



The Clarinet Polka: A Novel

Keith Maillard

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Author Keith Maillard received critical acclaim with his novel *Gloria*, which told the story of a young woman on the cusp of womanhood in a town called Raysburg, West Virginia. In this book, *The Clarinet Polka*, Maillard turns that same eagle-eyed attention to the other side of the tracks of that very same town and creates a stunning portrait of Polish America and of one man's struggle to find meaning in his life and roots.

The year is 1969, and young Jimmy Koprowski returns from his stint in the airforce to Raysburg, his blue-collar Polish American hometown where nothing much happens beyond working at the steel mill, going to Mass, and getting drunk at the local PAC. Jimmy's efforts at rebuilding his life result in sleeping off hangovers in his parents' attic and drifting into a destructive affair with a married woman.

But things change when his younger sister Linda decides to start an all-girl polka band, and Jimmy falls for the band's star clarinetist, Janice, whose young life is haunted by tragic events that happened before she was born. The threads of Jimmy's family life, the legacy of WWII Poland, and the healing power of music, language, and tradition all begin to converge.

At once gritty and compassionate, moving and witty, *The Clarinet Polka* showcases the emotional and perfectly pitched voice of a lost soul finding his way.

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