



# Border Crossing

*Jessica Lee Anderson*

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## **Border Crossing** Jessica Lee Anderson

The mixed-race son of apple pickers, Manz lives with his hard-drinking mother and her truck-driver boyfriend in the hardscrabble world of dusty Rockhill, Texas. Forced to take a summer job rebuilding fence of a cattle ranch, Manz works alongside his friend Jed and meets a girl named Vanessa — but even among his friends, Manz suffers from an uncontrollable paranoia. As the summer wears on, Manz becomes convinced that "Operation Wetback," a brutal postwar relocation program, is being put back into effect. As the voices in his head grow louder and more insistent, Manz struggles to negotiate the difficulties of adolescence, the perils of an oppressed environment, and the terror of losing his grip on reality.

## **Border Crossing Details**

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Author : Jessica Lee Anderson

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## From Reader Review Border Crossing for online ebook

### Susann says

I can't accurately review this, because it's just too painful to read about someone developing paranoid schizophrenia. I found myself skimming over some of the voices-in-head moments. I really felt for Manz, though.

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### Melissa says

This is a sensitive and accurate portrayal of a young person's struggle with schizophrenia. Having once been friends with a 20-something who suffered from this illness, I recognize the tedium and frustration of the main character's friends and loved ones trying to relate to his burgeoning paranoia and delusions. This is not a romantic illness by any means. Mostly, the sufferers delusions are obsessive and get very boring. This eloquent little novel managed to convey that very well, in spite of (or perhaps because of) being written from the point of the view of the mentally ill person. The author deftly handled the gradual progression of Manz' paranoia. At first, he worries he might be imagining the sights and sounds of his delusions but gradually, he falls under the sway of the voices to the point where he trusts no one. Simultaneously, he recognizes that he needs the people he is trying to cut ties with. His need to sever his ties of family and friendship has to do with his delusion that he is being watched in a way that puts those closest to him in danger. Conversely, he mistrusts the very people he wishes to protect. His lucid moments of self-awareness of his need for a contact with reality are at the heart of what makes his struggle so heartbreaking. A warning, this story does not have a pat, feel-good, ending.

Earlier in the review, I mention that I was once friends with a person who suffered from schizophrenia. It was not I who cut off relationships but my friend. Even on his meds he was eccentric and could at times be rather tedious in his delusions, in spite of also being immensely talented as an artist. However, during the year or so that I was friends with him, his behaviour was fairly well controlled and maintained a reasonably normal quality of life. Sadly, he went off his meds, through a brick through the large picture window of a popular trendy pizza place and before he was arrested managed to walk away and go back and through another brick through the remaining window. After that he was hospitalized for awhile and I didn't see him for months. When I finally did run into him again, it was a chance meeting nowhere near any of his usual haunts. He had been living with his parents and was much subdued. He had been a brilliant surrealist cartoonist but when asked if he was making any new strips he simply replied that he wasn't drawing any more because, "they won't let me". My friend and I were not able to ascertain whether 'they' referred to his parents and doctors, or the angels that made up a big part of his delusions.

He had also become very religious. He had always been fascinated by angels but as a young gay man in the 90's he also had previously a slightly 'hedonist' sensibility and wore quite flamboyant clothing, mostly hand decorated by himself. His angel fixation had really come to a head shortly before the incident with the pizza place. He would discuss angels with me to the point of sheer tedium. I recall a day when I attempted a normal conversation with him at a favorite cafe and I just could not get him off the topic of angels. Finally, I said, "Dave, I love you. I've missed you. But I just cannot talk another minute about angels." Mistake. He abruptly got up, and without another word, left the cafe.

At our last meeting, none of his originality and flamboyance was apparent. It was quite sad to witness. A month or so after that meeting I received a very conventional, store bought Christmas card with a Bible verse from him, signed with his actual name. Formerly he had gone by a couple of different pseudonyms for his

strip. Somewhere, I still have a card from a few years previous to this time that featured one of his highly decorated signature angels and was flamboyantly signed "Dave Urbane".

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### **Lisa Gibson says**

To represent a young adult with mental illness in a book can be challenging. To depict them beautifully and with any kind of honesty is even more difficult. However, that is exactly what Ms. Anderson winds up doing. She masterfully writes about the frightening descent into schizophrenia. Soon enough we feel Manz's terrifying paranoia that everyone is out to get him. His fear of being deported, despite his being a legal citizen is crippling him. Manz's family does not discuss their problems. His mother drowns the grief of the loss of Gabriel (Manz's half brother) in the whiskey bottles she hides. Tom, Manz's stepfather covers his grief in constant jokes.

Manz wants to help Jed, his best friend and Jed's sister Sally. Their father is physically abusive to the entire family. Sadly, he can't seem to ignore the voices long enough to see any avenues of assistance for them.

This book was lovely, in a heartbreakingly honest sort of way. It was sad to see Manz deteriorate and fall under the spells his own mind was casting on him. As a parent, you long to be the balm that soothes, to have the hand that heals. Mental illness is a cruel monster indeed. You loved one often looks whole and healthy, while inside the confines of their mind, they're waging a war for their very life. Ms. Anderson depicts that desperation, the spiral that pulls you in deeper so well. I appreciated this book for exactly what it was, an honest story, beautifully told. Four big kisses for the honesty and integrity of this one!

