

## The Spark and the Drive

Wayne Harrison

Debut author Harrison mines his own background as an auto mechanic to deliver a gritty, authentic tale of a complicated marriage threatened by a first love. During the summer of 1985, 17-year-old Justin Bailey interns at Nick Campbell's garage Out of the Hole, one of the few places around that specializes in muscle cars. Years after his own father "accepted his sexuality" and his mother began her descent into alcoholism, Justin finds a father figure in Nick, a local legend among gearheads. Tragedy strikes when Nick and his wife, Mary Ann, lose their infant son to AIDS, and in their grief, the Campbells turn to Justin to fill the void. Justin and Nick go drag racing after hours with a rare Corvette left behind in the shop, chasing death with every heat; at the same time, Justin begins an affair with Mary Ann. The betrayals begin adding up, leading to a grim but well-earned resolution. VERDICT Harrison writes cleanly and vividly about the world of auto garages, producing an elegiac novel about working-class dreams dashed by reality, a Bruce Springsteen song set to prose

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