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The Grass Arena

John Healy

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John Healy's The Grass Arena describes with unflinching honesty his experiences of addiction, his escape through learning to play chess in prison, and his ongoing search for peace of mind. This Penguin Classics edition includes an afterword by Colin MacCabe. In his searing autobiography Healy describes his fifteen years living rough in London without state aid, when begging carried an automatic three-year prison sentence and vagrant alcoholics prowled the parks and streets in search of drink or prey. When not united in their common aim of acquiring alcohol, winos sometimes murdered one another over prostitutes or a bottle, or the begging of money. Few modern writers have managed to match Healy's power to refine from the brutal destructive condition of the chronic alcoholic a story so compelling it is beyond comparison. John Healy (b. 1943) was born into an impoverished, Irish immigrant family, in the slums of Kentish Town, North London. Out of school by 14, pressed into the army and intermittently in prison, Healy became an alcoholic early on in life. Despite these obstacles Healy achieved remarkable, indeed phenomenal expertise in both writing and chess, as outlined in the autobiographical The Grass Arena. If you enjoyed The Grass Arena, you might like Last Exit to Brooklyn, also available in Penguin Modern Classics. 'Sober and precise, grotesque, violent, sad, charming and hilarious all at once' Literary Review 'Beside it, a book like Orwell's Down and Out in Paris and London seems a rather inaccurate tourist guide' Colin MacCabe

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