



# From This Wicked Patch of Dust

*Sergio Troncoso*

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**From This Wicked Patch of Dust** Sergio Troncoso

**Best Books of 2012** by *Kirkus Reviews*

**Southwest Book Award** from the Border Regional Library Association

**Notable Book** by *Southwest Books of the Year*

**Shortlisted** for the biannual PEN/Texas Southwest Book Award for Fiction

**Finalist** for Reading The West Book Award in Adult Fiction from the Mountains and Plains Independent Booksellers Association

In the border shantytown of Ysleta, Mexican immigrants Pilar and Cuauhtémoc Martinez strive to teach their four children to forsake the drugs and gangs of their neighborhood. The family's hardscrabble origins are just the beginning of this sweeping new novel from Sergio Troncoso.

Spanning four decades, this is a story of a family's struggle to become American and yet not be pulled apart by a maelstrom of cultural forces. As a young adult, daughter Julieta is disenchanted with Catholicism and converts to Islam. Youngest son Ismael, always the bookworm, is accepted to Harvard but feels out of place in the Northeast where he meets and marries a Jewish woman. The other boys--Marcos and Francisco--toil in their father's old apartment buildings, serving as the cheap labor to fuel the family's rise to the middle class. Over time, Francisco isolates himself in El Paso while Marcos eventually leaves to become a teacher, but then returns, struggling with a deep bitterness about his work and marriage. Through it all, Pilar clings to the idea of her family and tries to hold it together as her husband's health begins to fail.

This backdrop is then shaken to its core by the terrorist attacks of 2001 in New York City. The aftermath sends shockwaves through this newly American family. Bitter conflicts erupt between siblings and the physical and cultural spaces between them threaten to tear them apart. Will their shared history and once-common dreams be enough to hold together a family from Ysleta, this wicked patch of dust?

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