

Intergenerational Road Novel Exploring Aging and ADHD Earns Critical Recognition from Windy City Reviews

Promising Young Man Featuring Dual Coming-of-Age Narrative at 18 and 80 and Evoking 1970s Cinema Vibes Receives "Recommended" Honor

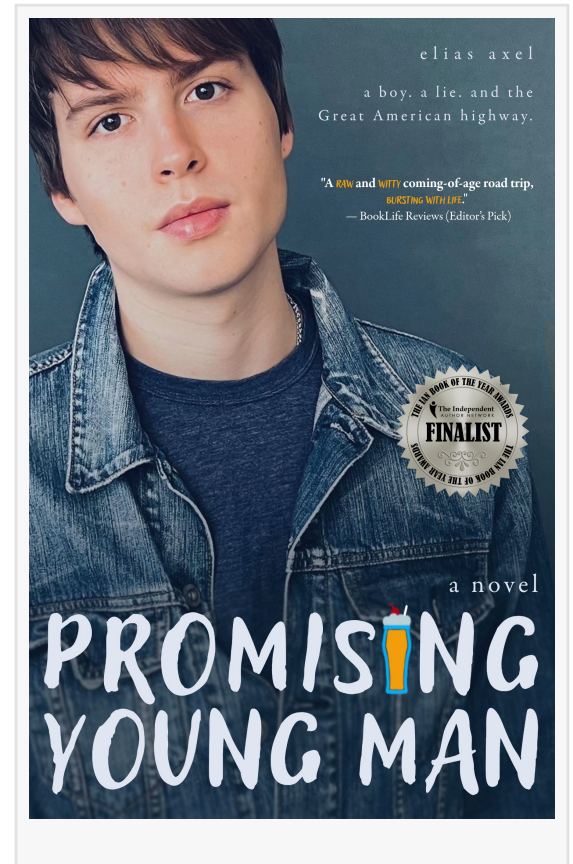
LOS ANGELES, CA, UNITED STATES, January 30, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- [Promising Young Man](#) by Elias Axel, an award-winning American novel, begins 2026 by earning a "Recommended" designation from [Windy City Reviews](#), a non-profit organization dedicated to providing objective book reviews, adding to growing recognition for an intergenerational story that speaks to readers at any age. The novel, published in 2025, tells a story rooted in the American Midwest that speaks to universal human experiences: the search for identity, the weight of expectations, and the unexpected places we find wisdom.

The darkly witty novel follows two characters at crossroads in their lives: 18-year-old Oscar, struggling with ADHD and the pressure to be "promising," and his late-70s grandmother "Grammy" who's secretly decided she's done living life by everyone else's rules. After strike three—a scrape with the law Oscar was too out of it to remember—the pair embarks on a mysterious road trip, heading west from Chicago toward California, a journey that becomes one of mutual understanding and self-discovery for both of them.

"While Oscar is at the center of the story, this is really about coming of age at eighteen and eighty," said Axel. "This is a profoundly human story. It's about what happens when two generations—one beginning adult life, one reflecting on a life lived—discover they need each other, and have more agency, than they realized."

Classic American Cinema Meets Timeless Themes—With a Twist

Kirkus Reviews praised the novel for its atmosphere, noting it "favorably recalls the feel of classic 1970s road films." The story captures the restlessness, dark humor, and bittersweet wisdom of that era's cinema—films that explored American identity through unflinching conversation and





An immediate comparison may be made to Hal Ashby's classic 1971 film, *Harold and Maude*"

Philip Janowski, Windy City Reviews (Recommended)

the open highway.

But *Promising Young Man* adds a contemporary layer with voices often absent from classic road films: a woman on the cusp of 80 and an explicitly ADHD protagonist, which Philip Janowski of *Windy City Reviews* noted "are unfortunately rare." He added that the novel "utilizes elements from both Fielding's *Tom Jones* and Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister*, while keeping the integrity of the

protagonist's challenges with ADHD intact," concluding: "Recommended."

Set against a backdrop of vintage diners, roadside motels, and two-lane roads stretching across Middle America, *Promising Young Man* evokes the nostalgia of a disappearing America while exploring timeless questions at any age: Who am I? Where do I belong? Is it ever too late to choose a different path?

As Oscar and Grammy enter a world largely unplugged from modern technology, they discover how connection—to each other, to the road, to themselves—can add meaning to the years ahead.

A Story That Resonates Across Generations

Grammy's journey resonates particularly with older readers: a woman in her late seventies who reconnects with a long-lost sweetheart and rediscovers what makes life worth living. Her story celebrates the courage it takes to pursue happiness and meaning even if it means changing course, and the wisdom that comes from decades of experience—both the mistakes and the triumphs.

"The novel is chock-full of Americana that will bring back memories for readers who remember traveling the old-fashioned way across the United States," Axel adds. "It's a love letter to a certain kind of American experience—no GPS, no smartphones, just paper maps and the open road."

The novel balances sharp humor with genuine emotional resonance. Oscar's sardonic internal monologue provides comic relief while Grammy offers a rollicking counterpoint. Their conversations—funny, uncomfortable, and ultimately transformative—form the heart of the story.

"Axel's writing crackles with energy and hard-won insight," wrote *BookLife Reviews*, which named the novel an Editor's Pick. Sarah C. Maza, Member of the American Academy of Arts & Sciences and Professor of History Emerita at Northwestern University, called the novel "deeply moving," "absorbing," and "truly enjoyable," noting its appeal across age groups and backgrounds.

Growing Recognition

Since its February 2025 publication, *Promising Young Man* has earned:

- "Recommended" from Windy City Reviews (NEW)
- Finalist, 2025 IAN Book of the Year (New Adult Fiction & Inspirational Fiction)
- Silver Medal, 2025 Readers' Favorite Book Awards (Realistic Fiction)
- BookLife Reviews Editor's Pick
- Kirkus Reviews "GET IT"
- 4.7-star reader rating on Amazon

MSNBC legal analyst Jill Wine-Banks (*The Watergate Girl*) stated: "I love this book."

About the Story

Oscar Danielsson would rather hide in his room than face high school graduation. Between his spectacular mistakes, self-medicating for his ADHD, and overwhelming existential dread, the future feels impossible. Grammy spent decades playing by the rules, and covering up her mistakes. Now in her late seventies, she's ready to break rules—and lie—to find out what she really wants from the years she has left.

After strike three—a scrape with the law Oscar barely remembers—he finds himself on a mysterious road trip with Grammy, heading west from Chicago toward California. As they travel through America's heartland in Grammy's aging Mustang, leaving behind everything familiar, both discover that even a journey based on a lie can lead to the most honest destination.

Availability

Promising Young Man by Elias Axel is available in paperback (\$17.99 USD, ISBN: 979-8-9920656-0-2) and ebook (\$9.99 USD) through major international retailers and Ingram distribution. An ADHD-accessible hardcover edition and audiobook are forthcoming in 2026.

The novel is 240 pages and appropriate for readers 16+. It contains mature themes including mental health struggles, substance use, and authentic depictions of life challenges across generations.

For international rights inquiries, review copies, or author interviews, contact Patricia Stankovic at patricia@mdlpress.com.

[Press Kit](#)

About Elias Axel

Elias Axel is an American author based in Chicagoland. *Promising Young Man* is Axel's debut novel.

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