



Wheat that Springeth Green (New York Review Books Classics)

J.F. Powers

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Wheat That Springeth Green, J. F. Powers's beautifully realized final work, is a comic foray into the commercialized wilderness of modern American life. Its hero, Joe Hackett, is a high school track star who sets out to be a saint. But seminary life and priestly apprenticeship soon damp his ardor, and by the time he has been given a parish of his own he has traded in his hair shirt for the consolations of baseball and beer. Meanwhile Joe's higher-ups are pressing for an increase in profits from the collection plate, suburban Inglenook's biggest business wants to launch its new line of missiles with a blessing, and not all that far away, in Vietnam, a war is going on. Joe wants to duck and cover, but in the end, almost in spite of himself, he is condemned to do something right.

J. F. Powers was a virtuoso of the American language with a perfect ear for the telling cliché and an unfailing eye for the kitsch that clutters up our lives. This funny and very moving novel about the making and remaking of a priest is one of his finest achievements.

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