



The Swallows

Written by Lisa Lutz

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The Swallows

By Lisa Lutz

The Swallows Novel

A new teacher at a New England prep school ignites a gender war--with deadly consequences--in a provocative novel from the bestselling author of *The Passenger* and the *Spellman Files* series.

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The Swallow's Compass

What do you love? What do you hate? What do you want?

The Swallows Nest

It starts with this simple writing prompt from Alex Witt, Stonebridge Academy's new creative writing teacher. When the students' answers raise disturbing questions of their own, Ms. Witt knows there's more going on the school than the faculty wants to see. She soon learns about The Ten--the students at the top of the school's social hierarchy--as well as their connection to something called The Darkroom.

The Swallows Band

Ms. Witt can't remain a passive observer. She finds the few girls who've started to question the school's "boys will be boys" attitude and incites a resistance that quickly becomes a movement. But just as it gains momentum, she also attracts the attention of an unknown enemy who knows a little too much about her--including what brought her to Stonebridge in the first place.

The Swallows And Amazons

Meanwhile, Gemma, a defiant senior, has been plotting her attack for years, waiting for the right moment. Shy loner Norman hates his role in the Darkroom, but can't find the courage to fight back until he makes an unlikely alliance. And then there's Finn Ford, an English teacher with a shady reputation who keeps one eye on his literary ambitions and one on Ms. Witt.

The Swallow's Compass Unlock

As the school's secrets begin to trickle out, a boys-versus-girls skirmish turns into an all-out war, with deeply personal--and potentially fatal--consequences for everyone involved. Lisa Lutz's blistering, timely tale shows us what can happen when silence wins out over decency for too long--and why the scariest threat of all might be the idea that sooner or later, girls will be girls.

A new teacher at a third-rate boarding school assigns to her creative writing students the task of answering what appear to be innocent questions. The answers reveal much more than she anticipated not only about the students themselves but about hidden activities occurring at the school. Cleverly done, with a powerful message this novel is amusing as well as uncomfortable. What bothered me most was that a friend's son spoke of a similar situation at his high school so despite the humor contained

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â€œHell hath no fury like a woman scorned?â€• Maybe. In this instance it's more like hell hath no fury like teen-aged girls who have been exploited, objectified and humiliated. Believe me, these girls aren't fooling around. ...more

The Swallows Goodreads

NOW AVAILABLE!!

this book is campy and silly while dealing with some very serious subject matter and all those earnest hand-wringing folks will likely ask if this is what we "need" right now as a society, but today "seduced by the unexpected option" i bought lavender-scented roach spray, and now i will forever associate bug-extermination with vaporized grannies, so there are a lot of things we do not need as a society, but which make unpleasant things just a little bit weirder. and that's what this NOW AVAILABLE!!

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if it sounds like this book trivializes rape culture and the objectification of women, i've explained it poorly. it doesn't diminish the seriousness of the problem to offer a book with a lighter tone about that problem. you can buy your acrid-chemical-scented bug spray and feel confident that it is addressing your issue. or you can address the issue and also have some humorous images in your head as you do so.

like spraycan grannies.

and this book's helpful blowchart:

it's a breathlessly quick read, and the pacing ushers the reader over some of the book's undeniable potholes: yes, there are too many characters and only a few are narratively significant; yes, the villains are very villain-y and there's not a lot of nuance; yes, it's convenient that all of a sudden, this longstanding and verrrrry secret society of rich lazy white boys is outed en masse, simultaneously, in a creative writing class survey; yes, a prank escalation seems like a disproportionately

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mild response to the situation, but be aware that escalation can really escalate. what starts with a stolen scooter sometimes ends more dramatically.

it's a fun and funny book, and while it may not be as #metoo #messageheavy as other recently published books on the subject, that doesn't mean it is without lessons about life and love.

“You don't make a spork for a guy you're not into.”

something to keep in mind...

come to my blog! ...more

4.5 stars, rounded up

I was a huge fan of Lutz's The Passenger and the entire Spellman series. While the Spellman books were all just great fun, The Passenger showed she had the chops to do an intriguing, serious mystery.

