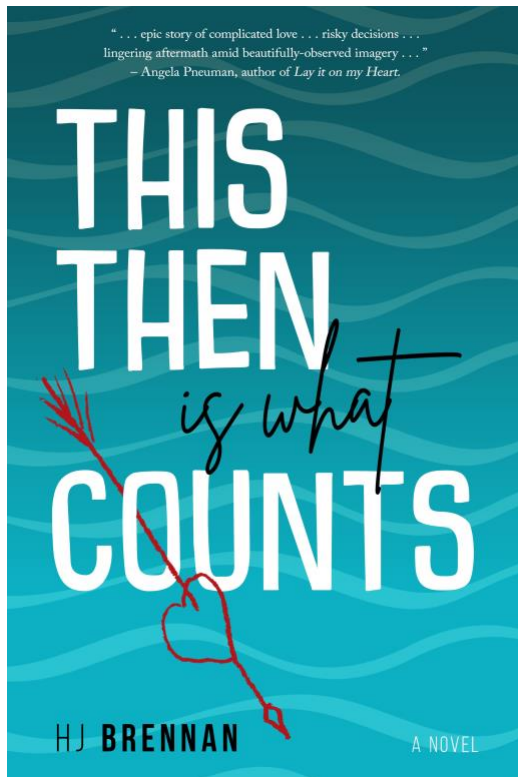


Reader's Guide to *This Then Is What Counts* by HJ Brennan



About the Book

"This Then Is What Counts" renders an unlikely, contemporary couple bound in love and forced into a tragic odyssey. James is thirty-something and emotionally adrift when he encounters a tall, heroic and deserted June. They work and sweat side-by-side on a historic construction project in the forest along the Chesapeake. Their mutual passion is lit, June's secrets are revealed, and love and life are threatened. Twenty-five years later, James is alone. He reflects on that short time he and June shared. It seems like yesterday, and she was bigger than life and the only love he's known. It was a physical year of working with their hands and enjoying their bodies, and they took hold of those days and swung them over their heads. When June's troubled past showed up, she laid out her options: "I either fight hard, run hard, or I'm screwed." They ran. As James tells the story in his darkly comic and unsettled retirement, a mystery builds as to why he's alone when his memories of that single year with June present such a wide-screen love.

Reader's Guide Questions

1. The story is told through James' voice. How might it have been different if told from June's perspective? From Kane's?
2. How much of James' life is wrapped up in that one year?
3. How can he disregard Margaret, Eva, and everything else going on around him the past twenty-five years?
4. How is Erskine's unwritten influence affecting James?
5. How likely is it that James will find June? If he does, then what?
6. What roles do Nolan and 'Chief' play in the story?