

Russian diaspora horror

Axolotl

Collection of short stories. Stroki. Moscow 2023. 260 pages

Publishers: Spain/ Impedimenta

This collection of 8 stories where reality intertwines with mysticism and where the boundaries of good and evil blur, includes both previously unpublished and new stories from the queen of Russian horror. For each text, Starobinets provides two perspectives, and in both – reality and fantasy – her characters find themselves in situations that test their and our humanity.

These are crazy stories about the backside of reality and about the real world, which is much worse than the „other“ world.

Axolotl - in Aztec mythology, a demon with a dog's head, the patron saint of freaks and monsters, a guide to the world of the dead. According to one of the ancient legends, at the beginning of time, Axolotl copulated with the ice salamander, who knew how to be in fire without getting burned, as well as with the lionfish, who knew how to set the sea on fire. And the three gave birth to a child who became immortal, for when he dies he does not die but turns into something else. One day this child will feel hunger and turn into one that devours the entire world - and after a series of epidemics and wars, the end of times will come.

Very simple everyday situations or others that seem most familiar to us, develop into small or very large horror scenarios: a disabled schoolmate, a vow of loyalty and betrayal. An epidemic, lock down, marital problems, infidelity. A pop star whose career is on the decline because his wife, who was the real creative force behind his songs, committed suicide. Shimon is bullied at school because his father went to America as a scientist, and then Shimon suddenly makes a discovery: Axolotl lives in the dungeons of Peterhof – a legendary reptile that Shimon wants to defeat in order to rescue Russia's honor. A girl finds out that it wasn't her grandfather who impregnated her grandmother, but a ghost.



THE AUTHOR

translations

over 20 languages

awards

2021 Spanish Celsius-232

2018 ESFS award

«Best European Sci-fi author»

2017 Winner Imaginales
festival in Epinal/ France

2016 Grand Prix of Utopiales
Sci-Fi book festival/ France

2014 National Bestseller Russia

2014 Prix Masterton

2014 Winner «The Portal»
Scifi Assembly Ukraine

sample translation available

full english

Anna Starobinets was born in Moscow in 1978. She is a Russian and Israeli citizen, writer and scriptwriter who works in various genres: sci-fi, dystopias and horrors for adults, fairy and detective stories for children. She is a widow of Alexander Garros, a renown writer from Latvia. Starobinets was in opposition to Russian government for the last years, and after the beginning of war with Ukraine she escaped from Russia with her two children and a dog.

Anna Starobinets

Summary

VOL 1 - The first case for forest police officer Badger - the Columbo among animal detectives.

When Badger - like every Friday evening - eats his back of bark in the tavern and secretly looks forward to the well-deserved hibernation, a terrible crime occurs: A rabbit has died! Some croaking frogs reveal the shocking news. Wolf appears to be the most likely culprit, because — duh — he's a lone wolf without an alibi, but Badger refuses to jump to conclusions. With the help of Vulture the crime scene investigator, Mouse the psychologist, brave witness Beetlebug Buck, and other curious creatures, the woodland detectives set out to discover the truth.

VOL 2 - Flush with success from having solved the case of the murdered Rabbit, crotchety detective Chief Badger and his impetuous young assistant, Badgercat, anticipate the return of peace and quiet to their community. But trouble recurs with a visit from Huntington Farm's bloodthirsty security team, who bring accusations of theft and harsh demands for justice. Guard dog Muxtar and hunting hound Polkan are searching for Chicken Four, a plucky little fowl who's just discovered what happens to her sister chickens when they disappear into Nina Palna's kitchen on Fridays. Now Badger and Badgercat have to persuade Palna to stop making chicken soup and to prevent Muxtar and Polkan from taking matters into their own paws (and jaws) suspecting the Fox. Guard dog Muxtar sets an ultimatum of twenty-four hours. After that he will come back with the other guard dogs from the security team and get the Fox. But is she really the culprit? Badger has his doubts. Will he succeed in convicting the culprit before there is a big row in the thick thicket? One thing is already clear: Badgers can forget his hibernation for the time being.

