



## Badlands

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With phrasing that's circuitous enough to deplete the national stockpile of commas, Porter creates a first novel of startling, dreamlike lyricism—yet one that is sometimes exasperating to wade through. Set in the wounded “childworld” of the Pine Ridge Reservation of South Dakota, this tale is told by a restless Englishwoman who has come with her lover, Adam, a lawyer, from New York so he can represent Harry Blackfoot in a lawsuit. A charismatic Sioux, Blackfoot is suing the Pennington’s, a Jesus-obsessed couple of German descent whose land includes traditional Indian hunting grounds. The battles fought in these pages are intricate, and mostly psychological: American junk culture vs. myth and mysticism, politics vs. the individual, sexual desire vs. the dryness of a neutered world, past vs. present. Blackfoot's 10-year-old daughter, Minny, and her cousin, the Pennington's illegally adopted son, Abe (“Snake Boy”), are repositories as well as mirrors of these conflicts, and their sadomasochistic sexual relationship is powerfully disturbing. Through the narrator's emotional and spiritual self-discovery, Porter presents an ideological agenda (“[He] lapped up America's junk, her fundamentalist lies, and spewed them out in death”) that may be expressed beautifully at times, but is in no way subtle.

Book of the Month Club selection. (Apr.)

FYI: Porter is a woman of many talents. Her play *Night Angel* was performed at Lincoln Center in October, and an exhibit of her art and poetry. *The Art of Love*, curated by Leo Castelli, has toured internationally and will travel to Sioux Falls to coincide with the publication of *Badlands*.

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