

## Journey to the Parallels

**Marcie Roman**

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Marcie Roman's novel *Journey to the Parallels* centers on a family who are trying to escape an alternate reality's totalitarian regime.

Every morning on the ride to school, Amber's mother urges her children to wave to the parallels—the mirror versions of themselves living in an alternate universe. It's one of their mother's many "fantastical observations." She also quizzes them about political candidates, waxes poetic about the dangers of technology and meat, and blames missing items on a ubiquitous witch. The older Amber gets, the more her mother's eccentricities bother her. She wishes that she had a "normal" family.

But when her mother suddenly forgets to prompt them to say hello to the parallels, Amber begins suspecting that she has been replaced. When she and her brother, Beetle, try to figure out where their mother went, they come face to face with their parallels. They are dumped into a scary new world in which they are constantly under surveillance, girls are banned from playing sports, and questioning authority gets you sent to "the farm."

The parallel world's strict rules, mass surveillance, and muddying of facts are in direct opposition to the values that Amber's mother imparted, which serve as a cautionary for Amber and Beetle, allowing them to see what's at stake when people do not think for themselves and become complacent. Amber's experiences—first with her replacement mother, and then in the parallel world—cause her to reflect on how she's been judging her mother. She grows to appreciate her mother, learning that "normal" doesn't compare to her eccentricities: her mother celebrates an active imagination and an open mind.

In the inventive science fiction novel *Journey to the Parallels*, a mother and daughter grow closer while trying to get back home.

JENNA JAUREGUY (May / June 2022)

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