After being trampled at a mass panic in his Belarusian hometown, 16-year-old music student Zisk falls into a coma. Most people give up on him, his girlfriend, his mother, his doctor. Only his grandmother Elvira Alexandrovna stays by his side and sees to it that he is taken care of - for days, months, years. After ten years, at the very moment when Zisk is told that his grandmother has died, he wakes up. He realizes that his family has moved on to another period in their lives, that they don’t want him anymore. The country as a whole, however, is still governed by the same authoritarian president, the general brain drain persists, the police quickly smother any kind of protest. Will Zisk find his place in Belarus?
Sasha Filipenko, born in Minsk in 1984, is a Belarusian author who writes in Russian. After leaving his training in classical music, he studied literature in St. Petersburg and worked as a journalist, scriptwriter, gag writer for a satirical show and television presenter. The Ex-Son, about life under the Lukashenko regime, was published by Diogenes in spring 2021. Filipenko is an ardent football fan. He has been living outside Russia since 2020, with varying domiciles in Europe.

Praise (cont’d)

»Highly topical, skilfully narrated and deeply moving.« – Dagmar Kaindl / Buchkultur, Vienna

»In this novel, humorous and bitter in turn, Filipenko depicts a country living in a state of paralysis, beneath a blanket of fear.« – Kristian Teetz / Sonntagsblatt, Hannover

»And yet the Ex-Son envisions the end of this dictator: almost a Good Bye, Batka!« – Peter Zander / Berliner Morgenpost, Berlin

»Filipenko’s style is clean and unadorned.« – Marco Kefting / Münchner Merkur, Munich

»Filipenko describes the rebellion of his people against dictator Lukashenko with enchanting humour, full of wit and yet full of grief.« – Lerke von Saalfeld / Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, Frankfurt

»This novel is first class, narrated with drama and suspense.« – Freie Presse, Chemnitz

»The Ex-Son is proof that Filipenko is one of the most exciting Russian-language authors of our time.« – Meike Schnitzler / Brigitte, Hamburg

»One of my favourite books from this year’s spring releases.« – Helmut Zechner / ORF, Vienna

»A bold, ink-black reckoning with the Lukashenko regime.« – Werner Krause / Kleine Zeitung, Graz

»Filipenko’s style captivates with its subtle irony and bitterly serious black humour.« – Karlheinz Kasper / Neues Deutschland, Berlin

»The Ex-Son was published in Russian back in 2014; a significant detail, because the novel has lost none of its topicality« – Nora Zukker / Tages-Anzeiger, Zurich

»Sasha Filipenko made us more closely acquainted with Belarus and its history. The fact that his book remains topical even seven years after its publication shows how dire the situation is.« – Uli Hufen / WDR 5, Cologne

»This literal irony of history is densely narrated, with humour and bitter solemnity.« – Volker Weidermann / Der Spiegel, Hamburg

»Perhaps the most moving and shocking release of spring 2021: Sasha Filipenko’s prophetic debut novel The Ex-Son, available for the first time in German, depicts the hell of the Lukashenko regime.« – Dagmar Kaindl / Buchkultur, Vienna

»A brilliant novel that undermines the facts with humour.« – Peer Teuwsen / NZZ am Sonntag, Zurich

»In this novel, too, the young author impresses with his considerable imaginative talents and stylistic force. A must read!« – Lilo Solcher / Augsburger Allgemeine, Augsburg
Praise (cont’d)

»Filipenko’s metaphor is impressive: it’s as though it wasn’t Franzisk in a deep sleep, but the world around him.« – Jutta Sommerbauer / Die Presse am Sonntag, Vienna

»Filipenko’s novel is emblematic of the wound which, even six years on from its first appearance, continues to bleed heavily.« – Bernadette Conrad / Aargauer Zeitung, Aarau

»Filipenko employs a timeless style of political satire comparable to the Absurdism of Frenchman Eugène Ionesco and other playwrights.« – Marc Duursma / NRC Handelsblad, Amsterdam

»Filipenko’s book is a roman à clef, offering aggrieving insight into the situation of the Belarusians.« – Franziska Trost / Kronen Zeitung, Vienna

»Filipenko employs a timeless style of political satire comparable to the Absurdism of Frenchman Eugène Ionesco and other playwrights.« – Marc Duursma / NRC Handelsblad, Amsterdam