

The Good Oak



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Thirteen-year-old Matt Echbar is angry at the world. His widowed father is too busy for him, and his grandfather is an embarrassment, an unschooled Basque shepherd whose language and customs are completely alien to Matt's all-American lifestyle. And things get worse when the grandfather steals a flock of sheep and dragoons Matt into helping him drive them to a secret camp in the Arizona mountains. The ensuing adventure is one of the most compelling and delightful coming-of-age novels in recent fiction. As Matt and his, aitatxi, accompanied by their two faithful sheepdogs, drive the flock across the burgeoning suburbs of Phoenix and into the remote mountains, the boy learns the ancient skills of the sheep-herder and discovers the unexpected wisdom that has given his Old Country grandfather the strength and patience of a sturdy oak. By the time the journey reaches its fateful conclusion, Matt has developed a new bond with the old man and has learned that true manhood includes accepting one's heritage. For anyone who has ever inhabited the precarious borderland between an American and an ethnic identity, *The Good Oak* will be illuminating reading, and for anyone who enjoys a good yarn about the angst and frustration of growing up, this novel offers a rousing adventure--sometimes hilarious, often profoundly moving, always irresistible.

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