



Songbird

Angela Fricstoe

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There are defining moments in life when everything changes. For Dani Mays, it was the day she witnessed her father kill her brother. Now seventeen years-old, she still hasn't put it behind her.

After Jace's death, she bounced between her alcoholic mother and foster homes, until she found a permanent place. And a reason to stay: Reece Tyler. He's her best friend, yet Dani wants more from Reece.

Faced with possibly losing Reece, Dani struggles to define his place in her life and escape the memories of her brother's death and the influence it has over her choices. Even as she weaves the pieces of her heart back together, the past becomes more than a memory when a former foster brother reappears and Dani begins receiving threatening phone calls.

Songbird Details

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From Reader Review Songbird for online ebook

booknerd_dork says

*****4.5*****

This is the second time I read Songbird and I remembered why I loved the book.

It is beautiful! Going through emotions and life story of Dani was lovely. Her craving for someone to love her after her brother Jace's murder by her own father left her alone as her mother found solace in the habit of drinking, same as Dani's father and being their abuser.

The start made me cry, and it totally grasped me in the story. Even second last chapter made me cry. Thanks! for not making it a tragedy. This story will be read by me many time in future.

I just wanted to know more about their life ahead after going through so much; heartbreak, confusions and loving each other even thinking it was one sided.

I want to read more about Colin too!! Please make a book for him too Angela! :)

This is a must read! You can find it on Wattpad, so get going

Linda Ulleseit says

Songbird is a fabulous tale of perseverance. It's a romance set among the hardships that plague Dani Mays, the main character. Dani is haunted by witnessing her father kill her brother, by living with an alcoholic mother, by being in and out of foster homes. Reece, her best friend, her love, is the only constant in her life. But she keeps pushing him away. Parts of this book are terribly sad, but overall it is an incredible testament to the power of love to overcome all odds.

Heather says

This wasn't bad, but it wasn't good. Will I read it again? No. And I'm glad I didn't buy it. But, the story wasn't a complete loss. It was interesting. I wanted to see where it was going and how things would play out for Dani. Reece is a likable guy. Dani, however, is an idiot. And, man, is she lucky that Colin is actually a decent guy.

The drama with the "threatening phone calls" was a bit hokey for me. It seemed forced, and it seemed to be thrown in to add something other than the ongoing relationship drama that was central to the story. Toward the end, when that particular part plays out, I all but rolled my eyes. (Can't roll eyes while reading!) It was forced and rushed.

I often felt like things were over-written. It's almost like the author was trying too hard. Over-explaining things. Or trying to write more eloquently than was necessary. I'm not entirely sure. And in some cases, the verbiage just confused me. Or at least made me have to stop and read it again, to make sure I read it right. One example:

The touch of him was so natural, how could I ever have thought he didn't love me?

The "touch of him"? I get what is trying to be said here, but there are better ways to do so.

A few other things didn't work for me:

There's little to no talk about football until Thanksgiving is approaching. And, at that point people are worried because Reece, who apparently is a good player, quit. And there's more football talk after Thanksgiving. This is high school we're talking about. With the exception of the playoffs and tournaments, high school football is generally over by November. At least in my corner of the country. Perhaps it's different in Colorado? Even if it is, why isn't his football prowess mentioned earlier?

A lot of the dialogue is somewhat off. It just isn't very natural in some places. And in a few, it's just wrong. Like Dani calling Reece's mom and chewing her out, calling her a selfish bitch out loud. Just didn't work for me. I get what she's doing. I get the circumstances, but I just don't think that works.

Grammar. I know I read an ARC, and it actually was pretty good overall. There were some things, though, that I found mildly annoying: using "effecting" instead of "affecting" in one spot. Mixing up lay and lie. Overuse of apostrophes (they should NEVER be used to note plurals). Some articles (the, an, etc.) missing. Stuff like that. Thankfully, it wasn't so bad that I couldn't get into the story.

