

Andrej Kurkow

A Matter of Death and Life

Published by Diogenes as *Ein Freund des Verblichenen*

Original title: *Milyi drug, tovarisc pokojnika*



Andrej
Kurkow
*Ein Freund
des
Verblichenen*

Roman · Diogenes

To Tolya, life is no longer worth living: his wife is being unfaithful to him. Tolya would really like to kill himself, but he can't bring himself to do it. Then he meets Dima, a former classmate who works in a kiosk where spirits are sold. They drink to their old friendship and tell each other about their lives, and Tolya asks Dima casually whether he knows anyone who could carry out a »very special mission«. Dima, who believes that Tolya wants to kill his wife's lover, promises to help. He knows a man called Kostya who is out of work and has just become a father, and who needs money so urgently that he will organise just about anything. All Tolya has to do is to put a photo and the necessary information about where to find the person in question into an envelope. Tolya does as he is told and goes to his favourite café to wait for the killer. But evening comes and the killer has still not turned up. Tolya, now drunk, goes home, and on the way he picks up a young prostitute with whom he spends the night and the following day. Next day, the young woman insists that Tolya calls her by her real name, Lena, and refuses to take money from him. Suddenly, Tolya no longer wants to die ... but the mission is already under way.

Book factsheet

General Fiction

144 pages

11.3 x 18 x 1.3 cm

September 2003

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Awards

- 2024 englische Übersetzung von *Samson und Nadjeschda* auf der Longlist des »International Booker Prize«
- 2023 Italienische Übersetzung von *Samson und Nadjeschda* für den »Premio Strega Europeo« nominiert
- 2023 englische Übersetzung von *Jimi Hendrix live in Lemberg* auf der Longlist des »International Booker Prize«
- 2023 Als ausländisches Ehrenmitglied (Foreign Honorary Membership) in die »American Academy of Arts and Letters« aufgenommen
- 2022 »Geschwister Scholl Preis« für *Tagebuch einer Invasion*
- 2022 *Graue Bienen* auf der Shortlist des »Prix Fémina«
- 2022 »The Halldór Laxness International Literature Prize«
- 2022 »Prix Médicis étranger« für *Graue Bienen*
- 2022 *Graue Bienen* nominiert für den »Prix du meilleur livre étranger«
- 2021 »Fulbright Visiting Scholar-Stipendium« in San Diego, Kalifornien, USA
- 2014 Ernennung zum »Chevalier de la Légion d'Honneur« durch den französischen Präsidenten François Hollande
- 2012 »Premio Gogol«, Rom
- 2012 »Prix des lecteurs«, Frankreich, für *Der Gärtner von Otschakow*
- 2009 Jurymitglied für den »Man Booker International Prize 2009«
- 2008 Writer in Residence in Innsbruck
- 2005 Nach Einschätzung der Zeitschrift *Lire* ist Andrej Kurkow einer der 50 wichtigsten Schriftsteller der Welt.
- 2002 Preis »Schriftsteller des Jahres 2001«, den Buchhändler anlässlich der Buchmesse in der Ukraine vergeben haben
- 2001 In der Ukraine als Künstler des Jahres 2001 mit dem Preis »Mann des Jahres« ausgezeichnet
- 1997 Sein Drehbuch *Ein Freund des Verblichenen* wird für den »Felix«-Preis in der Kategorie »Bester Europäischer Drehbuchautor des Jahres« nominiert.

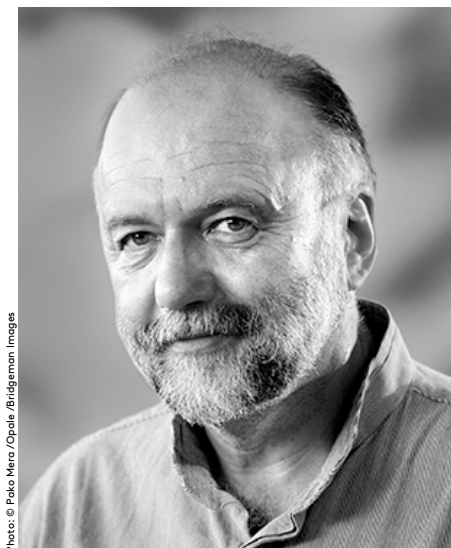


Photo: © Peko Mera/Opale /Bridgeman Images

Andrej Kurkows, born in St. Petersburg in 1961, has lived in Kyiv since childhood and writes in Russian. He studied foreign languages, was a newspaper editor and, during his military service, a prison guard, and wrote numerous screenplays. He is considered to be one of Ukraine's most important contemporary writers and is nominated for the ›International Booker Prize‹ 2023 with *Jimi Hendrix Live in Lviv*. Andrej Kurkows's works have been published in 42 languages. He has been a freelance author since 1996 and lives in Ukraine with his family.

