

Belarusian literary fiction

The Good always Wins

Novel. Novel. Manuscript. Minsk 2023. approx. 320 pages

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ATTENTION: Only backup copies of this text exist in the West. In order not to endanger the personal safety of the author and his family in Belarus, a translation should not be published until 2025 at the earliest.

Summer 2020. Mass protests against Lukashenko's regime out on the streets of Minsk. Inside the State Theater the rehearsals for a contemporary play about the Inquisition process against Joan of Arc. Matvei has only a small supporting role. The big role in his life awaits him elsewhere.

Matvei has to save the cat of his beloved former teacher from her apartment, because she was sentenced to prison for a critical social media post. He manages to take home Heidegger the cat, who meows his pitiful hungry "Daazain". Feeding him becomes more important to Matvei than the protests on the streets or the long theater rehearsals. While buying cat food Matvei gets caught in a raid and is sentenced to prison. A punk poet, Lady Di, who is also on trial, manages to convince the judge to acquit her by speaking boldly. She wants to make the world a better place, her weapon is words. She promises Matvei to take care of Heidegger during his arrest.

Released after 40 days Matvei finds out that the judge resigned. Also the ranks of the best-known TV propagandists gave up their jobs – due to Lady Di's powerfully eloquent persuasive skills? Only one last chief propagandist keeps rushing. The theatre premiere is banned by the censors, moving it to an exile stage in Vilnius brings no attention. The depressed theatre diva commits suicide. It seems that the dead Belarusian culture can no longer be brought back to life, even in exile.

Matvei is blacklisted in Belarus and remains unemployed for 16 months. His savings are gone. He has nothing to lose and decides to kill the still agitating chief propagandist. Arriving at the hater's apartment he finds Lady Di murdered by secret service agents and the hater writhing in remorse, and begging for forgiveness. Instead of murderous hatred, Matvei starts feeling empathy with him and understands: before having been murdered Lady Di had managed to convince this last hater to renounce the deadly poison of propaganda. In the end, the good always wins.



THE AUTHOR

translations
4 languages

awards

Bogdanovich Literay Award
2012
Best European Fiction anthology
2011 (Dalkey Archive)

sample translation available

english

other works

Mova
Paranoia
Revolution
Lake of Joy
Night

Martinovich was born in Oshmiany, Belarus in 1977. He is a political scientist, doctor of art history, and professor at the Vilnius University. He is a regular contributor to the German weekly DIE ZEIT. His literary works are published parallel in the Belarusian and Russian languages. «Paranoia», published in Russia at the end of 2009, was immediately banned from sale in Belarus (unofficially prohibited). In 2017 he was Writer in Residence at the Literaturhaus Zürich and PWG foundation. Martinovich lives somewhere in the backcountry of Belarus.

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