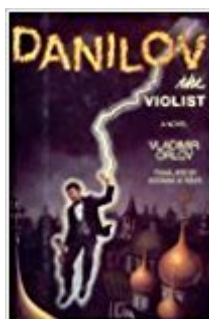


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Danilov, The Violist: A Novel



Synopsis

Book by Orlov, Vladimir

Book Information

Hardcover: 307 pages

Publisher: W. Morrow; 1st U.S. ed edition (1987)

Language: English

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Average Customer Review: 5.0 out of 5 starsÂ Â See all reviewsÂ (2 customer reviews)

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Customer Reviews

I have to admit I only read the Russian original, so I was pretty puzzled and pleased to discover that author Vladimir Orlov acted as a translator of his own work. When I grew up in the early 80s' Soviet Russia, Danilov: The Violist was a must read for all intellectual young Russian people, a true cult book. Combining bitter realism with humorous fantasy in quite an entertaining way, the story focuses on a gifted musician (Danilov) struggling with both his creative inhibitions and the bureaucratic ones, those of the strictly controlled Soviet artistic world. Danilov's gradual discovery of his own talent is something any creative person can relate to, be they American, Russian or Japanese -- even if you neglect the fact that Danilov is, in fact... half demon. Not a traditional ugly evil-doer one foot in Hell, but just the unlucky result of a (quite common, if you believe Orlov :-)) love affair between a human and a demon. As such, he belongs neither on Earth nor in the Next (sort of parallel) World and has to deal with both -- defending himself, his art and the relationships he develops against both worlds' cynical bureaucratic systems. On the safe Earth, Danilov's creativity and honesty are tested -- away from it, in a magical universe that just for fun copycats human development and culture, his very existence is doubted and endangered. In all his tribulations, Danilov has to choose between honesty and career, hate and understanding, love and betrayal. While the novel can't boast any of the universal philosophical revelations of Mikhail Bulgakov's Master and Margarita -- its obvious predecessor in style and subject matter -- Danilov: The Violist

is funny, easy to read and makes the reader think. To a non-Russian reader the book has an added plus of giving a very realistic and detailed picture of the everyday life in the 60s-80s Soviet Union, full of humor and understanding. In three words -- funny, honest, and cleverly written.

I always envisioned life under the Soviet flag as gray, humorless, uninspired--but Danilov suggests it was anything but humorless. I've read the book 3 times, and recommend it to everyone. Danilov, the half human half demon, is delightful. His job is to torment humans, but evil deeds give him stomach ache and he seeks to do good instead--though secretly, lest his employers from down below give him hell over it. And, as it turns out, there are things worse than hell, when he is threatened by total annihilation. The zany characterizations of both Russians and demons, the descriptions of Russian society and the games people played, the politics, the music -- Danilov is definitely one of my favorites. I've lived on China's Xiamen Island since 1988, and I wish there were an English book that could bring to life China of the 60s and 70s in the same way. If only there were a sequel--or a prequel, even!

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