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### **BCPL Youth Services Librarian says**

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### **Taylor says**

At first it seemed to be about one thing, Mexican struggles, trying to fit in an uncommon bi-racial society, but then things started to get crazy. I almost believe what I read as Manz believed what he heard. The ending was a twist, but only slightly predictable. I would have preferred a more detailed future in the ending, but it's satisfying enough. This book reminds me of the first story, "The Hitchhiker", in More Horowitz Horror, as well as a book I remember reading a long time ago: How To Drive Your Family Crazy On Valentine's Day.

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### **Meg says**

It was really interesting and alluring reading through the main character's point of view, knowing he has schizophrenia and recognizing it in his thoughts and actions. I really liked how Jessica Lee Anderson didn't limit the in-detail conflict to just him. The ending was kind of sad-ish, though, just because I always hope

unrealistically for a beautiful, perfect ending, and this ending was just a little unsure, uncertain. I guess the ending wasn't sad-ish, just I was because it wasn't happier.

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### **Jennifer Wardrip says**

Reviewed by Melanie Foust for TeensReadToo.com

Manz's summer starts off regularly enough. Listening to his mother, Delores, come home drunk at night. Getting short-term jobs at ranches in the area with his friend, Jed. Then strange things begin happening.

He starts hearing voices, and they won't stop. They begin telling him what to do, and he starts listening. They tell him that people are after him. He's on the watch, constantly on edge. The border patrol will come to get him any day now, and everyone he knows is a conspirator in their plan. Or so he thinks.

Anderson has created an intriguing cast of characters who all deal with serious issues. Manz has schizophrenia, making it hard to know whether or not to believe anything that comes out of his mouth. At the start of the book, it isn't so bad, but as the story progresses it becomes increasingly worse. Delores has an alcohol addiction that amps up every time her partner, Tom, leaves town. Since Tom is a truck driver, that's fairly often. Manz's friend, Jed, deals with domestic violence from his father at home. Jed's mother and sister suffer, as well.

At less than two-hundred pages, *BORDER CROSSING* is a very quick read. The plot keeps you alert at all times, never knowing which way things will go. Although the ending isn't quite as clear as I would have liked, it still manages to wrap up the story well, while simultaneously leaving some things for the reader to decide on their own.

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### **Amber says**

I read Anderson's latest book in less than two hours during my lunch yesterday and today. After I stopped reading yesterday, I wished I had saved it for a quiet weekend at home. I was completely drawn into the story and when I finished the book today, I felt a bit like I was walking out of a dark movie theater--it took some adjusting.

*Border Crossing* is for an older audience than Anderson's previous book, *Trudy*. This is a darker book that takes the reader into the main character's mind, which isn't always a pleasant place.

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### **P.J. says**

Book 30 for 2009!

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### **Katrina Burchett says**

Isaiah Luis "Manz" Martinez was born to a teenage mother, whose father disowned her not because she got

pregnant so young but because she was carrying a Mexican's child. Manz is Mexican and Caucasian. His father, Adres "Loco" Martinez, passed away and so did his half-brother, Gabriel. Now it's just him and his mother, Delores, and her man, Thomas, whose job as a truck driver takes him away from home a lot. Manz and his family don't have much to live on, so he does his part by taking on a summer job. Working at Darby Guest Ranch is tougher than he thought but nothing is more difficult than listening to the strange sounds and voices no one else can hear. Will Manz learn to distinguish what's real from what's not or will he allow the voices to destroy him?

Jedediah (Jed) Parker isn't fighting a battle in his mind like his friend, but, just like Manz, he doesn't have the life of a typical teenager. This young man has a lot to deal with. He's more than a son and a brother; he's his mother and sister's protector, doing what he can to keep them safe from his abusive father.

I bought this book because I wanted to see how the author dealt with a subject as delicate as schizophrenia. I decided I was going to take my time reading; absorb every word so I'd understand exactly what Manz was going through. I predicted a couple of things early on in the story, but only because I know this mental disorder can be hereditary and extremely difficult to live with. Something that occurred with the Parker family was unexpected and the thoughts tormenting Manz at that time saddened me. And the paranoia Manz experienced throughout the story was so cleverly written that at times I wondered if what was really was. There are teenagers, like Manz, who have way more to worry about than fitting in, getting good grades, etc. Their issues are much deeper and more frustrating because they have no control over what's going on. I sympathized with Manz, that's for sure, and my heart goes out to every single person who is struggling with this illness.

Border Crossing is a well-written page-turner; definitely a must read!!

\*\*Parents-There is profanity, but not much.

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### **Sandra Guzman says**

easy read.. did not like the ending

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### **Zoraida Rivera Morales says**

This book deals with a very difficult subject and does so with such care and reality. When I started reading I was a bit confused, but not enough to stop reading! So glad that I didn't because the confusion was part of the reality the author was trying to convey.

I recommend this book for young adults that like reading about real-life challenges and want to understand realities that they or others may be exposed to.

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### **Laura Koepp says**

A good description of mental illness (paranoid schizophrenic). It was a quick read - with a realistic ending.

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## **Kristen says**

Review: An interesting look at the life of a teenage guy living in Texas. This novel deals with issues like alcoholism, class differences, illegal immigration, and child abuse.

Final verdict: Not the happiest story, but a decent read.

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## **Jennie says**

Age: YA

Genre: realistic fiction

Diversity: cultural; psychological

Illustrations: None

Personal Response: While I thought it was well written this was a rather depressing story. The subject matter itself, paranoid schizophrenia, is a depressing one and having a first person perspective into a young mans first psychotic break is fairly harsh. Having said that, life can be fairly harsh and I don't think the the material is inappropriate for a teenager.

Curriculum: This book could be used as reading material in a middle school or high school class that deals with mental illness. The themes of domestic violence and racism present in this story could also be addressed.

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