

I Am Not Your Perfect Mexican Daughter by Erika L. Sanchez

Julia was never the Perfect Mexican Daughter her parents wanted her to be. That was her older sister, Olga. But when Olga dies, Julia is the only daughter her parents have, and suddenly, she's expected to take up the mantle. Problem is, Julia has no interest in being Olga's replacement: she wants to write, not have a quinceanera. She wants to live her way, not in her parents'. But now she has to confront grief in a reeling mind, and she's not sure Olga was who she presented herself to be. Did her parents ever have a perfect Mexican daughter?

I read this book in a single sitting; I don't think I could have set it down if I tried. Julia is a character who is rough around the edges-- grieving, angry, depressed, and confused-- but she's also a character who is unapologetic about it. There's something about her that makes you want to cheer her along as she learns what it means to be family, be there for herself, and explores her community around her.

I Am Not Your Perfect Mexican Daughter explores tragedy with an open hand. It's gritty, raw, and hurting. In many moments, it is desperately sad. Yet, Julia's story holds a lot of truths about being a teenager, dealing with grief, having mental illness, and operating as a family. It's not a simple story, nor one that's light and easy, but it is important.

Because of language and dark themes, I give I Am Not Your Perfect Mexican Daughter a B-MA.