



The Swift Boys & Me

By Kody Keplinger

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The lyrical and moving middle-grade debut from YA author Kody Keplinger!

Eleven-year-old Nola Sutton has been best friends and neighbors with the Swift boys for practically her whole life. There's the youngest, Kevin, who never stops talking; the oldest, Brian, who's always kind and calm; and then there's Canaan, the ringleader and Nola's best-best friend. Together, they have a summer of fun adventures planned.

But then everything changes overnight.

When the boys' dad leaves without even saying good-bye, it completely destroys the Swift family, and all Nola can do is watch. She tries to hold on to them, but they are changing. Kevin stops talking, Canaan starts hanging out with mean boys, and Brian is never around. Nola just wants things to go back to the way they were -- the way they've always been.

Is Nola strong enough to save the Swift boys from themselves, or has she lost them forever?

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Editorial Review

From School Library Journal

Gr 5–7—Nola Sutton was looking forward to spending the summer after sixth grade doing odd jobs and having fun with her best friend, Canaan Swift. But when Canaan's dad abruptly leaves his family, Canaan becomes first distant, and then downright hostile, forcing a hurt Nola to make other plans. She strengthens a casual friendship, makes a new friend, and gets to know her cranky grandmother a little better—and begins to accept that some things must change, for better or for worse. Copious flashbacks, demonstrating what a great friend Canaan has always been, slow what little forward momentum the plot has and make the boy's total personality change—from super friend to dog-tormenting bully—seem even more perplexing. Nola's attempt to track down Mr. Swift's whereabouts strains credulity and adds nothing to the plot; also unconvincing is much of the dialogue, though it does a good job of getting across a flavor of the Kentucky setting. Barbara O'Connor's books are a better bet for stories of friendship with a Southern accent.—Eva Mitnick, Los Angeles Public Library

From [Booklist](#)

In Keplinger's poignant middle-grade debut, 11-year-old Nola's carefree world is shattered when her best friend's father takes off without explanation. Nola and the three Swift brothers, who live in the other half of their duplex, have always been friends, but Nola is closest with Canaan. She and Canaan do everything together, from sneaking turns on a neighbor's trampoline to sharing secrets. Nola is unprepared for how sweet Canaan changes when his father leaves. Instead of confiding in her, he is sullen and angry, hanging out with the bullies who call her Nasty Nola and playing mean pranks on their neighbors. Nola is crushed, especially when her mother announces she is getting married and moving them to another neighborhood. Nola is both happy and sad, but Canaan doesn't even seem to care. Keplinger gives appropriate gravity to Nola's feelings of hurt and helplessness, while tempering her distress with reassuring outlets in her parents and two new friends. A believably bittersweet ending delivers an emotional understanding of the necessary changes we all undergo while growing up. Grades 3-6. --Krista Hutley

Review

Praise for *The Swift Boys and Me*:

"This is the sort of solid, amiable preteen summer story there used to be a lot of; let's hope this heralds a revival." -*Bulletin of the Center for Children's Books*

"Keplinger takes a stab at middle grade and completely nails it! The characters' voices are strong and this awesome tale of strength, struggle, and friendship needs to be heard, by tweens as well as adults. Nola and the Swift boys could be any one's next door neighbors, but luckily they're ours to embrace." -*RT Book Reviews*

"The small-town Kentucky setting, unfolding events, and emotional interactions between characters young and old all play their parts in establishing the story's solid sense of realism." -*Publishers Weekly*

"Realistically, there's no easy solution; the conclusion doesn't sugarcoat the pangs of growing up. A fine, honest and heartfelt coming-of-age tale." -*Kirkus*

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Antonio Duncan:

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Lauren Robinson:

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Elizabeth Givens:

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