



Townie: A Novel

John Butman

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Townie takes place in Oldon, Massachusetts, a burgeoning New England village that has become the favored residence of the mega-rich, a town whose historic past has been preserved and polished until it gleams with the arrogant intensity of a Colonial theme park.

Alan Lowe inhabits a different Oldon, however, a town that he loved as a boy for the “power and rightness of its countryside.” Now, in early middle age, he finds himself living on the margins of the changing town, in a camp deep within Oldon Woods, “inelegantly sheltered by a stale, army-surplus sheet, perforated here and there with pinholes and rudely draped into the equivalent of a teepee.”

Then Alan’s seemingly rootless life converges with that of Arthur Worthy, a member of the recently-arrived elite, whose life “bristles with appointments, trips, activities, possessions, responsibilities, and business urgencies.” But Arthur lives on the margin, too, as alone and isolated in his mansion as Alan is in his teepee.

They share, as they discover, an unexpected connection, a woman named Anna, “who must be understood as a catalytic force in both of our lives, the intoxicating girl who devolved into the equable woman whose existence served to define our own.”

Alan abandons his camp in order to temporarily look after Arthur’s mansion and their lives soon become deeply intertwined in an adventure that is ostensibly a business deal but is, more essentially, a search for love and connection with place.

Townie is a picaresque novel of the countryside, funny and skewering about our social and business pretensions, moving and true about our need for roots and authenticity.

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