



Demigods on Speedway

Aurelie Sheehan

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Men in dinosaur suits. A Norwegian freakazoid millionaire. Cats and catharsis, somber symbols, listless lives going off the rails. Pluck, persistence, and the pursuit of happiness.

In the tradition of Joyce's *Dubliners*, *Demigods on Speedway* is a portrait of a city that reflects the recession-era Southwest. Inspired by tales from Greek mythology, these gritty heroes and heroines struggle to find their place in the cosmos. Each of these linked stories develops the extremes of the modern psyche: an executive struggling to understand his wife's illness even as he compulsively cheats on her, a teenage runaway whose attraction to her "twin" is bound to fail, an overweight boy vicariously experiencing true love through the tales of his trainer, a car-wash attendant with outsized dreams of Hollywood.

Characters with mythical-sounding names like Dagfinn and Zero plot their courses through a sky riddled with flawed constellations. Sheehan's edgy language aptly reveals her characters as they lurch toward the next day's irreverent beginning. As the characters' lives overlap, their stories carry mythology out of the past and into a very modern dilemma: the cumulative sense that here is a city with its own demigods, individuals struggling to survive under siege while passionately seeking to make something immortal in their lives.

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