Despite all of that, I did find Dani's story interesting. I was engaged and interested for most of it. It's a fast, easy read, and I am not sorry I took the time to enjoy the story.

Crystal says

I found Songbird to be a beautiful and honest book to read. I enjoyed reading about Dani and her love for Reece, who is her best friend. However she believes the Reece does not love her back and her heart breaks a little each time he watches him go out with another girl. Then a boy shows up at her school and he looks familiar but Dani can't place him, she only knows she wants to stay away from Colin. Switching between flashbacks and her current life you get a real feel for what Dani has gone through in her life to make her into the girl she is today and I as the reader really marveled at how grounded she was despite the hand she had been dealt. But she was lucky. She had been given a steady foster family, the Thompsons, and a steady friend in Reece.

Then Reece invites her to the Homecoming Dance and things change, and then they change again and Dani's world turns upside down and she has to figure out how to make things right again and whether she wants to make things right again because suddenly Colin is in her life and he and she work through some things together and become close friends. As their friendship grows and Reece grows jealous things become tense. Dani waffles back and forth and some suspense is thrown in. More flashbacks and more suspense make for an even better book, one that I could not seem to put down.

And in the end I was happy. I liked the outcome. I felt it was a real outcome and even though I wanted more I thought it was a great way to end this book. I really liked all the characters. I did not like the way they behaved sometimes, but that's teenagers and adults alike, they don't act like they should at all times, as Dani, Reece and Colin display as well as Dani, Reece and Colin's parents as well. Songbird is a great book, it's entertaining, it has some lessons that can be learned, it has some romance and it has some great friendships. I really enjoyed the book.

DelSheree says

Some readers love to read books that will let them escape the real world for a few hours. Some prefer the

realism of everyday life, joyful or tragic. I tend to be among the first group...usually. I know there are bad people in the world who do horrible things, so I don't typically like reading about them for fun. For anyone like me, don't pass Songbird by just because it doesn't have any magic, vampires, or alternate realities.

Dani Mays is a victim of tragedy. Watching her brother shot down by her own father left scars, there is no doubt about that, but that one event would have more effects on her life than she would realize as a small child.

Songbird opens with Dani as a small child, but the death of her brother cuts her childhood short personally and in the book. Jumping forward to a seventeen year old Dani, the effects of her difficult life are seen in almost everything she does. She is careful, slow to trust and even slower to forget, and desperate to please those she loves partially out of a need to show her love, and partially out of fear that if she doesn't she will lose them.

That duel need frames the romantic portion of Songbird's story line. Reece Tyler is Dani's link to acceptance and hope for a better life. She loves him. She can't say no to him. She treasures him above anyone else in the world...except maybe the memory of her dead brother. Their love story is tainted early on by Dani's past.

Angela does such a great job of weaving past hurt into the current time and twisting it into a mess you are sure will never be worked out. At different points in the novel you will be rooting for Reece, but then lean toward Colin. A few times I found myself so frustrated with Reece I didn't want him to end up with Dani, but at other times I wanted to shake Dani for not seeing her own faults and fixing them. Needless to say, Angela's portrayal of a young girl so damaged by failed family relationships that forming a new, normal one seems almost impossible is engaging and hard to put down.

But if you're thinking all Songbird has to offer is some teenage romance complicated by death, keep reading. Not only does Dani's past make having a romantic relationship difficult, it brings her safety into question as well. When Dani starts receiving strange and threatening phone calls she begins to worry that someone from her past has caught up with her. Who is causing her so much distress...I'm not going to tell, of course, but it isn't easy to guess. Angela kept her hints small and the possibilities great for who could be the culprit. You'll guess, sure you know, only to find out you were wrong.

The combination of romance and mystery is balanced very well. I found both sides of the engaging, with neither one becoming too dark or graphic. The scary side of humanity is represented very well, but the reader isn't bombarded with it. I finished the book saddened by what some people will do, but comforted that there is still enough good in people to make up for it.

Chrissy says

Love, love, LOVED this book!!!

