

Bird's Flight

Audrey Murphy

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Get ready to soar with Audrey Murphy's tale of escape in *Bird's Flight*. A well-written, well-structured narrative explores the story of Ty Partridge, aka Bird, a young man determined to escape the fate of quiet drudgery in his Midwest hometown.

Greenstone, Missouri, is like any other rural mining town—conservative, close-knit, and a place where little changes. Bird has no intention of joining his contemporaries in the dark underground coal tunnels. Rather, his passion is for dance, and as a young boy he makes a conscious decision to get out of town just as soon as he can, no matter what his family (especially his father) may think. Murphy traces the young man's exodus from Greenstone to New York, where he faces the familiar trials and joys that the city has to offer. Within this story of one man's life are also the stories of many Americans intent on changing the course of their lives.

The author weaves a tightly knit narrative throughout. The plot is easy to follow, and the story isn't muddled by unnecessary side stories and plot twists. Bird's passion is dance, and he's going to see his dream come true. The story is told in the first person, and Murphy maintains the voice of a young man sure of his dreams, but who also sometimes questions whether sacrificing everything is worth the end result. The storyline flows well, except for a few awkwardly structured sentences here and there, such as the following: "My chores of feeding Brownie, our cow, and slopping the hogs gave accountability for how my time was spent too, but none of the work I did appeased dad." Otherwise, this is a well-written book.

The cover art, however, is a little confusing. At first glance, it resembles Ground Zero—piles of rubble in the foreground, with the Manhattan skyline in the background. On closer inspection, it appears to be an entrance to a coal mine, with the skyscrapers sandwiched in the middle. Perhaps it's supposed to be a metaphor for Bird's life, but the art might be worth revisiting or streamlining.

Overall, *Bird's Flight* is a thoroughly enjoyable and poignant story of love, loss, and life's teachable moments. With perseverance and dedication, Bird makes his dreams come true. Readers who have made similar life-changing (or life-affirming) journeys will find much to enjoy in this novel, and those with country roots will find the descriptions of small-town life achingly accurate. A lovely debut novel by an author who could easily build a devoted following.

BARBARA NICKLES (April 22, 2015)

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