



Flying Tips for Flightless Birds

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From debut author Kelly McCaughrain comes a sweet and kooky romcom for fans of R. J. Palacio's *Wonder*, Sarah Crossan, and Susin Nielsen's *We Are All Made of Molecules*. Twins Finch and Birdie Franconi are stars of the flying trapeze. But when Birdie suffers a terrifying accident, Finch must team up with the geeky new kid, Hector Hazzard, to form an all-boys double act and save the family circus school. Together they learn to walk the high-wire of teen life and juggle the demands of friends, family, first love and facing up to who they are – all served up with a dash of circus-showbiz magic.

Flying Tips for Flightless Birds Details

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Author : Kelly McCaughrain

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From Reader Review Flying Tips for Flightless Birds for online ebook

Trisha says

Lots to love here - lots about circuses, standing out, and finding a place to belong.

A little more serious than I was expecting, and sort of wished I got a better feeling of the Northern Ireland location.

Some really positive messages.

Ailsa says

Flying Tips for Flightless Birds is a lovely coming of age story set in rural Ireland. The book is narrated by Finch, but you also get a blog post from Birdie, which gives a bit more insight into how she's seeing the world differently from her brother. Finch lives and breathes the circus school, it's his favourite place to be. This is partly because the twins are very much odd ones out at their school, wearing flamboyant clothing and generally attracting the attention of the class bullies. The circus is his safe haven, and he can't imagine not having it in his life. Due to past events (which are eventually revealed, but not for a while), Finch doesn't really trust other people very much, and I liked how that really emphasised how much trust he puts in Birdie when they're on the trapeze. It also means that he's very reluctant to let Hector hang out with them, despite Birdie wanting to make friends.

Then a few chapters in, Birdie has her accident, and suddenly Finch has to figure out who he is when he isn't half of Birdie-and-Finch. So much of his life has revolved around his twin, and now there are huge questions that make it seem like maybe she wasn't always as open and honest with him as he thought. I loved the focus on the twins' relationship in this book. Finch really struggles in a lot of ways without her, and at times it made him a not very likeable character, but even so, I felt like that was very realistic: his actions made sense given his past experiences and current uncertainty. Even when I was a bit frustrated and annoyed with him and the choices he was making, I hoped he would figure things out.

I also liked the fact that while Finch is gay, and that's a fairly central thing, it's not a book about him coming to terms with his sexuality. I'm sure you'll be pleased to hear that there's a romantic plotline, too, but again it's a subplot, not a main focus of the story.

Flying Tips for Flightless Birds was a really fun book to read. It tackles some deeper topics, and in my opinion does them well, but overall it was a happy book which made me smile a lot. It's a great portrayal of life in a small town, where everybody knows you and you've all been at the same school together since you were five, which is absolutely something I could relate to. If you're looking for an entertaining, uplifting coming of age story with memorable characters, Flying Tips for Flightless Birds is definitely it. I'm giving it 8 out of 10.

[Review first posted on my book blog; link in my profile.]

Strawberry says

I loved this sweet and heartwarming story. Finch Franconi and his twin sister Birdie are trapeze stars at their own family's circus, a circus which is in danger of being closed down. Despite problems at school they decide to hold a special performance, to save it, but when an accident threatens to end the twins double act, Finch has to find another way to rescue the place he loves.

This was such a lovely and charming story that I'm still smiling after reading it. Set in a small village in Northern Ireland the story begins with a blog post entry from Birdie (which also explains the title of the book) before moving onto the main story which is narrated by Finch throughout. I wasn't sure if I'd get into the book at first, although it was easy to read. I wasn't sure if the circus background was one I would click with and I wasn't sure about the over the top stereotype look that Hector and some of the other characters had, but a few more pages into this and I began to enjoy it...So much so that soon I couldn't put it down!

As the story continues we find out more about Finch and Birdie's life at their family's circus school and how hard it is for them to fit in at their regular school. I have to admit quite a bit of the story was predictable for me, especially the overall ending, but I still loved reading it, and Finch's character is definitely one I grew to like. It becomes obvious early on that Finch not only struggles at school because of being part of the circus, but he also struggles because he is gay, and dresses in a way that makes him more of a target. Despite Finch's struggles and his defensiveness, I liked the self confidence he has and it's something many teens can relate to, wanting to be themselves. Birdie's blog post entries happen at the start of several of the chapters and I liked reading these as they gave an insight into actual circus life as well as giving clues to what was happening in the main story.