With The Swallows, we get something different again. Alex Witt arrives at a New England boarding school thinking she's going to teach English Lit, but gets handed creative writing instead. This isn't some posh school, it seems to be more half baked than serious. And what a cast 4.5 stars, rounded up

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Lutz retains her wicked turn of phrase ability - “Stonebridge May look like Green Gables, but it's the Bada Bing Club for the preppy set.”

Normally this subject matter wouldn't enthrall me. Pissy, entitled teenager boys lord it over the girls in the school. But, it just kept me engrossed. I wanted to see if/how the boys got their comeuppance. It's sad to think that in 2009, the girls are still seen as objects, things to be manipulated. And the ending, well, I couldn't read that ending fast enough. Wow, wow, wow.

I had one minor quibble with the book. Admittedly, we only see a microcosm of the entire school

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population, but I can't believe that a majority of the school officials and teachers would have been willing to turn a blind eye to the goings on.

My thanks to netgalley and Random House- Ballantine for an advance copy of this book. ...more

The Swallows Of Kabul Summary

Dang it. Honestly, it pains me to give this one anything less than a stellar review, as Lisa Lutz is one of my favorite authors, and I credit her Spellman Files series to getting me out of a multi-year reading slump. All that to say, please take this review with a grain of salt, and know full well that I could be the outlier here, due to the fact that I know she can write the heck out of a story.

Perhaps the fact that this one felt so off base from her previous works is what threw me off initially. Dang it. Honestly, it pains me to give this one anything less than a stellar review, as Lisa Lutz is one of my favorite authors, and I credit her Spellman Files series to getting me out of a multi-year reading slump. All that to say, please take this review with a grain of salt, and know full well that I could be the outlier here, due to the fact that I know she can write the heck out of a story.

Perhaps the fact that this one felt so off base from her previous works is what threw me off initially, so the predictable nature of this story left me underwhelmed and unsatisfied. There are a lot of characters in this story, and it was quite difficult keeping them all straight and determining just why some were even included. I love a good challenge in my reading, but I need for it to have purpose and meaning, not to just be used as a plot device to bloat the page count.

Upon finishing this book, I'm hard pressed to tell you what genre this book technically falls. Overall, I got a heavy YA vibe from the voices of the characters, setting, and plot, yet I'm unsure that this would actually appeal to the YA audience, which could be why I'm waffling around this detail. I guess there is a mystery at hand, but I can guarantee at least half of the reading population will figure it out early and be sorely disappointed at the payoff after such buildup.

Overall, I'm sure you can tell I didn't connect well with this one, but I still hold the author in the highest regard and will continue to search for future work from her. I highly recommend you give this one a try for yourself, as this could be the book for you if the synopsis sounds appealing!

*Many thanks to the publisher for providing my review copy via NetGalley. ...more

Although painful to read in some places, due to the horrific actions of a few, this was an amazing book. Clearly 5â• for me!

The message it brings to light is similar to the new form of hazing/bullying that is greatly magnified with social media. But the story is much deeper than the flippant "technology is bad" philosophy. By the end of the story, we learn the origins of the behavior and compliance of many adults, are what has allowed this culture to continue.

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This was a fast paced novel and I was completely shocked by the conclusion! The reactions from all characters is so realistic, you could have been reading a current news article concerning a boarding school or college campus.

I highly recommend this book to all YA readers. Due to explicit details, my personal opinion is 14+.

*Many thanks to NetGalley and publishers for the advanced reader's copy in exchange for my honest review. ...more

The Swallows Golf

At the beginning of this book I thought, "Okay, this clearly takes place in a fictional universe of boarding school novels where we have dropped all pretense that anything in it is real or related to real life." And I was willing to suspend my disbelief for that. Boarding school novels can be campy fun or dark microcosms of teenage misbehavior. I'm down for that. This is a school where the staff is made up of *checks notes* six adults while there are 400 students, though we only ever meet about ten of these students and the rest of them seem to not actually exist. Okay, whatever, let's do it.

