



## Night Kites

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In *Night Kites*, seventeen-year-old Erick Rudd experiences sudden changes in his life when he leaves his longtime girlfriend to begin a relationship with the unconventional Nicki, who has been dating Erick's best friend, Jack. At the same time, Erick learns that his older brother Pete is gay and dying of AIDS and discovers that friends, neighbors, and even relatives will begin to avoid their entire family out of ignorance about the ways in which AIDS can be contracted. Interestingly, Kerr noted in an interview in *School Library Journal* that when she wrote the book, she did not expect that AIDS would continue to be an ongoing social and medical problem.

One of the most effective elements in *Night Kites* is the parallel Kerr draws between the homosexual lifestyle that Pete felt he had to keep hidden for so many years, and Erick's belief that he should keep his new relationship with Nicki a secret from his family. This parallel allows Erick to understand the isolation and loneliness that secrets and lack of acceptance can bring. As in other Kerr novels, Erick is also disappointed in many of the people around him: Pete for not revealing his homosexuality to Erick until his disease forces the issue, his parents for not accepting Pete's homosexuality as well as Erick thinks they should, and Nicki for her fickleness in dropping Erick once the family's secret is out.

While some aspects of *Night Kites* may seem slightly dated in terms of society's understanding of AIDS, most of the book remains relevant in the light of the continuing social stigmatism surrounding the disease. Kerr's portrayal of yet another young protagonist struggling to make sense out of rapid and confusing life changes also makes *Night Kites* a moving and effective novel for young adult readers.

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