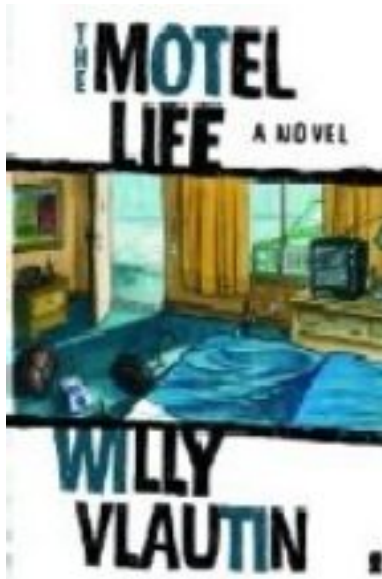


# THE MOTEL LIFE



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<b>Autor:</b>	WILLY VLAUTIN
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Opening like an early Tom Waits barstool-tale, 'The Motel Life' tells the story of two brothers, Frank and Jerry Lee, who take to the road in an attempt to escape the hit and run accident caused by Jerry Lee.

With intense feeling and compassion, Vlautin explores the lives and frustrations of the two brothers - one a natural storyteller, the other an aspiring artist - and renders perfectly the sense of entrapment they feel. Will the kid's death shock them out of their torpor or send them ever deeper into trouble? Can Annie James, a girl from their past, offer them any sort of redemption, however slim? Interspersed with drawings that form an integral part of the narrative, 'The Motel Life' is a moving and beautifully naive debut that should come to be seen as a classic of downbeat American prose. In a gritty debut, Vlautin explores a few weeks in the broken lives of two working-class brothers, Frank and Jerry Lee Flannigan, who abruptly ditch their Reno motel after Jerry Lee drunkenly kills a boy on a bicycle in a hit-and-run. The two are case studies in hard luck: their mother died when they were 14 and 16, respectively; their father is an ex-con deadbeat; neither finished high school. Frank has had just one girlfriend, motel neighbor Annie, whose mother is an abusive prostitute. An innocent simpleton, Jerry Lee is left feeling suicidal after the accident, despite his younger brother's efforts (à la Of Mice and Men's Lenny and George) to console him: 'It was real quiet, the way he cried,' says Frank, 'like he was whimpering.' On returning to Reno, an eventual reckoning awaits them. Vlautin's coiled, poetically matter-of-fact prose calls to mind S.E. Hinton—a writer well-acquainted with male misfit protagonists seeking redemption, no matter how destructive.

Despite the bleak story and its inevitably tragic ending, Vlautin, who plays in the alt-country band Richmond Fontaine, transmits a quiet sense of resilience and hopefulness. (May)