Kristina Franken says

I highly recommend this book for anyone

FTC: I received a free copy of this book and was not reimbursed in any other way.

Kim says

Absolutely beautifully written, clean, inspirational young adult romance!! Now, by 'inspirational' I do not mean religious. I mean that the story revolves around a young woman who has a very dysfunctional family, has faced severe loss in her life, moved around foster home to foster home...but despite all of that, she comes out a winner. She's a good girl, lucky to have been placed in mostly good foster care homes (Note: There is no crying about horrible foster care which I was really thankful for; because as I know there are bad foster care situations, it always seems that the focus goes in that direction. I don't think I have ever read about an overly good foster home, it was nice). She's also been lucky in the friend department as she made friends with a boy in the 3rd grade and remained best friends with him through their current time as seniors in high school. When things get weird with that boy, she finds another boy bestie, also very committed to her. This is a book about friendship, love, relationships, parents, and the world in general for teens following their hearts. I LOVED it! This was one of those I eenie, meenie, minie, moed when picking out - and I believe I did it just right. SO glad to have read this book. Very touching with excellent characters you care very much for. The only sorta-problem I have with it is that the ending was a little abrupt. It was fairly obvious which direction the main character was moving toward in the end...but - still...I really like things all spelled out for me. Plus, there was so much more that could have been added in. I really appreciate the rare stand-alone book, but this one is one I really think could be series'd-off. I want to know more about these characters and how their lives turn out. I could imagine, but nahhhh...that's WHY I read!!!!

5 sparkling stars all the way! Beautiful! Relevant! Romantic! Touching!

Ashley says

Originally reviewed on my blog, Books from Bleh to Basically Amazing.

Songbird by Angela Frisroe is a book that I am very conflicted about. With a beginning like this book has, it should have been Amazing! So why, now that I'm finished do I feel a little more meh? Let me 'xplain.

Songbird begins when Dani is 6 years old and she watches her alcoholic father shoot her 16 year old brother, Jace, in the park. Jace is her hero, her savior in a violent, abusive home. The first four pages of this book, FOUR PAGES, made me cry. Do you know what it takes to make someone cry within the first four pages?! Amazing skill, that's what.

By page five, I'm completely invested in this story, completely invested in Dani and completely hurting and rooting for her. But then... I sort of detached from the story. By the description of the book, I expected the story to focus on Dani coming to terms with the death of her brother, the imprisonment of her father and a mother turned alcoholic, and all the baggage that accompanies this. I also expected music to play a huge role in Dani's life, considering that the title of the book is Songbird.

But, this is not what I got. Dani spent years bouncing between foster homes before finally setting in with her current 'parents'. Here, in this new home, she finally has a sense of stability, she has a best friend she trusts completely, who she knows will never do anything to hurt her and will always protect her (much like long-dead Jace) and she is finally feeling okay. Dani is still insecure, which is natural. Everyone she's ever truly loved has either been taken from her, or chosen to leave her behind. She's worried that her foster parents won't want a relationship after she turns 18 and she's terrified that if she tells Reece, (the best friend) that she has loved him, been in love with him forever that it will change things and she will lose him as a friend.

With all that emotional pain, all that drama, do you know what the primary focus of the story was? Reece. Yup. Reece. I've made no secret of the fact that books that revolve almost completely around the romance are not really my thing. I don't read many, and when I do, I have to be in a very specific mood. So I was quite disappointed to realize with all that potential, all those possibilities, Fristoe decided to make Dani's biggest problem her friendship and potential relationship with Reece. And, I thought that Dani handled it horribly! Admittedly, Reece could have done much better as well, but I thought Dani was incredibly selfish throughout a vast majority of the novel. You'll know exactly what I mean when you read the book.

Another thing that really bothered me about this book was the addition of the threatening phone calls Dani begins to receive. (Not a real spoiler- it mentions this in the synopsis). The whole thing felt really contrived, really unlikely and simply a plot twist to further the Dani/Reece drama. The moment felt very 'Jump the Shark' (Wikipedia knows!) and I kind of rolled my eyes a bit. Definitely a WTF moment.

