



Real Thief, The

By William Steig

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Gawain is a loyal and true goose serving as chief guard of the royal treasury. He'd been happy enough with his life at home tending his garden and making sketches of architectural masterpieces. Now he's being charged with stealing from the treasury. Gawain is certain of his innocence, but he can't prove it. Will the real thief come forward to save Gawain, or will he live in exile forever?

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Real Thief, The By William Steig Bibliography

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

Who hasn't known the sickening, demoralizing feeling of being falsely accused? In *The Real Thief*, William Steig explores this injustice with the keen insight of a good psychologist and the skillful pacing of a brilliant storyteller. Gawain is a goose, a guard for the new Royal Treasury, and intensely loyal to the honey-scented, gruff, fatherly King Basil the bear: "He wanted to please him, to stay forever in his gruff, good graces. Everyone did. Basil was a popular king." The Royal Treasury consists of jewels, medallions, and precious crowns of historical interest--and the only creatures who have keys to the Treasury are Gawain and the King himself. One fateful day, Gawain discovers to his horror that the pile of rubies is smaller than it should be. He hurries to tell the King, and they both rush back to count them: "Sure enough, there were only 8,643 of the red gems when there should have been 8,672." Day after day, treasures continue to disappear, including the world-famous Kalikak diamond!

The King is flummoxed. He calls a meeting of his Royal Cabinet, who finally persuade him that the thief must be his faithful Gawain, whom he loves like a son: "He sent his councilors away and slumped in his throne, dejected. Having listened to an opinion he didn't really believe but was forced to respect, he grew confused and fell into muddled ponderings." That very night Gawain is rousted out of bed at midnight and dragged to the castle dungeon. A trial is held a few days later, and the innocent goose is found guilty, his name disgraced forever. He hates the ones he had trusted and loved for seeing evil in him that isn't there, and he flies the coop before he can be locked away. The real thief? That is for the reader to discover. In this simple fable of justice, loyalty, friendship, and betrayal, Steig again manages to portray a reflection of life so heart-rendingly accurate it's uncanny. Children will be on the edge of their seats throughout this powerful, suspenseful tale, and visibly relieved by the happy, forgiving ending. (Ages 8 and older, excellent for reading aloud) --*Karin Snelson*

Review

"Honorable goose Gawain has only his King's best interests at heart but, as guard of the royal treasury, he is accused of theft after jewels and money disappear from the vault. . .Steig's captivating style and tongue-in-cheek humor bring to life an endearing set of animal characters with some extremely human foibles."

--*Booklist*

"Impossible to resist." --*Kirkus Reviews*

About the Author

William Steig (1907-2003) was a cartoonist, illustrator and author of award-winning books for children, including *Shrek!*, on which the DreamWorks movies are based. Steig was born in New York City. Every member of his family was involved in the arts, and so it was no surprise when he decided to become an artist. He attended City College and the National Academy of Design. In 1930, Steig's work began appearing in *The New Yorker*, where his drawings have been a popular fixture ever since. He published his first children's book, *Roland the Minstrel Pig*, in 1968.

In 1970, Steig received the Caldecott Medal for *Sylvester and the Magic Pebble*. His books for children also include *Dominic*; *The Real Thief*; *The Amazing Bone*, a Caldecott Honor Book; *Amos & Boris*, a National Book Award finalist; and *Abel's Island* and *Doctor De Soto*, both Newbery Honor Books. Steig's books have

also received the Christopher Award, the Irma Simonton Black Award, the William Allen White Children's Book Award, and the American Book Award. His European awards include the Premio di Letteratura per l'infanzia (Italy), the Silver Pencil Award (the Netherlands), and the Prix de la Fondation de France. On the basis of his entire body of work, Steig was selected as the 1982 U.S. candidate for the Hans Christian Andersen Medal for Illustration and subsequently as the 1988 U.S. candidate for Writing.

Stieg also published thirteen collections of drawings for adults, beginning with *About People* in 1939, and including *The Lonely Ones*, *Male/Female*, *The Agony in the Kindergarten*, and *Our Miserable Life*.

He died in Boston at the age of 95.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Robert Ford:

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