

La Maravilla

Alfredo Vea



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"Buckeye Road wasn't much of a town, just a place where a pocked and pitted road met an invisible street....It was less that unincorporated, it was unknown..."

Yet it is here in the desert outside the Phoenix city limits that Alfredo Vea, Jr., finds a world of marvels spilling out of the adobe homes, tar-paper shacks, rusted Cadillacs, and battered trailers that are otherwise known as "Buckeye." Three thousand years of history and the myths of many cultures, as well as the fates of a dozen unforgettable characters, will all collide one hot summer in 1958; and the events played out on Buckeye Road will amount to nothing less than a new and life-affirming vision of the American Southwest...and of America itself.

The vivid symbol of Buckeye Road is La Maravilla—the blanket of marigolds laid upon graves in Mexican cemeteries, and the mythical dog, sacred to the Aztecs, who returns from the under-world to lead his master to Mictlan, the land of the dead. La Maravilla is the embodiment of belonging to two worlds, and of being torn between the love and fear of both. It is the condition and mystery borne by all who inhabit this American outback—whether they are Blacks, Chicanos, Asians, Native Americans, Mexicans, European immigrants, or Anglo misfits. For Beto, the young boy at the center of this magnificent story, it is the dilemma that he must somehow resolve and emerge from whole. For Beto has no parents to guide him—his mother has fled the "old ways" of her Mexican family for a bright new American life beyond the desert sunset in California, where "Indians are history and Sunday is for football, not church!" But in her place, and more than filling it, is Beto's aristocratic Spanish grandmother, a Catholic curandera with a passion for the music of Duke Ellington. He also has his grandfather, a Yaqui Indian whose spirit soars above a desert without frontiers. With this extraordinary first novel, Alfredo Vea, Jr., takes his place in the first rank of America

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