I was also disappointed at the lack of music in the story. The title and synopsis make it sound like music plays a huge part in Dani's life. We are told it's important to her, but we are never really shown that. There were a few references to the notebooks Dani carried with her to include her song lyrics in and how important they were to her, as well as 2, maybe 3 instances where we read these lyrics and that's about it. No more mention of music, even though it's supposed to be something that defines her.

However, even with these things that disappointed me, my overall feelings about this book are positive. I genuinely enjoyed reading the book and learning about Dani. Interspersed throughout the story are a series of flashbacks, giving us more insight into Dani's past. We see what happens with her father before his capture by police, how her mother slips farther and farther into her addiction to cope with what life she has left, what happens in the foster home where she met Colin (which would add way to much to a review to get into. ;p) and so much more. We learn so much about Dani and her relationships with others and how they formed through these flashbacks, and other than that amazingly powerful opening chapter, they were the highlight of the book for me.

The times when we were able to learn more about Dani and how she is learning to deal with the terrible hand life has dealt to her were the highlights of the story for me, and the reason why I say that overall, even with several things that I found to be bothersome, this is definitely a book I'm glad I read and it is one that I would recommend to others, although I would want to discuss it with them first.

Lili says

Dani has always had to deal with the death of her older brother, including the memory of her abusive father shooting him right in front of her. Jumping through foster homes was no picnic for her, and when she finally settled down in one that was perfect enough to be called home, she still had to deal with the constant reminders of the past haunting her. Being put through hell at such a young age steeled Dani and prepared her in a sense not known to most children her age for harsh reality. Having the innocence of childhood robbed from her, she took solace in her best friend and the love she found in his protectiveness of her. Reece Tyler became Dani's rock in fifth grade and has been nothing more for the following seven years. When all their history finally intensifies their friendship and Dani can't hold back anymore, it's Reece who's put in the hot seat.

Soon after he makes his decision the unexpected reappearance of a forgotten foster brother stirs up what was left of Dani's inner peace. An ensuing love triangle begins to form, one of the most endearing you'll ever read.

At first, as I was reading through Dani's history I thought she was a bit naive when it came to making

relationships and processing their progress. However, it became obvious that her tendency to categorize the people in her life into particular roles is her rational thinking trying to make sense of what state her life is in and dealing with it. Everything truly came down to how the connections and emotions built up when she was little and with her fractured family affected her future daily life. Both of her relationships with Reece and Colin really made Songbird an engaging book to read because through Dani's eyes it was like a chain reaction. The author made it seem like all the people Dani loved were connected in a way. That in turn made the book more approachable because of the reader's ability to relate with the main character.

Songbird was easily was one of those touching tearjerkers that has a strong main character to root for till the very end. Fristoe's writing style was uncomplicated and easy to follow along as the flashbacks were multiple and interspersed throughout the book. The plot itself made you predict numerous outcomes for the ending but it was what caught me most off guard and was most satisfying of all.

Grade: B

Courtney Vail says

Songbird is a sweet story that perfectly captures the quest for love, laced with moments of pain and suspense, and you end up being sucked in from the very first words. The first chapter is so horrific and gut-wrenching and helps readers instantly sympathize with poor Dani, as the then six-year-old witnesses her brother's murder by her father from a playground tube she's hiding in.

Now, at seventeen, Dani yearns to escape her past and find love in the eyes and arms of her best friend, Reece, but right when the bonds of her friendships with him are strained, her life gets chucked into further turmoil at the resurfacing of a former foster brother in her school and threatening phone calls she begins receiving. She must make peace with her past and self-reflect to discover if her heart's desire is really her true love or just a replacement for her brother. And by the time the haze clears and the caller mystery plays out, will it be too late to follow her heart?

