

## EXERPTS FROM *DREAMLAND BURNING*

### William

*I wasn't good when the trouble started. Wasn't particularly bad, either, but I had potential. See, Tulsa in 1921 was a town where boys like me roamed wild. Prohibition made Choctaw beer and corn whiskey more tempting than ever, and booze wasn't near the worst vice available.*

*My friend Cletus Hayes grew up in a house two doors down from mine. His father was a bank executive muckety-muck with a brand-new Cadillac automobile and friends on the city council. For that reason alone, Mama and Pop generally let Clete's knack for mischief slide. He and I got along fine eighty percent of the time, and kept each other's company accordingly.*

*One thing we always did agree on was that misbehaving was best done in pairs. Plenty of the roustabout gangs running Tulsa's streets would have taken us in, but I always figured the two of us were spoiled enough and maybe even smart enough to know the difference between hell-raising and causing real harm. Those gangs were chock-full of unemployed young men back from the Great War who'd come to Oklahoma looking for oilfield work down at the Glenn Pool strike. They'd seen bad things, done a few themselves, and liked showing off for locals. Problem was, the local would try to one-up 'em, the roustabouts would take things a step further, and in the end, someone always spent the night in jail. That's why Clete and me kept to ourselves. We weren't angels, but we weren't hardened or hollow, either. Of course, even fair-to-middling boys like us veered off the righteous path from time to time. Some worse than others.*

*I was only seventeen but had the shoulders and five o'clock shadow of a full-grown man. More than one girl at Tulsa Central High School had her eye on me, and that's the truth. None of them stood a chance, though; Adeline Dobbs had stolen my heart way back in second grade, and the fact that she was a year older and the prettiest girl in school didn't dampen my hopes of winning her in the least.*

*(Latham, 2017, p. 9–11 )*

## Rowan

*Nobody walks in Tulsa. At least, not to get anywhere. Oil built our houses, paved our streets, and turned us from a cow town stop on the Frisco Railroad into the heart of Route 66. My ninth-grade Oklahoma History teacher joked that around these parts, walking is sacrilege. Real Tulsans drive.*

*But today my car is totaled and I have an eleven-thirty appointment with the district attorney at the county courthouse. So I walked.*

*Mom and Dad wanted to come home and pick me up after their morning meetings. I convinced them the walk would help me clear my head, and it did. Especially when I got to the place where he died.*

*(Latham, 2017, p. 1–2)*

*[. . .] Honestly, I'd been a little worried that being there again would mess me up. So to keep myself calm, I imagined how things must have looked the night Will and Joseph and Ruby tried to survive. There's this old map of Tulsa online, and the streets I walked along to get here are on it. In 1921, the Arkansas River cut them off to the south, just like it does today. But back then they ran north into trees and fields and farms. There aren't any farms now, only highways and concrete.*

*It was probably quieter a hundred years ago, but that doesn't necessarily mean better. I understand now that history only moves forward in a straight line when we learn from it. Otherwise it loops past the same mistakes over and over again.*

*That's why I'm here, wearing one of Mom's knee-length business skirts, sitting on a bench near the courthouse, waiting to tell the DA what happened. I want to stop just one of those loops. Because it's like Geneva says: The dead always have stories to tell. They just need the living to listen.*

*(Latham, 2017, p. 2)*

Source: Latham, J. (2017). *Dreamland Burning*. New York: NY: Little, Brown, and Company.