



## Parrot in the Oven: mi vida

*Victor Martinez*

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*Perico*, or parrot, was what Dad called me sometimes. It was from a Mexican saying about a parrot that complains how hot it is in the shade, while all along he's sitting inside an oven and doesn't know it...

For Manuel Hernandez, the year leading up to his test of courage, his initiation into a gang, is a time filled with the pain and tension, awkwardness and excitement of growing up in a crazy world. His dad spends most of his time and money at the local pool hall; his brother flips through jobs like a thumb through a deck of cards; and his mom never stops cleaning the house, as though one day the rooms will be so spotless they'll disappear into a sparkle, and she'll be free.

Manny's dad is always saying that people are like money--there are million- and thousand- and hundred-dollar people out there, and to him, Manny is just a penny. But Manny wants to be more than a penny, smarter than the parrot in the oven. He wants to find out what it means to be a *vato firme*, a guy to respect.

In this beautifully written novel, Victor Martinez gives readers a vivid portrait of one Mexican-American boy's life. Manny's story is like a full-color home movie--sometimes funny, sometimes sad, but always intensely original. For Manuel Hernandez, the year leading up to his test of courage, his initiation into a gang, is a time filled with the pain and tension, awkwardness and excitement of growing up in a mixed-up, crazy world. Manny's dad is always calling him *el perico*, or parrot. It's from a Mexican saying about a parrot that complains how hot it is in the shade while all along he's sitting inside the oven and doesn't know it. But Manny wants to be smarter than the parrot in the oven—he wants to find out what it means to be a *vato firme*, a guy to respect. From an exciting new voice in Chicano literature, this is a beautifully written, vivid portrait of one Mexican-American boy's life.

1998 Pura Belpre Author Award

1996 Americas Award for Children's and Young Adult Literature

1997 Books for the Teen Age (NY Public Library)

1996 National Book Award for Young People's Literature

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