

Sisterhood of the Infamous

Jane Rosenberg LaForge

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In Jane Rosenberg LaForge's dark thriller *Sisterhood of the Infamous*, two sisters contend with a grisly killing, and their lifetime of resentment boils over.

When she was younger, Barbara hungered for fame. She went from the Hollywood suburbs to center stage as part of an all-girl punk band, The California Youth Authority. Her ambition was akin to a physical craving: "I wanted people to see, hear, and feel me in every possible direction. I wanted ... to rest on the tip of everyone's tongue." Her relationship with Jasmine, a pop star, is an offshoot of her ambition. Arguably, Barbara loved fame more than anything, even her own family.

Now, Barbara is dying of breast cancer with her sister by her side. Barbara's narration relays scraps and shreds from her childhood, her long rivalry with her sister, and her ex-girlfriend's murder. Her mind is foggy; she conflates memories with imagined events, resulting in a twisted catalog of discontentment that stretches across decades.

Barbara's voice leaks in, even when her sister narrates. Despite their differences and mutual dislike, the sisters' voices are close to identical. Their memories contend with one another's, resulting in an appealing, disjointed, unreliable patchwork picture of the past. Jasmine's murder is the catalyst for the story, but takes up less space than Barbara's vibrant, often violent accounts of lesbian life in the 1970s. These anecdotes feature details as painful and bright as a slash of blood.

Sisterhood of the Infamous finds its rhythm in the sometimes mean-spirited sparring between the sisters. It is a thrilling and gritty novel—not because of the murder at its center, but because of the sisters' fierce competition for who controls the story, and over who gets to rewrite their shared past.

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