

Burn Fortune

Brandi Homan

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It's the 1990s, and June is making her way through high school in Marshalltown, Iowa. Life moves at a laconic pace, spiked with the adrenaline of teenage discovery. But in Brandi Homan's *Burn Fortune*, what June discovers about the interminable territory between childhood and adulthood will immolate her. It's a haunting narrative about a girl's passage through the invisible gauntlet of sexual violence.

June is anxious for something more. In her quest for bigger horizons, she discovers Jean Seberg is a native of her small town and wonders "How do you start from here and end up there?" As June studies Seberg's films for clues about the eddies and currents of power that are savaging her own life, Seberg, Joan of Arc, and other characters Seberg plays offer June an indirect means of identifying and expressing what's threatening in her life.

A central element of June's story is sexual assault, which is gestured at in a way that evokes all the erasures of living through and with sexual violence's trauma. The invocation of dreams, movies, and visions at different points in the narrative helps June to tell her story while also implying traumatic disassociation. As the story unfolds, the boundaries between the worlds of teenager, actress, and character become porous, until June-Jean-Joan form a trinity that explicates all June can't face or articulate on her own.

Burn Fortune is a story told sideways. Homan conveys the weight of what June's done and what's been done to her in a narrative of fragmentation. The sum of June's life is perfectly banal and utterly devastating. As Homan's assemblage of dreams and movie images converge, their collision structures and restructures any given moment, showing that the "only way to speak is to leave and if you leave you burn. Ain't nobody rising from the ashes. Nobody."

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