

Booklist

Advanced Review – Uncorrected Proof

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★ **American Salvage.**

Campbell, Bonnie Jo (Author)

Apr 2009. 184 p. Wayne State Univ., paperback, \$18.95. (9780814334126).

The houses are ramshackle, the trucks old, the weather extreme. The men, clad in shabby camouflage, are battered and scarred. They labor at dangerous, soul-killing jobs; hunt; drink too much; and stand by their women no matter how flat-out crazy they are (or they think about killing them). The women do the same. Money is tight; the old ways and the precious wildlife are disappearing; loneliness is a plague; and the meth-cookers keep burning down the house. Welcome to rural Michigan, Campbell's home ground, and a story collection of rare impact. These fine-tuned stories are shaped by stealthy wit, stunning turns of events, and breath-taking insights. Terrible injuries, accidental and otherwise, leave people and animals in misery, but they are salvaged, maybe even healed. Against all odds, salvation counterbalances loss and despair in unexpected ways in this small place of big feelings, where everyone is yoked together for better and worse, and where, as one persistent survivor observes, "what looked like junk to most people could be worth real money." Campbell's busted-broke, damaged, and discarded people are rich in longing, valor, forgiveness, and love, and readers themselves will feel salvaged and transformed by this gutsy book's fierce compassion.

— *Donna Seaman*