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In 1993, Robert Latimer placed his 12-year-old daughter, Tracy, who suffered from cerebral palsy, into the cab of his truck and ran a hose from the exhaust pipe through the back window. His actions ignited a firestorm of debate in Canada and around the world. Was the girl's death truly a "mercy killing," freeing her from a life of debilitating pain and continual physical decline, or was it a selfish act on the part of a father who was no longer capable of shouldering the burden of caring for a child in a degenerative state?

Veteran author Kathy Stinson drew on the Latimer case for her latest work of YA fiction, in which 15-year-old David's life is thrown into turmoil when his father takes his younger sister, Ivy - severely disabled due to cerebral palsy - swimming one day at the cottage and "let her go" during one of her increasingly frequent seizures.

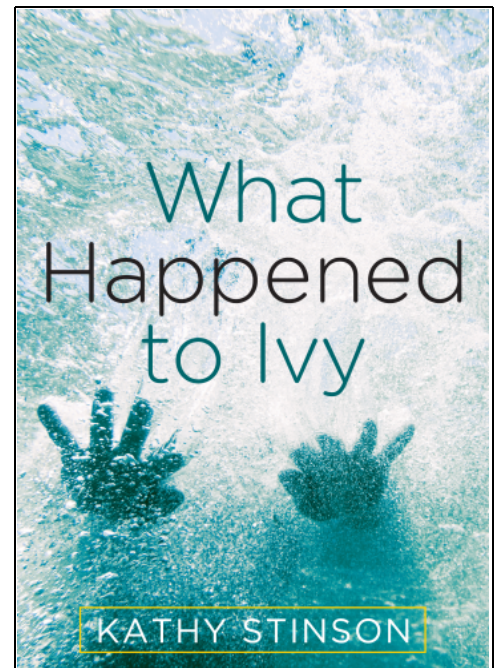
Stinson imbues David and the book's other characters with a level of depth that gives the story a documentary feel. David resents his sister for infringing on his freedom, for occupying the bulk of their parent's attention, and even for the taunts her presence invites when they're out at the mall. But he loves her, too.

The conflicted emotions are portrayed with a rawness that forces the reader to think, "What if?" The novel also succeeds in presenting the situation in a judgement-free manner. There is no editorializing on Stinson's part, and the story's conclusion is left up in the air, allowing readers to form their own opinions of what should happen next.

In a YA landscape littered with dystopia, urban fantasy, and romantic fiction, Stinson offers an important wake-up call to young readers that there is more to life, and that it's not always easy.

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What Happened to Ivy

by Kathy Stinson

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