There are some serious moments, like when Birdie has an accident, that can leave you feeling a bit emotional, but overall this book definitely has a romantic comedy vibe, with Finch's friendship with Hector being both sweet and funny to read. I loved the way the two work on their double act, and the constant back and forth with Finch's feelings and opinions on Hector, the arguing and conversations they have. I knew (or hoped I knew) how the story would end and I was so amazed and pleased with the way that it finished. It was a lovely and satisfying ending and it definitely got me in the heart it was so sweet.

There's nothing dark in this story and barely any use of the s swear word. Overall the story is just a funny romantic contemporary which I think anyone will love reading. The story is predictable but at the same time it's one I love because the whole circus/not fitting in theme is one I and so many teenagers can relate to. I'd definitely recommend this book and want to read it again which I always see as the mark of a brilliant novel! -Thanks to Walker Books for a free copy.

Alba says

Originally posted on: <http://www.albainbookland.com/2018/05...>

Flying Tips for Flightless Birds is a sweet and quirky coming of age story set in a circus school in rural Wales. The main characters are twins Finch and Birdie Franconi, but the story is narrated only by Finch. He is a very complex and sometimes difficult to like character but he definitely steals the show.

Finch and Birdie are a team, both in stage and in real life. They don't have any other friends in high school and are often bullied by the "cool" kids. Finch doesn't seem to care, as long as they face them together. But then, two huge things happen: a new boy, Hector, joins their school and is determined to be their friend and Birdie suffers an accident. This means Finch has to face a new reality and he soon realizes that he might actually care, a lot.

I have to stay that the story was a bit slow at the beginning but after the first few characters, it picked up pace and I started having fun with these characters. Plus, at the beginning of each chapter, there is a blog post from Birdie talking about the circus school, their students, how it started and about circus history in general. I found those really interesting, not only because there were a lot of things I didn't know about the circus, but because they fitted with the story. It felt like Birdie was talking directly to Finch and helping him figure it all out.

I also enjoyed how the friendship between Hector and Finch developed. Hector was a very interesting character and I admired his dedication and optimism. Some of their scenes together were really special, and Hector's brighter personality complemented Finch's moody and sometimes darker one.

Eve beinguniquebooks says

Birdie and Finch are twins and make the Flying Franconi's part of their circus, they run an online blog to try and advertise themselves to try help business keep going.

Set in Finch's perspective, we see new boy Hector arrive and Finch's past relationship with his best friend James and what happened to them, especially as Kitty was James's girlfriend and she's the lead bully towards them.

As Finch struggles in school Hector helps him as he wants to be taught circus act stuff and so Finch repays him by teaching him that. However it's tricky as Hector takes a lot of practice to get it and settle into the basics.

Finch battles his feelings about his uniqueness in his style and sexuality drawing unwanted attention to him until Birdie has her accident and he switches to plain clothing without his partner.

Then Birdie has an accident and ends up in hospital and in a coma during which Finch must become part of a new act with Hector as he teaches him more and more the pair naturally become a great duo. Finch then finds out Sinead and James are hiding something as he sees them visiting his sister and sets out to discover something he never expected...

This is a fun but serious novel too, featuring issues such as comas, circus acts, bullying, sexuality, individuality and friendship. I loved the play of words on the title and how Finch and Hector helped each other and became a great team too once confiding their feelings. It shows sporting and hope throughout and that's what makes it all the more gripping and emotional as they never give up on Birdie or their act.

Elizabeth says

I wanted to shake Finch a couple of times when he was being an idiot, but I otherwise really enjoyed this.

Chrissi says

I was immediately intrigued by this book when I read about it in an email. The title interested me and I'm all for reading about circuses at the moment. A massive thank you to Walker for sending me a copy of this book. I'm always excited when I hear that a book is a debut. I'm always on the search for fabulous new writing talent. I am happy to say I'd easily read another book by Kelly McCaughrain, I was really impressed with her debut!

