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Barkskins: A Novel

Annie Proulx

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Barkskins: A Novel Annie Proulx
From Annie Proulx—the Pulitzer Prize and National Book Award-winning author of *The Shipping News* and *Brokeback Mountain*—comes an ecological masterwork, five years in the writing: an epic, dazzling, violent, magnificently dramatic novel about the taking down of the world's forests.

In the late seventeenth century two penniless young Frenchmen, René Sel and Charles Duquet, arrive in New France. Bound to a feudal lord, a "*seigneur*," for three years in exchange for land, they become wood-cutters—barkskins. René suffers extraordinary hardship, oppressed by the forest he is charged with clearing. He is forced to marry a Mi'kmaw woman and their descendants live trapped between two inimical cultures. But Duquet, crafty and ruthless, runs away from the seigneur, becomes a fur trader, then sets up a timber business. Proulx tells the stories of the descendants of Sel and Duquet over three hundred years—their travels across North America, to Europe, China, and New Zealand, under stunningly brutal conditions—the revenge of rivals, accidents, pestilence, Indian attacks, and cultural annihilation. Over and over again, they seize what they can of a presumed infinite resource, leaving the modern-day characters face to face with possible ecological collapse.

Proulx's inimitable genius is her creation of characters who are so vivid—in their greed, lust, vengefulness, or their simple compassion and hope—that we follow them with fierce attention. Annie Proulx is one of the most formidable and compelling American writers, and *Barkskins* is her greatest novel, a magnificent marriage of history and imagination.

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