Around a third of the way through I thought, "Okay, we're going to get some interesting gender wars here. Maybe this is satire? It could be satire. Nothing in it feels all that satirical but the lack of realism and the committed-to-weirdness plot could mean satire. Let's wait for some sharp topical insight." And I waited.

I should have stopped reading it once I'd given it some more space and still couldn't get my bearings. But I like Lisa Lutz, I've read several of her novels, I thought her last one was her best so far, I figured she had to have something smart waiting for me. But at the end I was just mad enough to want to throw this book.

There does not seem to be much of a point to it all. Teenage boys are terrible. Girls decide to fight back. Things escalate. It's not going to end well. The broad strokes are not exactly new, in this kind of scenario it's all about the details. And the details here never meshed. The teenage boys are so terrible they are irredeemable. We get one as a narrator who helps out the girls and maybe he's supposed to be sympathetic, but he never seems to take any responsibility for his bad actions. (No one takes any responsibility in this book because the terrible teenage boys are capable of such ridiculous revenge that no one dares, which... what??? But I guess that's okay in a book where not only are the teenage boys capable of these dramatic acts of revenge, they are also apparently capable of keeping a secret for years that they also then all decide to stop keeping for the same school assignment? I'm sorry I could do this for HOURS but I will not.) The teachers are truly awful for no real purpose except to maybe remind us that adults are just older teenagers. There is no explanation for so much awfulness, so I guess you could see this as one of those super dark books like *Fight Club* where everyone is just so totally effed-up that that is the point but this book sure seems to think the girls are at least mostly justified so I don't think that's it either! The teacher who is the closest thing we have to a protagonist is at an odd remove from the action and it's unclear what she even has to do with anything besides give us some B plot.

I do not know why Lutz's usual darkly comic gifts have failed her so utterly here, sometimes a bit would

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land but none of them ever stuck that landing. And given the amount of manipulation, sexual coercion, sharing of images of underage children, and all on display, it feels like it should all DO something. It should mean something or take you somewhere. We live in a world with so much misogyny, it's not that we don't want some humor with it, it's just that if we're going to get it in our entertainment it's still going to hurt so you have to make it worth it. You have to give us something to believe in or laugh at or get excited about.

To its credit, this book does have a truly excellent flowchart called The Blowchart that they should give out to actual teenagers because it is very good advice.

I do not think this book has much to say that is useful or interesting about feminism or patriarchy or teenage misogyny and manipulation. If you would like a book like that, I would directly you to the very excellent 2018 novel THE RED WORD by Sarah Henstra, which is also about a kind of gender war, this time at a college, that is a very smart and gutsy book that I highly enjoyed and which very much deserves your time. ...more

This little gem, set in a private north-eastern co-ed boarding school, manages to merge the overtly sexual focus of hormonal teenage boys, with the insecurity of teenage girls and the consequences of no adult supervision. The result is a maelstrom of angst that results in violence that any attentive teacher or administrator should have seen coming from a mile away.

The plot focuses on a group of over-indulged, privileged boys who rate the performance of eager-to-please teenage girls as they drop This little gem, set in a private north-eastern co-ed boarding school, manages to merge the overtly sexual focus of hormonal teenage boys, with the insecurity of teenage girls and the consequences of no adult supervision. The result is a maelstrom of angst that results in violence that any attentive teacher or administrator should have seen coming from a mile away.

The plot focuses on a group of over-indulged, privileged boys who rate the performance of eager-to-please teenage girls as they drop to their knees to offer oral sex. At the end of the year, the girl with the highest blow-job score (who is almost always in the dark regarding the entire process) is then declared the winner of the "Dulcinea Award". Though the admin and staff seem to have knowledge of this, it is with a wink and a nod that life on campus moves forward through the year. New teacher Alex Witt, however, can't, upon discovery of this perverse campus tradition, look the other way and encourages a few girls who have also uncovered the existence of the Dulcinea to stand up for themselves, develop some self-esteem and fight back. As the war is waged, loyalties are tested, traditions are toppled and reputations, as well as lives, are ultimately lost.

