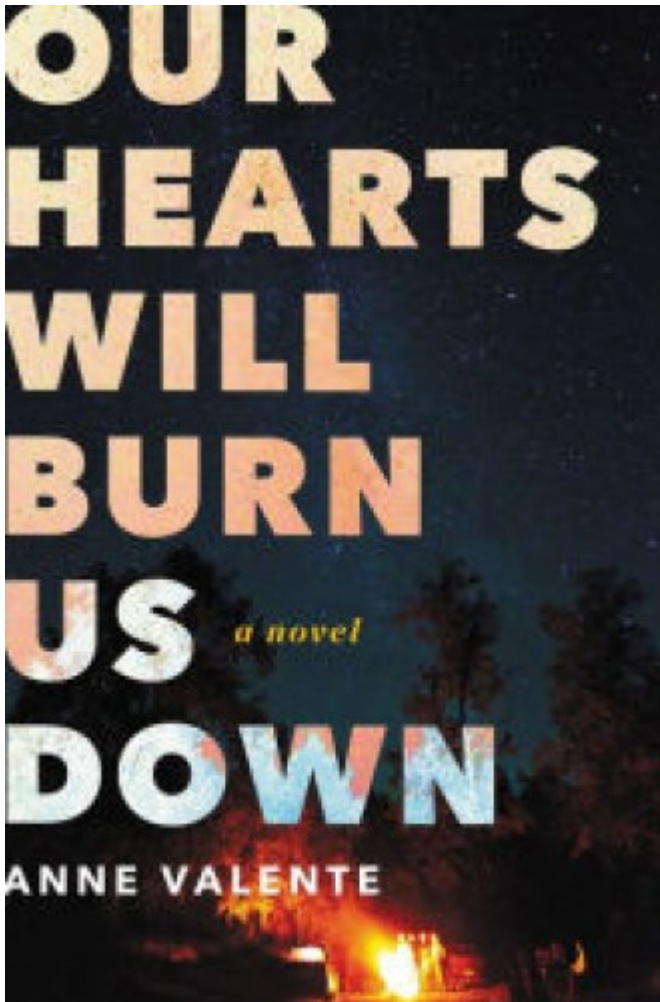


*Our Hearts Will Burn Us Down*, by Anne Valente

Books in the [November 8, 2016](#) issue

## In Review



### **Our Hearts Will Burn Us Down: A Novel**

By Anne Valente

William Morrow

As the Iraq war rages and President Bush continues a fruitless search for weapons of mass destruction, a brutal school shooting in a suburb of St. Louis leaves four teenagers traumatized. This painfully beautiful novel by Anne Valente, who teaches

creative writing in Santa Fe, captures the complexity of human responses to violence. Through the lens of high school friendships and against the backdrop of seemingly ineffective crime scene investigations, Valente poses an existential question: Is it possible for the human heart to burn itself up with grief to the extent that nothing remains? At the edges of the narrative linger the events of the war (bombings, civilians killed, the murder of a U.S. journalist), reminding readers that tragedy's scope is too large for any one person or community to envision fully.