Some YA authors use empty, bland first person narrators, but Fristoe's use of Dani's voice immediately strikes chords of confidence and surety. Aside from a couple of grammatical slip ups, there's no hesitation or clumsiness or amateurism anywhere in sight in this debut novel. It's rich in detail and characterization and is packed with plenty of showing actions.

Songbird is light on plot, but it's the perfect read if you're looking a story that will tug at your heart and stay with you long after you close the cover ... or turn off your eReader ... or whatever your word-addiction vice may be. :)

Amber says

Grief and growth combine in Songbird to weave a heartbreaking tale of one girl organizing the pieces of her broken life. Utilizing both the past and the present, Songbird is filled with all of the high and low notes in Dani's life. Dani's physical and emotional journey is gripping and realistic and the three boys that love her are entrancing.

After seeing her father kill her older brother at six, living off and on with her alcoholic mother and being tossed from foster family to foster family, Dani is struggling to reconcile all of her grief from the past. Each

day is a constant reminder of the hurt she's suffered and Dani is finding it hard to get out of the past long enough to live this life she has now. As a reader, I really wanted things to look up for Dani. At the same time, I did grow frustrated with her when she wouldn't make things better for herself. She has a major crush on her friend Reece but can't imagine telling him. While I understand this, I wanted her to take charge of her life since so much of it before had been reacting to awful situations she was put in. When she finally does, her voice rises into one of the most beautiful crescendos I've encountered.

I don't envy Dani her choice between Reece and Colin. Reece has been there for Dani since she moved in with her permanent family. He's been her biggest supporter and her protector. But he's also never noticed her the way she notices him until homecoming. But after, he gets weird. At first, Dani really doesn't like Colin but she gets to know him and all that changes. Colin can very easily shift into the hole that Reece leaves in her life. I liked that the boys were both good choices and that Dani doesn't have an easy time figuring out what's right. While Dani does make some poor decisions getting to her final one, I understand all the reasons behind them and have to say that I'm not sure I'd have done anything differently if I was in her place.

And then, of course, there is Jace. He's a physical presence in the novel even though we only get him in flashback. Dani's transformation through is directly related to her grief at the loss of her brother and "normal" life without him. While the switch between past and present was a little jarring sometimes, it worked well to really make the reader understand Dani's sorrow and the trials she had to face. I wish the mysterious phone calls had been in the novel a little earlier and with more variety to spice up the plot more but the story was far more about Dani dealing with her demons. Ms. Fristoe approaches the subject with tenderness and is easy to read.

Songbird is a touching debut about loss and life after. Dani's journey was a pleasure to go along with and the past and present merging into the story was an effective tool for showing the reader the demons she keeps. If you like stories that deal with sorrow and song, this is definitely one not to miss!

Emily says

The emotions in this book had me laughing one minute and crying the next. As Dani struggles to forget the past, having watched her father an abusive parent and wife beater kill her older brother and the only stability in her life. Her mother's quick descent into alcoholism as well as defending Dani's father she quickly moves through to the adoption system. Some families were good occasionally getting back to her mother but still her mother refusing to ever fully stop having self-pity on the situation her life had dealt her. Dani ends up back in the system and with the family she now knows and loves as her parents the Thompsons. They support her and help her through her life like parents should.

Her best friend from the first time she came to live with her parents is secretly the love of her life and she writes songs filled from her love and pain. Reese is the one thing in life she can't live without or so she feels. But she is too scared to tell him that he's not really like a brother to her but her one love. It takes Collin a guy from her past from a bad foster home to help her realize that some things aren't always best locked away and people aren't always what you picture or seem. That some emotions are reciprocated and that forgiveness, life, love and death all make us the person we are.

In that she gets the courage to tell Reese how she feels, to find out that he feels the same and that Colin is one of the best friends she never thought she would have. It's a captivating and heartwrenching tale with a surprise twist at the end and the happiness that everyone longs for eventually as well as the strength to not dwell in the past but live for your future.

