



## Calvin and the Sugar Apples

**Inês F. Oliveira**

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In Inês F. Oliveira's touching coming-of-age novel *Calvin and the Sugar Apples*, a girl struggles with changes in her life.

Ten-year-old Amelia is having a rough time. Plagued by self-doubt, she's at odds with her best friend, Camila, thanks to a traumatic incident at the school talent show. Meanwhile, her treasured pet chinchilla, Calvin, has disappeared—or at least, Amelia has convinced herself that he's disappeared, because the sadder alternative is that Calvin passed away, which is too much to even contemplate.

Amelia narrates, ably presenting the world from a ten-year-old's point of view. She is dimensional—harried by insecurities, prone to impulsive and petty behavior, but well-meaning at heart. Like the sugar apple tree in her backyard that she often compares herself to, she's ignored and underestimated. But the arrival of a transfer student ignites the possibility of a new friendship as well as the opportunity to move on from past hurts.

Amelia's keen, poetic observations of herself and her world have an elevated, almost magical quality. Sometimes this works against the story—the pacing drags at points, and it takes a few chapters for the plot to snap into focus. Still, the text is emotive as Amelia is forced to confront the changes in her life. While her attempts to get out of her rut aren't always smooth, the book finds gentle humor in her adolescent angst. Its illustrations add to the book's charm, providing a cozy counterbalance to Amelia's flights of fancy.

*Calvin and the Sugar Apples* is a sensitive and rich children's novel—a thoughtful, warm reflection on overcoming loss and embracing change.

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