

Title: *The Revolution of Birdie Randolph*
Author: Brandy Colbert
Genre: Realistic Fiction

Reviewer's Name and Grade: Prisha S., 11th Grade

Date Reviewed: August 27, 2020

The Revolution of Birdie Randolph takes place in present-day Chicago. The main character, Dove "Birdie," is a high-schooler going into her junior year. We learn that her mother, Kitty, is strict and puts pressure on Dove regarding school. She co-owns a hair salon underneath the family's apartment. Dove's father named Raymond is a kind, hard-working parent who doesn't see Dove often. Mimi, Dove's sister, is in college in Wisconsin and gives great advice to Dove. Laz is Dove's best friend. They always spend time together and it is later revealed that Laz is gay. His mother is named Anyana who works with Kitty.

The story begins with Dove being upstairs in the apartment when she is greeted by an unfamiliar woman. Dove is thrown off, but the woman reveals herself as Carlene, Dove's aunt. She hasn't seen Dove in many years, but with her sudden return, Dove's learn that she has had substance abuse problems for many years and has gone through rehab several times, as well as some relapses. Kitty and Carlene are sisters, but it's clear that they have a tense relationship because of their curt remarks to each other. Carlene spends time with Dove and they form a close bond.

Meanwhile, Dove is dealing with feelings towards a boy named Booker. They begin to see each other more, but Dove is aware that his past might seem to interfere with his true intention according to her parents. Booker was in juvie years ago because of an altercation with a football coach. He also lost his mother to cancer. Booker's father forced him to quit football, so he sought love with Dove which he might have lacked through his childhood. Dove is nervous to introduce Booker to her parents, so she lies when she goes to meet him.

Tensions between Kitty and Carlene rise, and Dove gets suspicious. She overhears a conversation Carlene had with a friend which confuses Dove. Towards the end of the story after a stressful event transpired, Dove, Kitty, Raymond, and Carlene are together. They are all upset and making hurtful comments to each other. It is revealed that Carlene is Dove's biological mother and Raymond is her father. Kitty became Dove's legal guardian after Carlene suffered through addiction and went to rehab. The family has a heartfelt, honest conversation at the end of the story; Carlene and Dove's bond is even stronger than before.

Did the plot keep you interested?

Yes, several chapters ended with cliffhangers which kept me hooked to the story. There were also some pivotal plot points which made those storylines surprising.

Was the pace of the book too fast, too slow, or just right?

The pace of the book was just right. The plot was changing and growing at an appropriate pace for the reader to comprehend.

What grade level(s) is this book appropriate for?

This book is appropriate for grade levels 10-12.

What type of reader would you recommend this book to?

I would recommend this book to a reader who enjoys coming-of-age, heartfelt stories dealing with the struggles teens face.

What other information do you think would be helpful for teens to know about this book?

This book dives into some topics that are taboo for families like Dove's, so the story can help readers relate and not feel alone if they deal with these issues as well.

Rating: *5 stars*

I enjoyed reading about a teenager my age who struggles with problems that my peers and I also deal with. This also helped me understand the problems and outcomes regarding addiction and its role in relationships.

Reviewer Name and Grade: Peter S., 10th Grade

Date Reviewed: December 23, 2020

The Revolution of Birdie Randolph is a realistic fiction story about the experiences of Dove "Birdie" Randolph, a black sophomore girl in Chicago, facing a strictly academic summer beneath her mother's tightening grasp until her long-lost aunt appears, changing everything which is regular in her life. Dove lives with her mother and father above her mother's salon, and her sister Mimi is away at college. At first, Dove's summer seems strictly planned out by her mother, filled with SAT prep and hanging out with the one friend her mother approves of, her family friend Laz. Regardless of her mother's plans, however, Birdie has met a boy named Booker with a darkened past, including time in juvie and the death of his mother, which she feels like her parents would disapprove of. Dove had previously dated a boy her parents approved of, Mitchell, an ideal student defined by the same kind of regularity that she was, for a year and a half, but for her Booker is a new experience, because she is involved with him and cares for him in a way which she could not for Mitchell. Booker is a secret that Dove keeps from her parents, when her Aunt Carlene appears, who nobody in the family has seen for years. Dove finds out later that this is because she is only recently sober, and that she had suffered from alcohol addiction for years. Despite her mother's general coldness towards Carlene and her less rigid ways, she moves in temporarily, and Birdie finds herself creating a warm connection with her aunt. As tension builds in the family, partially as a result of Carlene's arrival, Birdie's secrets, and perhaps some held by her parents and Carlene, the sketchy balance which held Dove and her parents together falls apart, and will have to be rebuilt.

Because the book covers a lot in a short span of time, it moved quickly but not too quickly, and I found the pace to be very reasonable. While the reading level in this book is relatively low, the I would recommend it to the older spectrum of teen readers due to the issues of race and sexuality raised in the book, in addition to explicit descriptions. I would overall recommend this book to anyone interested in just reading a good book, as I don't believe that it would cross any major boundaries for anyone in the demographic that I previously named. I just think that it's important to keep an open mind when you read the book, because its tone drastically shifts towards the end.

In conclusion, I would rate this book four out of five stars. While the book was excellent and intriguing, I just don't think it deserved five stars. However, I would not hesitate to recommend the book to someone.