This book takes a hard look at what happens when we pander to elite males and sweep under the rug the concerns of our young women; when we ignore what is the beginning of the practices that eventually lead to women identifying with the #metoo movement. It is a cautionary tale that is both timely and relevant. Though a bit heavy handed at times, any teacher or informed parent will appreciate

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the kernels of truth tucked into these pages. Lutz has tapped into the culture of male-dominance that is evident even in our teenagers and carried it to a conclusion that is frighteningly possible.

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The Swallows New Orleans

This is my first Lisa Lutz book and I really enjoyed the read. This was so off the wall that I didn't take any of it seriously and just went with it - I don't think the book was meant to be serious although there are some deep-seated male/female issues shining through. You can read the intro to find out what the book it about, but let me tell you what I liked.

I thought the character Alex Witt was badass - her mother was as well so she got it honest. Gemma was a true leader and her decisiveness This is my first Lisa Lutz book and I really enjoyed the read. This was so off the wall that I didn't take any of it seriously and just went with it - I don't think the book was meant to be serious although there are some deep-seated male/female issues shining through. You can read the intro to find out what the book it about, but let me tell you what I liked.

I thought the character Alex Witt was badass - her mother was as well so she got it honest. Gemma was a true leader and her decisiveness helped move the story along. Most of the males were immature jerks. The headmaster was totally clueless! I thought the "blowchart" was a nice touch. The writing, the characters, and the plot all kept me interested. I will probably pick up another of Lisa Lutz's books soon because I enjoyed the writing.

The only thing I didn't really like was the number of points of view the story was told from. Sometimes it was hard to remember whose head you were in while reading what they were thinking/doing.

Thanks to Random House Publishing Group - Ballantine through Netgalley for an advance copy.

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I've never read anything by Lisa Lutz, but after devouring *The Swallows*, I think I may need to catch up on her previous works. When new teacher, Alex Witt, begins her tenure at Stonebridge Academy, she starts noticing some secretive activity between some of her students and the faculty at large. There's mentions of a social hierarchy between student classes—the Ten, as they like to be called are the social elite and there's one for each year in the school. Alex also starts finding out about a I've never read anything by Lisa Lutz, but after devouring *The Swallows*, I think I may need to catch up on her previous works. When new teacher, Alex Witt, begins her tenure at Stonebridge Academy, she starts noticing some secretive activity between some of her students and the faculty at large. There's mentions of a social hierarchy between student classes—the Ten, as they like to be called are the social elite and there's one for each year in the school. Alex also starts finding out about a secretive gathering of male students that keep mentioning "The Darkroom". Although teaching is not her passion, Alex stumbles on disturbing facts that she cannot allow to keep hidden. Why is Stonebridge Academy trying so hard to keep the status-quo when there's serious allegations and controversies happening under their discretion?

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Before I get any hate, I know that the story in *The Swallows* is a little all over the place at times. We had some irrelevant POVs throughout the story, the ending is very melodramatic and over-the-top, and we had a lot of main(ish) characters that served no purpose. HOWEVER, I really was enthralled throughout the storyâ€”from beginning to end. I could not put down *The Swallows* even if I tried. I wanted to find out how Alex was going to deal with the conflict at hand (which I cannot say or get into any further), and I wanted to also see how the students were handling it as well. *The Swallows* falls in between adult and young adult fiction, which worked for me. The subject matter was very not young adult, but at the same time, the narrative felt geared for a younger audience at times. Whatever that means, it worked for me. I usually do not enjoy young adult novels because they tend to gravitate towards ridiculousness, but it worked with *The Swallows*. Overall, *The Swallows* is a very compelling and real depiction of how society has, and still is, in the stone ages when it comes to gender equality. Perfect for anyone who wants a novel reflecting student life right before the #metoo era (book takes place in 2009). I think this book will have a lot of differing viewpoints, but everyone will have an opinion.

...more