*Flight Behavior*

By Barbara Kingsolver

Genre: Adult Realistic Fiction

Published: 2012

Rating: 4.5 out of 5 stars

I usually prefer to read fantasy or dystopian sci-fi, but this time I decided to read *Flight Behavior* just on an impulse and because someone told me that Barbara Kingsolver is a good writer. The book was surprisingly good, and it reminded me that I should give realistic fiction more of a chance. *Flight Behavior* was a touching story that made connections to my own life in many places and opened my eyes to other things I’d never known.

Dellarobia Turnbow is a Tennessee farm wife unsatisfied with her dull, monotonous life and unhappy marriage. The story begins with her ascending the mountain behind her house when she comes upon a huge mass of orange covering the forest like a lake of fire. Dellarobia returns to her house in shock, and pretty soon her husband and his parents discover the spectacle too. They realize that it’s actually a colony of monarch butterflies settling in a different place from their usual winter habitat. Word spreads, and the phenomenon attracts scientists and news reporters to the tiny town where Dellarobia lives. With the new fame and new people, Dellarobia finds her life changing while she navigates rocky waters with her marriage and her past.

One small thing I disliked initially was how the first chapter dragged on and on as Dellarobia climbs the mountain and continuously ruminates about the disappointments in her life. That almost put me off from the rest of the book. However, once I got past those pages, I warmed up to the story because of the well-written prose and plot.

Barbara Kingsolver’s writing, although slightly dense, is eloquent with perfect metaphors for every snapshot of life. The figurative language expresses Dellarobia’s everyday emotions, worries, and thoughts in a way that I can relate to easily. It’s as if there are a million little truths, tiny but accurate observances of human life hidden within the text of each page. The nature imagery and cultural descriptions are also beautiful. Kingsolver evokes a very vivid sense of the Southern small-town life in which the characters act out their stories.

The descriptions of Dellarobia’s past and the mistakes she made to end up in her position are convincing and raw. Her actions contribute to the development of her character, rather than her personality being directly stated to the reader. Kingsolver also skillfully crafts the relationships between Dellarobia and the supporting characters. I really love how, as the story goes on, we learn more about characters who initially seem antagonistic to Dellarobia. The reader learns alongside Dellarobia that there is more to every person than just what meets the eye.

As a whole, *Flight Behavior* tackles issues such as climate change and the human condition, common topics that we’ve all heard about. Except this book puts those issues in the context of normal people’s lives changing undeniably, which makes a powerful impact on the reader. With memorable characters, *Flight Behavior* stays true to the perfectly human struggles and the bittersweet triumphs we all go through in life.