Cate (The Professional Fangirl) says

This is a **Reading Good Books** Review.

* In compliance with FTC guidelines, it should be noted that I received the book for free.

Songbird is about 17-year-old Dani Mays and her struggles with her past and present. She had a turbulent childhood; going from one foster home to the next, dealing (or trying not to) with an alcoholic mother and a convict father. It all started when she witnessed her own father murder Jace, her beloved brother. She was six years old. Eventually, Dani settled in with the Thompsons and led a somewhat normal life. But it was her best friend, Reece Tyler who made it all better. Reece was good-looking, popular, but he chose to be Dani's friend nonetheless. He had been there with her always. Sort of like, another brother to take the place of the one she lost. Her future was looking bright until her past comes back to haunt her.

This is my second Young Adult book in a row. I must admit, I am still a reluctant reader. Let me tell you what I liked about it. It is well written. Easy to read, easy to understand. It is also very plot driven. Everything, from Jace's death to Dani's struggles with her friends melded together nicely in the end. I must say, the funeral for Jace, as told in a flashback, was very good. I teared up a little bit. It dealt with heavy emotions and situations – abuse, murder, family dysfunction – but it is balanced by happy thoughts such as love and friendship.

The thing between Reece and Dani was so cute in the beginning. I was rooting for them. Even when Colin, the new kid in school, came around, I was still hoping they would end up together. But it became old so fast. Nothing happened for the first few chapters other than Dani pining for Reece, thinking he's cute and he'll never go after a girl like her, all that jazz. Colin comes into the picture and Reece goes all possessive. Then it becomes this constant “will they or won't they” among the three characters. When one gives in, the other shies away... and vice versa. It eventually got so tedious that I found myself rolling my eyes, thinking, “not again”. I felt that the book could have used less of that and still would be an effective story.

Then came the weird phone calls. That plot line, to me had so much potential. If developed earlier/better, it would have been a good B-story. But it was lost in the sea of the Reece-Dani-Colin drama that you could take that whole part out and it would not affect the ending very much.

I could see the author's struggle between keeping the mood light and fun (with all the teen romance aspects) and inserting a bit of a suspense/thriller aspect. I just wish she took the risk of developing the darker plot point further. I could have used more of that and less filler.

Rating: 3/5.

Recommendation: Teens would like this and find that they can somewhat relate to what Dani is experiencing in high school.

Patricia Mckelvy says

Songbird is a wonderful refreshing debut novel, showing promise for a new author and audience. While this novel does have a very serious undertone and back story of abuse, drinking, and such affects, Angela Fris toe

has brilliantly created 2 worlds - Dani's present, in which she can breathe and live, and her past, in which she is stifled and constrained. It is only when Dani grows into her own, do her 2 worlds collide, forcing her to face and reconcile with one or both. Even though her past obviously and understandably affects her present in every aspect of her life, Dani can be seen as almost 2 characters. As with most novels that tackle such topics as abuse, drinking and even murder, readers are given insights into the character's past through flashbacks. Usually, I find these to be annoying, uninformative, and ill timed. However Angela Fristoe has cleverly and perfectly created and placed every single flashback, coinciding with the many aspects of Dani's fears and troubles.

While there is a love interest (or 2....) in this novel, it is not overdone. Even more so, you get to see not only Dani grow as a character both inside and outside this 'love' plot, but also her love interest Reese. Not only was love tested but friendships were tested as well, of which Angela Fristoe has beautifully intertwined together (love and friendship) creating an entire new aspect of this novel.

While this debut novel is wonderfully written and the characters are amazingly developed the title is a little bit deceiving, especially if you are not willing to read this novel. While Dani's talent in singing is touched upon it is not explored as much as I would have loved. Of course, the title 'Songbird' can be construed in many ways beyond that actual action of singing - Dani learns how to fly away from her haunting past into her present.

Angela Firstoe's debut novel is a much for all to read! Her characters, plot and development are beautifully created and explored. I for one will be watching out for her next novel!!
