



The Paperbark Shoe

Goldie Goldbloom

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Winner of the 2008 AWP Award for the Novel

From 1941 to 1947, eighteen thousand Italian prisoners of war were sent to Australia. The Italian surrender that followed the downfall of Mussolini had created a novel circumstance: prisoners who theoretically were no longer enemies. Many of these exiles were sent to work on isolated farms, unguarded.

The Paperbark Shoe is the unforgettable story of Gin Boyle—an albino, a classically trained pianist, and a woman with a painful past. Disavowed by her wealthy stepfather, her unlikely savior is the farmer Mr. Toad—a little man with a taste for women's corsets. Together with their two children, they weather the hardship of rural life and the mockery of their neighbors. But with the arrival of two Italian prisoners of war, their lives are turned upside down. Thousands of miles from home, Antonio and John find themselves on Mr. and Mrs. Toad's farm, exiles in the company of exiles. *The Paperbark Shoe* is a remarkable novel about the far-reaching repercussions of war, the subtle violence of displacement, and what it means to live as a captive—in enemy country, and in one's own skin.

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