It centres around twins Finch and Birdie. They are the stars of the flying trapeze in their family circus. Finch and Birdie are treated horribly at school because they are outsiders, they dress outlandishly and express themselves through their outfits! Lots of people at school pick on them because they're different. Birdie has a terrifying accident, leaving her out of action for the family circus school. Finch has to work with Hector, a new geeky kid at school. He's a little bit hopeless at all things circus, but Finch perseveres with him. Finch and Hector grow closer as they learn to deal with friends, family and school pressures. They learn about who they really are.

I thought this was such a cute book! I have to admit that it took me a few chapters to get into it, but when I was, I was completely captivated. I found it incredibly easy to read. I loved how there were many positive messages that could be taken from the story. Finch, Birdie and Hector are such fantastic characters. I especially grew to love Finch and Hector. I loved how their friendship developed over the course of the story. I was championing Hector from the very beginning too. Such an adorable character.

I thoroughly enjoyed reading this book. I couldn't stop turning the pages. My heart grew to love these truly special characters.

Bookread2day says

This lovely story brought back my memories going to the circus laughing out loud at the clowns. Full praise to Kelly McCaughrain for this delightful first novel. I would like to thank Walker books for sending me this book to read and review.

Ellen says

This book is SO CUTE. I loved it

Vanessa says

A solid 3.5 stars.

I read this book in one day aka it was entertaining and easy to read. The cast of characters was cute, if a little bit cliché and there were a fair share of sad, cute and funny moments each.

Our first person narrator, Finch, was kind of a difficult nut. On one hand really relatable, but on the other I also kind of wanted to shake him so he would wake up so instead of only concentrating on how people treated him, he could also take a look at himself to see how *he* treated other people.

So basically it was your typical coming of age story, but with a circus background. Nothing super earth shattering, but nicely written and leaves the reader with a good feeling after reading the last page.

The focus of this story is on the relationship between twins and the friendship Finch is trying to build with the new kid in town: Hector (okay, Hector tries to build it and Finch is kind of resisting for various reasons). Hector is a true ray of sunshine and the highlight of the book and his friendship (view spoiler) with Finch is the true soul of this book (I honestly expected the sibling relationship to be exactly that).

This book is also not really heavy on plot. There is more of an overarching theme of who people really are, if they can change and where it leads them. Of course there is the Franconi circus school and the characters preparing for a big performance, but that all is of secondary importance to the characters and their relationships.

All in all this was a cute and fluffy read with a colorful cover for a rainy day.

Debra says

Birdie and Finch are twins and a double act. At school they stand out from the crowd together. On the trapeze they fly together through the air. Bullied for being different they get through because they are a double act. However, at 14 this is the time when children start to grow up in slightly different ways - how do they come to terms with this and with the biggest separation of their lives?

I really enjoyed this book. I found it very engaging despite not being the target age by more than a few years. The characters are very real & the scenarios of being bullied are realistic though slightly tamer than many children experience. The author brings the characters into that time when things start to change. People change - best friends drift apart and people grow up at different rates. This is the age where nothing stays as it was in childhood and it is difficult to negotiate.

There are plenty of excellent topics which are dealt with well in this book. Not just bullying but being different, giving people a second chance, rejoicing in individuality and understanding your own and other

people's sexuality.

A book that I would certainly recommend to a young teenager - not just because of the topics it covers but also because it is a good read!

I received a free copy from the publisher.

Sam says

I'll admit, this book took me quite a while to start liking, and I really only continued on because I was bored. I hated the main character, Finch, so very much, for traits that I now know are important to his development, and, admittedly, are accurate to his age. I also hated Hector for all the token pop culture references his character drug around for the sake of pushing the idea that 'wow, he really is a Geek, huh!'. Luckily, this book isn't a very long read. It's easily a book you could finish reading in a dedicated day, or less, if you're a fast reader.

For me, at least, the book really started moving forward and started interesting me once Birdie was in the hospital. There was suddenly weight to the school drama, to how Finch felt, to how he suddenly had to deal with everything without his twin, and it forced him to start to consider his actions alone. Without Birdie, his interactions with Hector were more fleshed out, and Hector truly began to shine as a character with his selfless attitude and loyalty. Perhaps I disliked Birdie as a character before she was given weight due to the accident, as well, but even she gained depth due to this.

