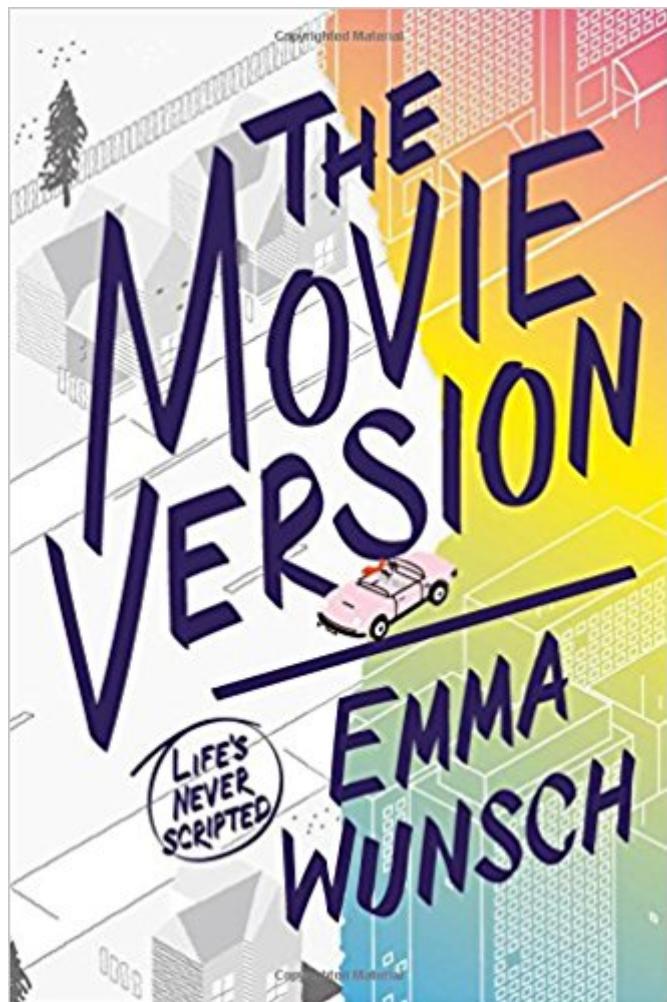


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## The Movie Version



## Synopsis

A whip-smart, heart-wrenching debut YA novel about first love, first loss, and filmmaking that will delight fans of Jandy Nelson and Jennifer Niven. In the movie version of *Amelia*'s life, the roles have always been clear. Her older brother, Toby: definitely the Star. As popular with the stoners as he is with the cheerleaders, Toby is someone you'd pay ten bucks to watch sweep *Battle of the Bands* and build a "beach party" in the bathroom. As for Amelia? She's Toby Anderson's Younger Sister. She's perfectly happy to watch Toby's hijinks from the sidelines, when she's not engrossed in one of her elaborately themed Netflix movie marathons. But recently Toby's been acting in a very non-movie-version way. He's stopped hanging out with his horde of friends and started obsessively journaling and disappearing for days at a time. Amelia doesn't know what's happened to her awesome older brother, or who this strange actor is that's taken his place. And there's someone else pulling at her attention: a smart, cute new boyfriend who wants to know the real *Amelia* —not Toby's Sidekick. Amelia feels adrift without her star, but to best help Toby—and herself—it might be time to cast a new role: *Amelia Anderson, leading lady.*

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Gr 9 Up—Amelia can't wait for her junior year of high school to start. Her brother Toby, a

popular senior, will make the year awesome. There will be parties, friends, and movie marathons. Amelia can't wait to tell Toby she may have a boyfriend. Nothing happens the way she imagined. Her sibling hides in his room and spends his days smoking pot, writing in a notebook, reading "Lord of the Rings," and listening to the Beatles. Amelia covers for him when he skips classes and when he hallucinates after drinking. While this is happening at home, the protagonist is trying to deal with school and her first boyfriend and struggling in a world without Toby as the star. Toby's breaking point occurs in the cafeteria, and Amelia tries to come to terms with his diagnosis. When he is sent to a treatment center, Amelia has to learn what kind of person she can be without her brother. Told in the first person, this narrative about a complex sibling relationship will resonate with readers. There are references to teenage drinking, cigarettes and marijuana, and sex. The secondary characters are different and distinguishable, but Amelia and Toby take center stage. VERDICT Recommend to fans of realistic fiction that focuses on mental health issues. —Natalie Struecker, Atlantic Public Library, IA

**\*\*STARRED REVIEW\*\*** "With a memorable, full-of-feeling narrator at its helm, this moving exploration of the effects of mental illness and a family's new normal marks Wunsch as a writer to watch." (Publishers Weekly) "Told in the first person, this narrative about a complex sibling relationship will resonate with readers." (School Library Journal) "Wunsch's debut offers a sometimes heartbreak but ultimately hopeful portrait of a relationship that has changed forever but is still strong." (Booklist)

