



*Barn Swallows: the Second Adventure*: a friendship blossoms through the pain of loss.

Right from the start, something has drawn Billy and Gus together. They're pre-teens (Gus is a girl!) and even though they quarrel and squabble and seem to annoy each other, there is some kind of common bond at work, something that you can't quite put your finger on, something that might bring two hurting, young souls together.

As it turns out, Billy is hurting – his wonderful Dad Ben died last year of an aneurysm. And Gus is hurting, too – her Dad Dennis seems mean and grouchy all the time and her Mom Gloria is spending so much time working at the group home. She has an autistic younger sister Brit, who spends most of her time living at a group home; Brit's twin brother Brian died of a heart defect when he was just 18 months old.

Billy and Gus live in a rural farming community. The land is their life – that's what defines them and keeps them grounded. But farm life isn't easy – and it's even more difficult for two youngsters when they have personal, deeply emotional, crosses to bear. And there's much more than that, too, because the death of Billy's Dad has had a huge impact on his entire family, and the death of Gus' baby brother – plus Brit's autism – has placed enormous strains on her family as well.

This is the core narrative of *Barn Swallows: the Second Adventure*, a newly released youth-oriented novel from the pen of author Carolyn J. Morris. The story, in some ways, picks up where her debut novel (*Mourning Dove*) left off, with Billy still very much in mourning over the loss of his Dad, the man he looked up to more than anyone else for friendship, love and guidance. It is the inclusion of Gus' difficult life story – plus the blossoming friendship between Billy and Gus – that keeps this lovely, delicate rural tale moving forward.

Author Morris displays a deft, sensitive writing touch throughout *Barn Swallows*. Her writing is crisp, yet delicate and subtle; she treats her subjects – kids, parents and grandparents alike – with enormous respect and compassion. And, given her own Ontario rural background, she makes clear that farm life, even with its extraordinary demands and occasional frustrations, is very much in her blood.

*Barn Swallows: the Second Adventure* is a lovely novel. It will appeal to pre-teens particularly, not only for the depth of the subject matter, but also for the respectful manner with which the author paints such a compassionate portrait of her subjects and her storyline. The author does not rush to judgment – she appears to understand implicitly that every character in *Barn Swallows* has their own story to tell and their own reality to face. The result is a novel that comes highly recommended.

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Author Carolyn J. Morris is a career educator (and marvellous story-teller) based in Toronto and the rural regions of southern Ontario. She grew up on a family farm north of Toronto and now resides in the tiny rural town of Beeton. *Barn Swallows* is her second novel.

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Carolyn j Morris, Author

[cjmorris@railfencebooks.com](mailto:cjmorris@railfencebooks.com)