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The Gypsies

Jan Yoors



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At the age of twelve, Jan Yoors ran away from his cultural Belgian family to join a wandering band, a kumpania, of Gypsies. For ten years, he lived as one of them, traveled with them from country to country, shared both their pleasures and their hardships—and came to know them as no one, no outsider, ever has. Here, in this firsthand and highly personal account of an extraordinary people, Yoors tells the real story of the Gypsies' fascinating customs and their never-ending struggle to survive as free nomads in a hostile world. He vividly describes the texture of their daily life: the Gypsies as lovers, spouses, parents, healers, and mourners; their loyalties and enmities; their moral and ethical beliefs and practices; their language and culture; and the history and traditions behind their fierce pride. The exultant celebrations, the daring frontier crossings, the yearly horse fairs, the convoluted business deals in which Gypsy shrewdness combined with all the apparatus of modern technology are all brought to life in this memorable portrait of the most romanticized, yet most maligned and least-known people on earth. An insider's story, The Gypsies lifts the veil of secrecy that for so long has enshrouded this race of strangers in our midst.

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