningitis?

In dealing with his grief, Callum has to re-evaluate his friendships and let others share his secret, while in mourning Iona?s death, the villagers are also confronted with their attitudes to others.

In an audacious narrative twist, Gill Lewis now widens the scope of her book, as Callum and friends track Iris? perilous journey to overwinter in the Gambia via her satellite position on Google Earth. On arrival, the bird falls ill from her old foot injury, anxiously monitored long distance by Callum and his friends. In desperation, Callum appeals to as many organisations as he can in the Gambia and receives an unexpected reply from a young Gambian girl, Jeneba who is lying sick in hospital.

Lewis now draws the threads of her story tightly together, as co-operation between the widely distant communities of the Scottish Highlands and the Gambia work to transform the life, first of wounded Iris and then of Jeneba herself. In helping Jeneba, Callum both brings his community together and finds a resolution to his own grief for Iona.

A bare outline of **Sky Hawk** makes it sound schematic, but Gill Lewis' beautifully understated writing gently sweeps her reader along and the story, itself, quietly and lyrically conveys her moving and timely message of the interconnectedness of people with nature and people with people ? whether within one village or across the earth. This is a beautiful book which will have resonance for many readers beyond its target readership.

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