



The Ballad of Barnabas Pierkiel: A Novel

Magdalena Zyzak

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A story of love and adventure in an imaginary Slavic nation on the brink of historic change—the debut of a ribald and raucous new literary voice

Set in the quaint (though admittedly backward) fictional nation of Scalvusia in 1939, *The Ballad of Barnabas Pierkiel* follows the exploits of a young swineherd with romantic delusions of grandeur. Desperate to attract the voluptuous Roosha, the Gypsy concubine of the local boot-and-shoe magnate, Barnabas and his short-legged steed Wilhelm get embroiled in a series of scandals and misadventures, as every attempt at wooing ends in catastrophe. After the mysterious death of an important figure in the community, a witch-hunt ensues, and a stranger falls from the sky. Barnabas begins to see the terrible tide of history turning in his beloved hometown. The wonderfully eccentric supporting cast includes a priest driven mad by a fig tree, a gang of louts who taunt our reluctant hero at every turn, and a dim-witted vagabond with a goat for a wife. Even as her characters brush up against one of the darkest moments of the twentieth century, Magdalena Zyzak's humor and prose delight in the absurdities of the human animal.

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