I was in tears as I finished this novel. You can see the hardships placed upon every member of this family because of the, at first undiagnosed, schizophrenia of the main character's older brother, who is her hero and champion, and who seems to be the glue that holds this family together. The parents of the family are loving parents, but largely absent, running their restaurant. The grandmother, the only other adult on the premises, is often out or away with her new boyfriend. So in a sense, Amelia, the main character, is alone, once her older brother Toby begins to disintegrate. She has her friends, other 16- and 17-year-olds. Maybe that's how it is with most teen-agers. Amelia has her first sexual experiences with the charming and kind Epstein, who lives in New York City, safely away from her town, so this experience is as much about romantic fantasy as real romance. In the absence of brother Toby, Amelia begins to become her own person, learns to drive, and starts to take part in an extra-curricular activity, an after-school film club. She's going to make it; Toby will probably make it, and so will their seven-year-old twin brothers. There's a lot of growing up

yet to do, but a lot has been thrust upon her, and upon them all. Anyway, well worth reading.

This was a really great debut. I enjoyed the early chapters and backstory showing the fun connection between Amelia and Toby through shenanigans and their shared passion in movies. As the plot unfolds, that obsession with movies became something of an inspiration and increasingly something of a hang-up for Amelia. She keeps holding her brother to a standard she's always wanted for herself, casting him in a star role she's always conditioned herself to never give herself. She's conditioned herself to always choosing or wanting to choose what she calls "the movie version" of life. To be daring, wild, and free. In truth, she's not particularly daring, wild, or free, but instead sees her brother as all of these amazing things, so when her brother's mental health reaches a crisis point, her own life comes unglued. A lot of her growth in the book comes from learning to be more accepting and supportive (of others and herself), to allow for struggle as part of who we are, and to gain the budding wisdom to know people are so much more than they seem on the surface.

Seventeen-year-old Amelia and her older brother Toby have always been more like best friends than brother and sister. They love watching all kinds of movies, and their movie quotes drive everyone crazy. Toby comes up with fun, silly ideas of things to do, is the life of the party, and always has an entourage of friends. She and Toby have always been there for each other so, when he starts cutting school, smoking pot, staying in his room, and acting strangely, Amelia covers for him. She starts to put her own life on hold for him, getting mad at her boyfriend and best friend for suggesting something might be wrong with him. When Toby is diagnosed with schizophrenia, Amelia has to learn how to deal with his diagnosis and to live her life without her brother by her side. It took some time before I could really get into this book. I started it, put it down for a few months, and then decided to try again one more time. The constant movie quotes, titles of movies I'd never heard of, and constant references to movies at inopportune times were very off-putting. I wasn't until Toby was diagnosed and Amelia decided to stop living her life like a movie that the book became bearable. Only then was I finally able to read without the constant distraction of movie titles and quotes. I also didn't think the author needed to be so explicit when describing Amelia and her boyfriend's sexual antics. I thought it was an unnecessary distraction, and the book could have stood alone without their relationship. I wasn't a fan of this book, and the only reason I gave it two stars

instead of one was because I thought it important for readers to learn about how mental illness affects teenagers.

This was an excellent and poignant little journey with lived in, totally true and lovable characters who existed before you got to peek in on their lives, and will continue to exist after. (And this feeling came after only 8-10 pages.) Everyone from protagonist Meals to her friend Ray who is curvier, not a virgin, likes to shop and works at Cinna-Yum! in the mall to new boyfriend Epstein who lives in NYC and even the grandma are fleshed out at some point in the book with a telling action or gesture that plucks at your heartstrings. Brother Toby, who is in a scary place, becomes realer for the contrast between what he was and is (and how Amelia longs for what he was). While the book feels like a true account of what it's like to deal with a newly diagnosed mental illness in a family member, it is ultimately a universal snapshot of a 17-year-old girl watching herself take shape when faced with adversity and become an individual.

One of the best new YA novels I've read in a long time. The author brings us so immediately and effortlessly into the mind of Amelia, I truly felt I was riding along with her, experiencing her adoring love, confusion, devastation and empowerment. Wunsch really captures the angst and innocence and earnestness of struggling with The Big Stuff for the first time in adolescence, and I was hooked in. The hallmark of a top-rated book for me is that I continue to think about the characters long after the book is over, and that is certainly the case with Amelia, Toby, and the rest of the characters.

This book is beautifully written, In that can't put it down, stay up all night reading kind of way. It lays before you the innermost workings of the teen mind, every nook and cranny. Amelia is strong, brave, and passionate. Throughout the book you begin to understand her more than you think you possibly could. I highly recommend this book.

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