



[Home](#) > My Brother's Shadow

My Brother's Shadow

Books Reviewed:

[My Brother's Shadow](#) [1]

Issue:

[204](#) [2]

Reviewer:

[Matthew Martin](#) [3]

Editor's Choice:

off

Media type:

Book

BfK Rating:

4

Kaia's brother has died in tragic and terrible circumstances, and it seems as though her own life has stopped too. She feels frozen, unable to concentrate or communicate, trapped in a day she'll never forget but doesn't want to remember. Her mother can't help her: she is suffering just as much and spends her days in bed, or drinking until she passes out.

Kaia's brother comes to her in her dreams and offers advice and love, just as he did when he was alive. But it's only with the sudden arrival of a strange boy at Kaia's school that things begin to change. The other children call him Wild Boy, then ignore him, as though he isn't there. But Kaia likes wild things. The boy becomes her shadow, never speaking, but always listening. The silence and companionship he provides help Kaia come back to life.

Author Tom Avery, who won the Diverse Voices Children's Book Award with [Too Much Trouble](#) [4], is a teacher and the book was inspired by his own experiences working with a bereaved child and family. Kaia's grief and her struggle to escape it feel achingly true, the contrast between the silence and agony of her world with the noise and exuberance of her classmates stark and affecting.

Kate Grove's illustrations of trees and flowers, of Kaia and her classmates, work perfectly with the text, matching the emotions and atmosphere. It's impossible not to think of [A Monster Calls](#) [5] when reading this book, and Avery provides vivid insight into the agony of grief, the anger, guilt and paralysing inertia that it brings. This is a brave book, beautifully produced, carefully written, and it will stay with you long after you have finished.

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Links:

[1] <http://pop.booksforkeeps.co.uk/childrens-books/my-brothers-shadow>

[2] <http://pop.booksforkeeps.co.uk/issue/204>

[3] <http://pop.booksforkeeps.co.uk/member/matthew-martin>

[4] <http://pop.booksforkeeps.co.uk/issue/189/childrens-books/reviews/too-much-trouble>

[5] <http://pop.booksforkeeps.co.uk/issue/190/childrens-books/reviews/a-monster-calls>