VOL 3 - The peaceful existence of the animals in the Far Woods is threatened by a crime wave. First, an underground art exhibition is robbed. Soon after, Marquise, a pampered, snow-white Persian, is kidnapped from the cat show. To Chief Badger and his ambitious assistant, Badgercat, all clues point to the snooty Arctic Fox as the culprit — until the emergence of Claws of Rage, a nefarious group of nonpedigreed agitators seeking vengeance against purebred, well-fed, happy-go-lucky animals. Can Chief Badger and Badgercat round up Claws of Rage members before they strike again? Will Badgercat be able to put aside his growing feelings for Marquise and uphold his duty as a Far Woods officer of the law? And what is that strange hairless animal up to?

VOL 4 - Chief Badger faces his most bizarre case yet, in which someone is plucking and burning the feathers of birds in the Far Woods. To make things even worse, the top suspect is his former assistant, young Badgercat. Chief Badger knows that Badgercat can't possibly be the Plucker, so who plucked Lady Cuckoo and attacked the owl twins, Chuck and Huck? Was it Warbler the barber, who's obsessed with hair, fur, and feathers? Or the sly, treacherous Arctic Fox? Was it the compulsive thief, Sneaky Sal the salamander? Or someone else?

VOL 5 - The Badgers of the Deep Forest Police are sent on a mission to the African savannah to investigate the kidnapping of newborn giraffe Rafik. They are constantly in mortal danger. After all, the Far Woodland spares no one: neither strangers nor natives. This is a terrifying and dangerous place where cruelty and lawlessness reign, brutal sacrifices are made and the law of the jungle prevails. But for a brave and honest animal, Woodland can also become a place of power that helps the animal find itself and find true love. Badger Senior, Badgercat, and Vulture Vulture don't shy away from trouble. They conduct their investigation on the fair principles by which residents live back home in Far Forest. But unraveling the complex case does not mean solving it. Because the hard truth from the investigation has yet to be taught to the residents of Woodlands, but those in power there don't need that truth at all.

VOL 6 - An epidemic has broken out in the forest.

VOL 7 (planned) - One of the beasts has disappeared far away in the woods of Sri Lanka

Anna Starobinets

Russian diaspora children's

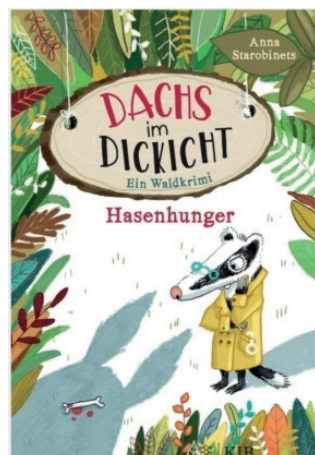
Beastly Ferry Tales

Children's book. Moscow 2020. 176 pages
Age 3-13

Beastly Tales by Anna Starobinets is a spin-off of the popular "Beastly Detective" series – for all fans and their younger sisters and brothers.

This book contains sagas and fairy tales, poems and songs, ancient legends and modern adventure stories, which animals from different forests of the world tell and sing to their young, mostly at bedtime. The collection also includes stories from the village of Okhotka. In this way, wild bookworms learn about the beliefs and myths, life and customs of little-studied rural animals.

The Big Badger from the Far Forest Police tells the Little Badger Kittens about the Sky Bears. The dog Polkan entertains the Muchtarchik pup with stories about the Great Dane and his sworn enemy Pusi-Don. The Persian cat remembers how the black magician Cat Noir lured her to the Forest of Shadows. The owl brothers Ug and Chuck learn that the location of the nearby forest used to be a field of honey carrots grown by the flying rabbit Wryluh. Badger Melesandra convinces her daughter that her father was the first badger on the moon. The Tail listens to the story of the laughing witch Koya, ancestor of the coyotes. The giraffe Rafik listens to the legend of the mango gods who created the first animals of the desert. The penguin boy listens to the shark penguin's hunting stories. And the Misfit listens to the scary fox story about the frozen demon.



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