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Thief!

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Editor's Choice:

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Media type:

Book

BfK Rating:

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Thief! is the fourth of John Pilkington's enjoyable 'Elizabethan Mysteries'. Young Ben Button is a boy actor with Lord Bonner's company in London and his adventures have already been chronicled in **Rogues? Gold, Traitor!** and **Revenge!** This time, Ben takes a break from the stage and the excitements of the London underworld to return to his home in rural Hornsey, a three mile cart ride north of the city.

There is to be no respite for him, however, since his village has suffered a number of violent burglaries - the work of no mere thief, but a murderer in search of a priceless treasure. As if that were not enough, his widowed mother is considering an offer of marriage - and security for her children - from a local farmer whom Ben dislikes. The boy actor hero, the excitements of the theatre, an intriguing mystery - readers familiar with the genre might well recall the stirring tales of Geoffrey Trease. It is no mean compliment to say that Ben Button's adventures stand the comparison. You trust and enjoy the authenticity without feeling the research is poking through the prose. The author shares Trease's interest in the lives of common folk and also his ability to keep his tale moving rapidly through a tight plot. His dialogue has a sense of 'otherness' but never descends to an affected idiom in which, the great man once wrote, characters were liable to exclaim, 'Ha, we are beset!' There is nothing pretentious about Pilkington's story at all. Cliff-hanging conclusions to chapters drive a reader on. The dangers of the hunt for the killer prove the suitor-farmer a coward and Mother makes a wiser choice. The villain comes to a blood-soaked end and, while a couple of minor characters get killed off, Ben lives on to solve the mystery and, one hopes, to fight another day.

Running Order:

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