



The Year the Swallows Came Early

By Kathryn Fitzmaurice

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"Expect the unexpected."

That's what Eleanor "Groovy" Robinson's horoscope says the morning everything begins to change. Suddenly, her father is in jail, her plans to attend culinary school when she grows up fall apart, and it feels like maybe nothing will ever be right again. But the swallows that return to her coastal town every year bring a message of hope with them that even Groovy can't ignore. Can she forgive the failings of someone she loves in order to bring her family back together again?

Kathryn Fitzmaurice's tender debut novel about food, family, friendship, and forgiveness is as full of promise as the swallows that return home to San Juan Capistrano every spring.

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The Year the Swallows Came Early By Kathryn Fitzmaurice Bibliography

- Sales Rank: #1517904 in Books
- Brand: Harper Collins
- Published on: 2011-05-24
- Released on: 2011-05-24
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 7.63" h x .61" w x 5.13" l, .44 pounds
- Binding: Paperback
- 304 pages

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

With her passion for cooking, 11-year-old Eleanor, aka Groovy, dreams of becoming a professional chef. But her father, a compulsive gambler, bets away her inheritance from her great-grandmother, money she had planned to use for culinary school. At first Groovy is as angry as her mother, who has Groovy's father arrested, yet during the next several weeks she learns that broken dreams, and broken families, can be rebuilt. Debut novelist Fitzmaurice creates a sympathetic heroine in Groovy and an interesting sidekick in Frankie, whose estranged mother makes a sudden appearance shortly after Groovy's father is jailed. Although nature metaphors (a surprise earthquake, birds returning early, dandelion seeds blowing in the wind) are overdrawn, the author's use of food motifs (particularly Groovy's ability to associate different dishes with specific events and moods) appears more relevant and smoothly integrated. Fitzmaurice does not completely resolve the family conflicts, but she provides hints that love will conquer old resentments. Ages 9–12. (*Feb.*)

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From School Library Journal

Grade 4–7—Watching helplessly as her father is taken off to jail, Groovy Robinson, 11, is convinced that there has been a terrible mistake. When her mom admits that she turned him in because he gambled away the \$25,000 savings account that Groovy's great-grandmother left her, the child shrinks into herself—disappointed, hurt, not caring about anything. Not until Groovy—now wanting to be known as Eleanor—heeds the advice of the homeless old sailor Mr. Tom does she grasp that people we love can hurt us, but that only through forgiveness can we become whole again. This first novel is peopled with three-dimensional characters whose imperfections make them believable and interesting. Groovy's big-talking, ne'er-do-well dad donates a trailer to Mr. Tom. Her beautician mom is guided by astrology, but her boundless love for Eleanor is totally grounded. And Groovy's perceptive friend Frankie is unable to grasp the real reasons that his immigrant mother left him in his stepbrother's care. The well-structured plot is underscored by clear writing and authentic dialogue, and short chapters keep the story moving. The book draws a parallel with the birds of Capistrano, and a novel that encourages understanding, tolerance, and forgiveness is as welcome as the returning swallows.—*Nancy Menaldi-Scanlan, formerly at LaSalle Academy, Providence, RI*

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From [Booklist](#)

Starred Review In San Juan Capistrano, the swallows return each year, but 10-year-old Eleanor, aka Groovy, is more concerned about her father, who was arrested before her eyes. It's shocking enough to learn that he's taken a \$25,000 inheritance left to Groovy that she could have used someday for cooking school, but it's equally hard to hear that her mother is the one who called the cops. Meanwhile, Groovy's friend Frankie has his own parental problems. Fitzmaurice, a first-time novelist, offers readers a small, quiet, yet empowering story with an underlying message of forgiveness. The plotting is sometimes creaky. Groovy's father is arrested for something that is seemingly not illegal, since he is the guardian of his minor daughter's money, and he's released from jail without a trial; but these details will be problematic for adults more than children. What all readers will appreciate are the beautiful portraits of the characters, young and old, and the way the story delicately weaves its seaside setting into the story. Groovy's first-person narrative sensitively shows both her strength and her uncertainty, and in the end readers will understand when she finally embraces what she knows to be true: You gotta forgive. Grades 4–6. --Ilene Cooper

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Gail Kernan:

This The Year the Swallows Came Early book is simply not ordinary book, you have it then the world is in your hands. The benefit you get by reading this book will be information inside this e-book incredible fresh, you will get info which is getting deeper an individual read a lot of information you will get. This particular The Year the Swallows Came Early without we understand teach the one who looking at it become critical in imagining and analyzing. Don't possibly be worry The Year the Swallows Came Early can bring once you are and not make your carrier space or bookshelves' come to be full because you can have it within your lovely laptop even telephone. This The Year the Swallows Came Early having very good arrangement in word as well as layout, so you will not really feel uninterested in reading.

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