If anyone else out there is like me and picks this book up, only to put it down due to how insufferable the MC's are, I ask you to keep with it. You will get the character development you want, and you will get the circus atmosphere you most likely chose this book for. I am a little frustrated that it took so long for the book to get good for myself, personally, but I'm also glad that it paid off and didn't simply leave me hanging, waiting for the spectacular, glitzy, circus-esque ending that I had been desperately hanging on for.

In some ways, this book is like the trapeze itself. Trust it to catch you when you let go. It won't let you fall.

Sasha says

Picked this one up from my YALC reading challenge TBR as I was in the mood for some contemporary. Unfortunately I didn't have a lot of faith in the story due to that very children's book cover. I quickly knew that this book WAS going to be a hit with me as both the style of writing and the story resonated in the same frequency as my soul. I freaking adored the story and the message in this book, and I want to hug the stuffing out of it. If you're looking for an amazing beach read, this is definitely a good book for you. Even if the cover is still an absolute eyesore.

Aisling O'Rourke says

----Spoiler Free Review----

Flying Tips for Flightless Birds by Kelly McCaughrain is her debut novel, a young adult contemporary set in Ireland. It is centred on Finch and his twin sister Birdie, the Franconi twins who are the trapeze stars of the family circus. However, a new boy, Hector, moves to their school one day, and he soon becomes very important to the twins. The Franconi's lives are turned upside down however when Birdie suffers a terrible fall. Can the Franconi's continue to perform after this tragedy?

This was a beautifully told story, which has great LGBTQ+ representation. The characters mature and develop throughout, and feel as though they jump off the page, similar to their circus performances. I've always loved stories based around a circus, and this novel didn't fail to disappoint.

I also liked the format that this novel was told in. The beginning of many chapters features a blog post written by Birdie in which she talks about interesting facts about their own circus, or circus' in general. These posts kept the novel fresh and engaging, as you never knew what she was going to write about next.

I also enjoyed the humour. It flowed effortlessly and never felt forced. As Hector and Finch get to know each other, we see how Hector's clumsiness makes him the perfect clown, with Finch as his partner in crime.

This novel also teaches the important lesson of not judging people. As the novel unfolds, the reader learns important truths about each of the characters that help explain why the characters act in certain ways. These discoveries led me to view certain characters in a more positive light toward the end of the novel.

My only criticism was that I felt Finch was a bit cruel to Hector at the beginning of the novel, but this changed as the novel progressed.

Overall, I give this book 4.5 out of 5 stars. I recommend it to anyone looking for a light hearted YA read, as it is a perfect summer read.

Katy Noyes says

A circus school setting for an adolescent tale of growing up, family, love and accepting who you are.

I'll get it out of the way first - I didn't like the title. I didn't really see the relevance and thought it could have been something more pithy or cropped. That may be just me though, and it certainly didn't spoil my enjoyment of the quite novel story inside.

One of a pair of twins, Finch, narrates the story of his world - a life he shares with his twin Birdie and their family, as teachers and performers in their own circus school. Juggling (sometimes literally!) school work and the life of a teenager with their rehearsals and performances, Finch comes across as very dedicated to his art but also a bit of a killjoy.

Desperate to attract new custom to keep afloat, we get an insight into Birdie's mind too, through her blog, meant to attract new students, and it's a good thing we have these insights, as Birdie falls prey to a heart-stopping accident and Finch is left alone, a twin without its partner, to try to save Franconis alone.

Or is he alone? Despite his defiant and uncivil demeanour, a new student refuses to give up and stop trying to learn from him. Hector wants to be a part of the circus.

I really admired the way in which Finch opened up to us before our eyes as the pages progressed. I gradually saw my feelings for him shift as I saw his interactions with others, saw Birdie's life, saw Hector and his family. He's a complicated character.

There are some heart-warming scenes between Hector and Finch as they use their unique talents and work together, and a fresh modern look at the old Mickey Rooney "let's put on a show!" theme. Especially as it's a circus. The use of the school context and seeing these characters in a school situation was also well played and written. Some minor characters get a little limelight and come across as realistic teenagers.

Finch is a great creation, he's almost but not quite an 'unreliable narrator' as it's fairly obvious at times what he isn't saying, feeling or admitting, but it's also not quite certain exactly how that will fit in with others.

A mature and 'different' YA novel, a fresh setting and protagonist, with a contemporary theme that needs discussing.

For ages 13 and above.

With thanks to Walker Books for the sample reading copy, sent for review purposes.
