



Cinderland: A Memoir

Amy Jo Burns

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A riveting literary debut about the cost of keeping quiet. Amy Jo Burns grew up in Mercury, Pennsylvania, an industrial town humbled by the steel collapse of the 1980s. Instead of the construction booms and twelve-hour shifts her parents' generation had known, the Mercury Amy Jo knew was marred by empty houses, old strip mines, and vacant lots. It wasn't quite a ghost town—only because many people had no choice but to stay. The year Burns turned ten, this sleepy town suddenly woke up. Howard Lotte, its beloved piano teacher, was accused of sexually assaulting his female students. Among the countless girls questioned, only seven came forward. For telling the truth, the town ostracized these girls and accused them of trying to smear a good man's reputation. As for the remaining girls?well, they were smarter. They lied. Burns was one of them. But such a lie has its own consequences.

Against a backdrop of fire and steel, shame and redemption, Burns tells of the boys she ran from and toward, the friends she abandoned, and the endless performances she gave to please a town that never trusted girls in the first place. This is the story of growing up in a town that both worshipped and sacrificed its youth—a town that believed being a good girl meant being a quiet one—and the long road Burns took toward forgiving her ten-year-old self. *Cinderland* is an elegy to that young girl's innocence, as well as a praise song to the curative powers of breaking a long silence.

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