



Swift: The Flight and Flame Trilogy, Book One

R.J. Anderson

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In R. J. Anderson's twisting middle grade fantasy *Swift*, a pixie struggles to find her place.

Life is getting harder for Ivy, a young pixie. She's smaller and weaker than her peers, and she can't fly. Ever since her mother disappeared years earlier, Ivy's father has been withdrawn and her older brother hostile. After she befriends a prisoner, Richard, Ivy begins to suspect that not everything is as perfect as the leader of the pixies would have everyone believe. In a desperate attempt to find the truth, Ivy runs away, learning that nothing—and no one—is what they seem.

Relationships are a key within the novel. Ivy struggles to reconcile her love of her fellow pixies with their actions. The pixie persecution of faeries, her mother's apparent abandonment, and her grief-stricken father's withdrawal all present emotional challenges. Ivy learns that loving someone does not always mean agreeing with them.

Stereotypes, including notions of certain genders or groups being superior to others, are examined as Ivy forges her own path and befriends non-pixies, including a kindhearted human. Ivy's story encourages discovering the truth for oneself and speaking out for change.

Some events, including Richard's escape from an ominous Faerie empress, are underexplained within the otherwise well-developed story. The book's language is engaging and accessible, and tensions between the bright promises of the pixies' home's safety and the darker realities of its poisonousness are drawn out through detailed descriptions of elements like the freedom of the forbidden sky and the cruelty of Richard's confinement.

With magic stemming from its vibrant language and enchanted creatures, *Swift* is a spellbinding and delightful fantasy.

VIVIAN TURNBULL (September / October 2020)

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