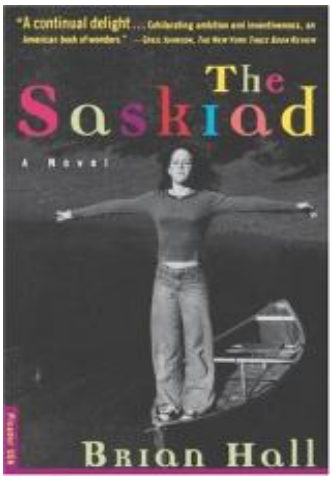
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The Saskiad

by Brian Hall



About the Book

Longing to escape the rundown commune where she lives with her organic-farmer mother, assorted half-siblings, and a cow named Marilyn, the precociously well-read Saskia White, 12, imagines herself the noble contemporary of Odysseus, Marco Polo, and other adventurers. Saskia's elaborate fantasies are soon upstaged by her real-life, long-lost father, who leads Saskia and her best friend Jane on a camping trip that turns into an epic adventure of love, sex, and lies. Saskia is as unforgettable as her own heroes, a young girl whose story resonates with a rare and joyous sense of life and discovery.

Discussion Guide

1. Saskia begins her autobiography with the sentence: "Like all real people, I go under several names." What does this say about her perception of identity? How does identity affect Saskia's sense of reality?

2. To Tycho, Saskia is a pupil and lover; to Odysseus, a squire; and to Marco, an advisor. What relationships does Saskia share with the men and women in her "real" life, and how do these relationships change during the course of the novel?

3. Many novelists have chronicled a young person's coming-of-age. Does Saskia remind you of other heroes or heroines? How does she differ from these characters?

4. Like Odysseus and Marco Polo, Saskia is a voyager. What does she set out to discover?

5. Saskia imagines that she has little in common with her mother, Lauren, and everything in common with her father, Thomas. Is she right about this? In addition to the adventuresome character that she shares with her father, what other traits might she share with him that she would prefer not to acknowledge?

6. Saskia is fascinated by alchemy, and its concept of the Philosopher's Stone: an infinitely precious object that lies all

around us, within reach, but which we cannot recognize. What might be the "Philosopher's Stone" of The Saskiad?

Author Bio

The Saskiad
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