



Abel's Island *William Steig*

A NEWBERRY HONOR BOOK

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Early in August 1907, the first year of their marriage, Abel and Amanda went to picnic in the woods some distance from the town where they lived. The sky was overcast, but Abel didn't think it would be so inconsiderate as to rain when he and his lovely wife were in the mood for an outing.

They enjoyed a pleasant lunch in the sunless woods, sharing delicate sandwiches of pot cheese and watercress, along with hard-boiled quail egg, onions, olives, and

black caviar. They toasted each other, and everything else, with a bright champagne which was kept cool in a bucket of ice. Then they played a jolly game of croquet, laughing without much reason, and they continued laughing as they relaxed on a carpet of moss.

When this happy nonsense got boring, Amanda crawled under a fern to read and Abel went off by himself for a bit. Roaming among the trees, admiring the verdure, he saw a crowd of daisies clustered above him, like gigantic stars, and decided to cut one down and present his wife with a pretty parasol.

He was already smiling at the little joke he would make as he held it over her head. He chose a perfect daisy and, using his handkerchief to avoid being soiled by the sap, carefully cut through the stem with his penknife.

The daisy over his shoulder, he sallied back toward his wife, very pleased with himself. It grew windy rather suddenly, and some rain fell, wherever it could through the foliage. It was hard to hold on to the flower.

His wife was under the fern exactly where he'd left her, absorbed in the life of her book. "I have something for you," he said, lifting the tip of the fern. Amanda looked up at him with large, puzzled eyes, as if a page of words had unaccountably turned into her husband. A sharp gust of wind tore the daisy from his grasp.

"It's raining," Amanda observed.

"Indeed it is!" said Abel indignantly as the rain fell



Whatever child likes *The Bat-Poet* or *Charlotte's Web* will love the way Steig uses our language and will want to relive Abel's odyssey on many a rainy Sunday afternoon.

—ROSEMARY WELLS, *The Washington Post Book World*

With inimitable style, Steig tells the story of a mouse, Abelard Hassam di Chirico Flint, who gets swept away in a driving rainstorm while rescuing his wife's scarf and winds up stranded on a river island for a year. Abel isn't just any mouse. He's a fastidious Edwardian dandy whose inherited wealth ensures the leisurely comforts he takes such pleasure in. But Abel's high-toned life of leisure conceals a soul full of true grit: once faced with the necessity of surviving, Abel rises to the challenge.

—Starred/*Booklist*

There was no trouble in locating the best book of the year, William Steig's *Abel's Island* . . . Abelard is, one hopes, all of us—proud, resourceful, despairing, persevering and, eventually, triumphant. And so is Mr. Steig triumphant in the quality of his prose—nor has he stinted on the quality and quantity of his illustrations.

—GEORGE A. WOODS, *The New York Times*

Abel's adventures are presented with Steig's usual grace, warmth, and insight, and the delights of the text are further enhanced by his drawings. On all counts, it's a winner.

—Starred/*School Library Journal*

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