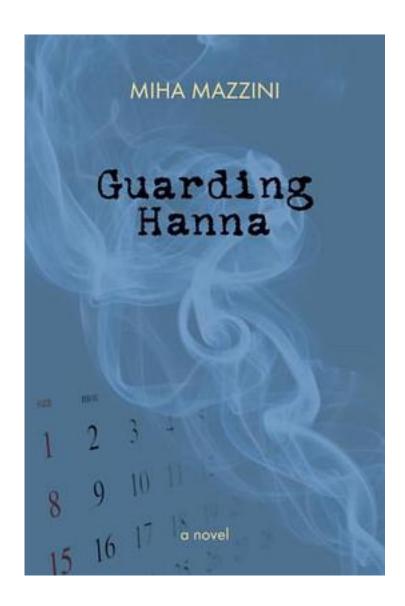
Guarding Hanna



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出版者:

出版时间:2008-6

装帧:

isbn:9781556437267

Abandoned at birth because he has the face of a "prize boar," the unnamed narrator of Guarding Hanna knows only a local Berlin gang as family. Patriarch Maestro acts as surrogate father, employing him to collect debts and perform thuggish tasks. Except for brief moments interacting with the gang, "the beast" spends his life alone, wandering Berlin's streets and sleeping in its vast housing projects. This changes in a flash when one of Maestro's sons is implicated in a crime. The only hope of saving him is to protect the sole witness, beautiful but eccentric Hanna Wyoczik. Maestro calls on "the beast" to move in with her until the trial. But never having spent more than five minutes in a social situation with any human being, much less a woman, he quickly finds the basic tasks of human interaction and social intercourse insufferable. Yet Hanna's unfazed reaction to her guardian, and her witty account of philandering ex-husbands and a nympho mother, soon confound and captivate him. Could love be rearing its head? Miha Mazzini weaves simple scenes into a meaningful and darkly hilarious novel, relentlessly poking and prodding at the human condition without losing sight of the characters' humanity.

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