

The Golden Hour

By Niki Smith

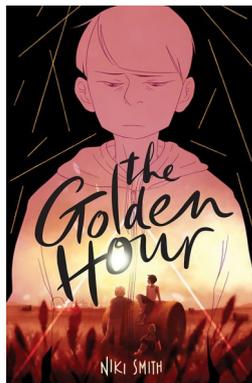
Publisher: Little, Brown US

ISBN 9780316540339 SCIS: 5388679

\$19.99

Blurb:

Struggling with anxiety after witnessing a harrowing instance of gun violence, Manuel Soto copes through photography, using his cell-phone camera to find anchors that keep him grounded. His days are a lonely, latchkey monotony until he's teamed with his classmates, Sebastian and Caysha, for a group project. Sebastian lives on a grass-fed cattle farm outside of town, and Manuel finds solace in the open fields and in the antics of the newborn calf Sebastian is hand-raising. As Manuel aides his new friends in their preparations for the local county fair, he learns to open up, confronts his deepest fears, and even finds first love.



Lamont Review:

Manuel is trying to adjust back into normal life after being caught in the middle of violent gun incident at school.

He has the support of his Mum (although she is also struggling with the aftermath of what happened), as well as his school and counsellors, but this is going to be a long process.

Manuel still finds himself having panic attacks, all linked back to the incident, that can be set off by situations and circumstances. When this happens, he needs to find a focus point to ground himself - 'When the world feels unstable, find an anchor'. And for Manuel, photography becomes his grounding.

Through a school project, he makes new friends with Sebastian and Caysha, and they introduce him to country life. Sebastian lives on a farm, and Manuel becomes more and more involved in farm life with Sebastian, helping him raise his new calf Daisy, and helping Sebastian and Caysha prepare for the Country Fair.

This is a powerful graphic novel that highlights the real struggles that people face trying to cope after a very traumatic incident, and how time, compassion and friendship are vital to moving forward and living a better life.

With hints that the relationship between Manuel and Sebastian might be more than just a friendship adding another layer to the story, this is a great read for those students 14+.

Reviewed by Sam