

mystical horror thriller

The Food Shack

Novel. AST. Moscow 2003. 413 pages

Publishers: Estonia - Hea Lugu

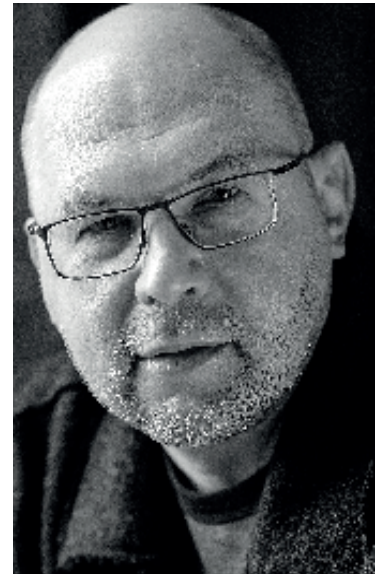
Summer holiday camp on the Volga during the Moscow Olympics. A barge adorned with banners ships food to the camp's food shack and at the same time drops off Igor and other students who earn a little extra with a summer job as a group leader in the pioneer camp. But more tempting are the prospects of erotic adventures with other group leader students.

The children in the camp are all only about twelve years old. They sweeten their camp life with horror stories: there is a prison camp nearby, fleeing prisoners might live in the woods as animal man-eaters; a pensioner lives in an old dacha on the grounds, where there is supposedly a black room in which all those who lived here on the camp grounds before the revolution in an upper-class dacha settlement have disappeared and now haunt as ghosts.

Valerka is the outsider who simply wants to belong, but is bullied. He is the first to see a classmate sucking another's blood at night. He thinks it's a dream. Only when he becomes a witness again does he entrust himself to Igor. Of course, Igor doesn't believe him until he himself gets a vampire visit at night, which he can fend off. The camp leader strives for discipline, constantly imposes sanctions, but the teasing of the girls and the brutality among the boys continue. Valerka rescues himself in the food shack of Baba Nyura, the old kitchen helper who knows about the vampires because she was once one herself, able to save herself, but has been physically disabled ever since. She knows that the real danger comes from the good pioneers. Their loyalty to the rules seems exemplary, their decency and love of order are perceived as positive qualities, their charm as innate. This is exactly why they remain inconspicuous. Until the next moonrise reveals their true nature.

It turns out that for decades there have been many deaths among former summer camp inmates, but nobody noticed them because the children came from different cities and only died at home later. Who is the leader stratilat who always has to bite 13 children in order to survive the 13 moons of a year until the next summer camp and whose history seems to go back to the Russian Revolution? Igor and Valerka forge a rescuing plan for the closing ceremony, where a campfire will take place on the banks of the Volga. They know that the vampires avoid the river like the devil avoids holy water. They want to drive the leader stratilat into the food shack and starve him to death there so that he won't survive his lunar time. Otherwise only burning him alive would remain as last option.

A very tricky vampire novel about a highly topical ideological conflict that runs through the entire book on many levels: Independence of thought, dreaminess, the urge for freedom and the attempt to understand our complicated world – as a counterpart to the simple answers and blunt rules that have always been and still are set up, out of laziness of thought or just to enslave people. A novel that is not only straightforward and strong like a wooden post, but also follows the rules of the genre so well, that the reader doesn't even notice how he has already been bitten and infected.



THE AUTHOR

languages

5 languages

awards

2006 Yasnaya Polyana Award
 2006 Big Book Award
 2006 Strannik Prize
 2004 Book of the Year
 2004 Bazhov Award
 2003 Mamin-Sibiryak Award

Aleksei Ivanov

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Ivanov is at home in different genres. But he is always interested in those times, places and events in Russian culture where a transition from one cultural system to another takes place. Be it in Russian history, where new times replace the old ones, thematized in his historical and contemporary novels. Be it the collision of parallel systems, as in his mystical thrillers. His books are all explicitly plot driven, which is why almost all of them have become movies. Because they are easy to read and follow the rules of the genre, they are always aimed at a broad audience. But even on the surface one senses, without having to consciously perceive it, the authentic saturation and great closeness to life of his novels. Because only one layer deeper Ivanov's books are full of documentary facts, socio-historical descriptions and witty references. This way, even more intellectual reader will get their money's worth and on top of that a good deal of horror, suspense or historical-exotic entertainment.

"Ivanov is the Russian Stephen King... Like him, he has written an honest genre novel without postmodern quirks or superfluous winking with the reader."

AFISHA

"Vampirism in the novel actually means the death of human thought as soon as it is caught in the rules of a particular group. And it doesn't matter whether it's party affiliation or class affiliation... You feel comfortable in their laps, you feel needed, but... that's not you anymore."

MEDIUM

"Seductive, plot-driven, very realistic despite the vampire bites."

FORBES

"Ivanov succeeds in the most important thing: one believes him this world of pubertal „leeches“, mysterious leaders and other bloodsuckers."

LITERATURNO

"The vampire plot, apparently mechanically incorporated into a retro setting, is not only the plot driving moment, but also very pragmatically expands the target group of the novel to younger readers, who were no longer in a pioneer summer camp, but have seen quite a few B-movies."

MEDUZA

Aleksei Ivanov was born in 1969 in Gorky (today Nizhny Novgorod). He grew up in Perm in the Urals. In 1996 he graduated from the University of Ekaterinburg with a degree in art history. He then worked as a caretaker, laboratory assistant, tourist guide, teacher, journalist and lecturer. His first publication in a magazine in 1990 was a fantasy novel. His first book publication was the mystical-historical novel „Heart of Parma“ 2003. 11 novels and 7 non-fiction books by him are now available with a total circulation of over 1.5 million. 5 books have been filmed, 5 more are currently being filmed. Aleksei Ivanov lives in Perm.

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