

literary fiction

My weird lover from the FSB

Blog posts and stories. AST. Moscow 2017. 220 pages

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Incompetent, vulnerable, cheeky, paranoid, yearning, shy, but also brilliant at self-presentation, and then, embarrassingly open; for everything that happens to the heroine Beshlei has also happened to the author Olga Beshlei. Nothing is really thought out. The sheer joy, needs, worries and dreams of a young Russian woman, whose stories follow the fortune and misfortune of life, the ebb and flow of the city of Moscow. They follow love, ambition, politics, belief and superstition, and above all people – friends and strangers and lovers past, present and maybe never to be. With a good eye for the off-key, a healthy sense of humour and her heart in the right place, Beshlei wonders why it is so difficult these days for a likeable and open-minded young woman simply to be happy.

It is not at all difficult for Beshlei's heroine to find emancipated soulmates in any Western city who have suffered similarly. Except perhaps, that in Moscow the probability is higher to discover that your lover is a gangster or a FSB officer. And the panic about trying to hide a huge pink dildo before a house search by the secret service should to be considerably less outside Russia.

The novel takes the form of a colourful collection of stories, but is basically a coming-of-age novel with the heroine courageously testing the breaking point of the rules that determine the life of her generation. And she tests her own limits as well. The author's prose leads the reader to the edge of his or her comfort zone. The education aspects of Beshlei's novel are not concerned with how hard it is to grow up, but on how hard it is to assert one's right to be accepted as a grown-up. Using her journalistic incorruptibility and literary skill, Beshlei proves herself to be a seismograph of a generation between the generations. She allows the younger readers to trip over their own half-baked principles and leads the older ones into situations where authority and experience no longer help.

"Life on the edge, where it hurts and makes one angry. The important things in life that really matter to us." *Valeria Pustovaya*

"To blast a metaphysical wind through a simple and normal life is such a skilful move that no-one has thought of before. It would appear that this literary sleight of hand is no artifice but has sprung from the depths of her talent." *Litteratura*

"Everyone in the FSB will read it and roll over laughing." *Aleksandr Lychagin*

"Life in its all-pervading garishness, making us so sentimental that one just wants to burst into tears. It is the way that Olga Beshlei writes about the common or garden things that makes them lose their banality. She has found her own, very strong style of connecting with life that simply takes my breath away." *Anna Berseneva*

Beshlei was born in Obninsk in 1989, a small research town in the district of Kaluga. After completing her schooling at the technical school for physics of the Institute of Atomic Energy, she went to Moscow to study political journalism. She became a political editor at the oppositional magazine "The New Times". After the success of her story "The FSB and my big pink Dildo" she was given the monthly column "Beshlei" on Colta.ru. In 2017 all those texts were published in book-form. At present Beshlei is editor-in-chief of Batenka.ru. Beshlei lives in Moscow.



THE AUTHOR

translations

1 language

sample translation available

english

german

Olga Beshlei