



## Burner: A Novel

**Mike Trigg**

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*Three people from quite different backgrounds are caught up in the implosion of an online movement in the surprising thriller Burner.*

In Mike Trigg's captivating thriller *Burner*, an online movement spirals out of control.

When Shane first started posting online under the alias Burner, he didn't expect it to start a true movement—or to lead to his arrest. But an online movement began nonetheless: the BurnOutz are critical of billionaires and seek the elimination of class disparities. Adherents of the movement invest as Burner tells them to; they bankrupt one billionaire this way. Still, though the movement itself is radical, Shane, as Burner, often says things just for the sake of saying them.

After Shane is taken into custody, his followers start a violent riot that culminates in the kidnapping of his girlfriend, Chloe. Now, Shane is desperate to find a way out of prison to get Chloe back. Wayne, a lawyer who claims to be a supporter of Shane's movement, the BurnOutz, volunteers to take his case, though his true motivations aren't known until later.

The book begins in media res—Shane is arrested; Chloe is taken by Burner's supporters; Wayne takes the case—resulting in instantaneous tension. Its suspense remains high throughout thanks to uncertainty and people's heightened emotions. Two settings are emphasized: the prison where Shane is incarcerated and the house where Chloe is held. Both are fleshed out in a sensory manner, with references to smells and noises proving even more powerful than the visual descriptions of either place. Indeed—although she doesn't know where she is—Chloe's sense of dread is palpable because of the tangible evidence of decay that she makes note of.

Shane's, Chloe's, and Wayne's distinctive, personality-infused perspectives are traded between, fleshing out their backstories. As individuals, they each grow and change—often in unexpected ways. Herein, people's upbringings influence their choices in clear ways, and the differences between following one's established personality and adhering to a pattern of choices are clarified in an intriguing manner. That Shane and Chloe come from quite different backgrounds illustrates such conundrums well; the story of how their particular relationship came to be is involving.

The trio's voices are further complemented by court transcripts, text messages, and press releases. Thus, new information about the case is revealed in a slow but steady manner, forcing continual reassessments of the known "facts." Still, the final reveal is only obvious in hindsight, and the book's closing notes are shocking and satisfying—though one final twist also rests on some questionable details.

*Burner* is a fascinating thriller in which an online movement swallows up the person who started it.

CAROLINA CIUCCI (December 11, 2023)

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