American Road Trip

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American Road Trip

When Teodoro “T” Avila’s brother, Manny, comes home from Iraq, T is sure everything will go back to the way it was. But Manny is suffering from severe PTSD, and things only seem to deteriorate as time goes on. In a desperate effort to pull their family together, T’s sister, Xochitl, tricks her brothers into a road trip. They travel from their home in Seattle all the way to New Mexico, where they will stay with their uncle and attempt to help Manny find treatment. During this time, T must deal with studying to become a first-generation college student, exploring a new love interest, and learning to navigate his brother’s condition. Told through T’s candid and unique voice, this novel is a fantastic look at family relationships, mental illness, socioeconomic status, and young love.

The book’s voice may feel a little off in the beginning, but it grows on you as you keep reading. The way T progresses throughout the book is inspiring. He begins as a young teenage boy who cannot see a future and coasts by with Cs and Ds. With the help of some school counselors, tutors, and people willing to give up their time to help him study, T turns his life around and begins to dream about a future. The exploration of PTSD in the book is also wonderful, showing how the condition affects not just the person who has it, but the people around them. There are a lot of things going on in this book, but they all fit together nicely. The pacing is just right, and the characters are very memorable. American Road Trip packs an emotional punch and will stay with you long after you finish it.

*Contains mild language and mild violence.