



The Bridges in Edinburgh

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The wordplay in the title sets the stage for a book that is both travel guide and fast-paced mystery. The publisher intends to create bridges of understanding among cultures through its “Going to” series. “Bridges” is also the name of an American family on vacation in Europe. The Bridges daughters hope to spend the last week of their trip in Italy or Spain, but instead, their father takes them to Scotland to stay at the home of his distant cousin, Angus.

Intrigue abounds shortly after they are shown to their rooms. The late Uncle Ambrose, a prankster, promised to leave his estate (including the lovely house in which Angus lives) to whichever relative—either the good Angus or the evil Tammie—is the first to solve a series of riddles. Angus is flustered, certain that he can’t succeed within the week allowed. Robin Bridges, age fourteen, is up to the task; she reads mysteries and draws extensively on what she has learned from the classics. She and her twelve-year-old sister, Jo, look for clues by learning about the landmarks and history of Edinburgh.

Tammie is sometimes a step ahead, but at other times, she is thwarted by the girls’ resourcefulness. Jo and Robin are also puzzled by mysterious doings at the mansion: Nelly, the housekeeper, is unfriendly, and their room is haunted. Their parents become increasingly alarmed by dangerous events, and inadvertently put the girls in harm’s way by grounding them in the mansion.

The author has written dozens of books, including *The Bridges in Paris*, *The Bridges in London*, and several “Know-Nothings” books. She also teaches creative writing at the New School University in New York City. Here, she deftly accomplishes her mission to entertain, educate, and break down stereotypes. To escape bondage in order to find the final clue, Robin persuades their guard to free them, telling him that they would really like to explore Edinburgh for just an hour. His stereotypical view of the United States, based on TV and movies, is that it is filled with violence and criminals. When he volunteers that it must be terrible to live where it is so unsafe, Robin seizes the opportunity to gain his sympathy and their freedom.

The book provides nifty references like maps, tour information, and Web sites. The series includes adventures in Mexico, Paris, and London, plus American cities. The books’ action and intrigue will keep young readers engaged. Families who read these volumes will find the familiar refrain “Are we there yet?” transformed from a complaint into a desire to explore.

LINDA SALISBURY (August 18, 2009)

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