Awards (cont'd)

- 1996 Das Drehbuch, basierend auf Kurkows Erzählung *Ein Freund des Verblichenen*, erhielt ein Stipendium vom französischen Kultusministerium, wodurch der Film teilfinanziert werden konnte. *Priyatel pokojnika* wurde 1997 eim Filmfestival in Cannes gezeigt.
- 1994 Nominierung des Romans *Bikfordov mir* für den Russischen Booker Prize
- 1994 Stipendium der Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung für seine Erzählung *Liebeslied eines Kosmopoliten*

Praise

A Matter of Death and Life

»Kurkov's eye for the absurdities of Ukrainian life is as sharp as ever.« – Christopher Tayler / Telegraph, London

»A brilliant little black comedy.« – Katie Law / Evening Standard, London

»An original, powerful voice.« – Matthias Matussek / Der Spiegel, Hamburg

Andrej Kurkows

»Andrej Kurkows knows how to make a story entertaining and amusing.« – Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung

»Andrej Kurkov is a master of grotesque humour.« – Brigitte, Hamburg

»With Kurkov, one is guaranteed entertainment of the highest order.« – Wiener Zeitung

»Kurkov's style is spare and effective, drawing us with deception ease into a dense, complex world full of wonderful characters.« – Michael Palin / (author)

»A latter-day Bulgakov [. . .] A Ukrainian Murakami.« – Phoebe Taplin / The Guardian, London

»A post-Soviet Kafka.« – Colin Freeman / The Daily Telegraph, London

»A kind of Ukrainian Kurt Vonnegut.« – Ian Sansom / The Spectator, London

»Kurkov writes short, sly, page-turners that specialize in what we might call absurdist noir.« – John Powers / NPR's Fresh Air, Washington D.C.

»Armed with the hilarious animal metaphors that populate his books, Kurkov depicts a humorous and scathing satire of the post-Soviet world, and of a Ukrainian society rediscovering itself, independent and riven by mafia, chaos and corruption.« – Laurent Rigoulet / La Chronique, Brussels

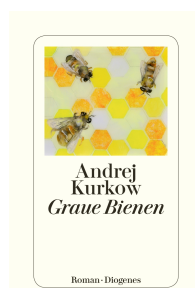
»His prose marked by humour and a contagious humanity evokes magical realism and the absurd.« – Jorge Ferrer / El Mundo, Madrid



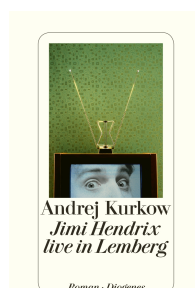
Samson and the Stolen Heart
432 pages
2023



Samson and Nadezhda
368 pages
2022
Award winner
Bestseller



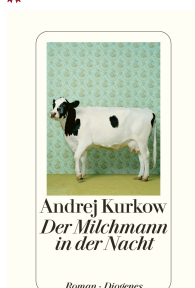
Grey Bees
448 pages
2019
Award winner



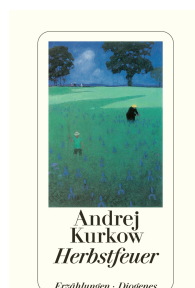
Jimi Hendrix Live in Lviv
416 pages
2014
Award winner



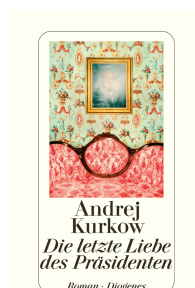
The Gardener of Ochakov
352 pages
2012
Award winner



The Milkman in the Night
544 pages
2009



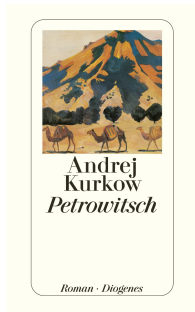
Bonfire
240 pages
2007



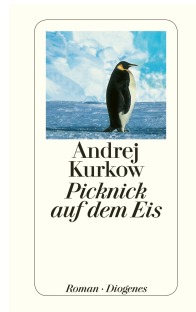
The President's Last Love
704 pages
2005



Penguin Lost
544 pages
2003



The Good Angel of Death
448 pages
2000



Death and the Penguin
288 pages
1999

Praise (cont'd)

»Andrej Kurkov's writing style moves between the unexpected, the beautiful and the hilarious — a tone that permits him to tell a tragedy without renouncing the paradox and the satire.« – Karina Sainz Borgo / ABC, Madrid

»He works with such imaginative power, which nothing seems to be able to quench, with a humorous and tender tone, with protagonists who don't have their fate in their hands, yet are saved by goodness and kindness.« – Alain Guillemoles / La Croix, Montrouge

»Andrej Kurkov connects the absurd with the ordinary, the comic with the sordid.« – Isabelle Mandraud / Le Monde, Paris