



Take Me to the Castle

F.C. Malby

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The door opened slowly, and she could see the outline of five men standing in the corridor. Her room was far enough away from the figures for no one to notice her nose pressing into the door frame. She was aware of her own breathing and tried to slow it down, slow down her heartbeat until she was invisible. The idea in these moments is to be completely invisible. There were a lot of invisible people in Prague, doing invisible things to other invisible people.

What would you do to secure your own freedom?

February 1993. Walls between East and West have dissolved, following the Velvet Revolution of 1989. It is a harsh winter in the newly formed Czech Republic, but the nation celebrates. Arriving in Letovice, Jana is trying to escape a personal loss and come to terms with the changes in her country and in her own life. She stays with the Martineks and meets their son, Miloš. When he leaves Letovice and she travels back to Prague, she encounters a deep and shocking betrayal. Jana meets Lukas, a conservator working on the restoration of a mosaic at the Cathedral of St Vitus. But who is he and what is he hiding?

An evocative portrayal of life during the fall of communism: It is a sometimes heartbreaking tale of deception, distrust and the need for redemption in the aftermath of a regime in which no one can be trusted, not even someone you thought you knew.

Take Me to the Castle Details

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From Reader Review Take Me to the Castle for online ebook

Shirley Golden says

'Take Me to the Castle' follows the lives of Jana, Milos and Lukas, and is set in Czechoslovakia during, and shortly after, the collapse of communism. It is a thoughtful, interesting read with strong characterisation, and the descriptions of the city and castle are beautifully done. It explores Jana's grief over the death of her father and his continuing influence over her life. The parallels with Lukas's job in building restoration works well alongside the theme of recovering human casualties. I found the first third lacked a little in narrative drive although the story is sustained by Jana's convincing voice (and chapter two is particularly gripping). When the implications of Lukas's part in past events unravels, the story gathers momentum. The love triangle works well, and the final third of the novel is both engrossing and touching. This is an engaging story with an excellent sense of place, set during an intriguing period of history. Recommended.

Barbara Heckendorn says

History and politic are hidden within this love story. It's a great inside what people were and are thinking during the turmoil of the political changes in Europe in the 70s and 80s. As an European I was always impressed how people from the eastern part were crusading against their regimes with silent marches also hazarding the consequences to be arrested for their desire to be free.

Jana the main character of the story is struggling with the past and the future. She made a predication which is already overhauled by the present:

How could human nature be so vile? Would this happen again, further on in history, to different people groups and nations? Was this the beginning of further brutality? Where had it begun? Jana was feaful that an end to the communist regime might give rise to too much freedom and leave people open the perils of some other individual or regime - one that would sweep in and change the world around them with new and dangerous ideologies.

Veronica says

I really thought that I would be able to get into this book and like it because Prague is one of my favorite places. However, for some reason I just couldn't follow the characters or really feel anything for any of them. Now I would like to say that it could just be my mood at the moment so I don't want anyone to take this review as bad. I think this book has a lot going for it. I like the history background that is infused in it. I will probably in the future return to this book and re-read it because I do think I haven't given it 100%. When I do I promise to return and re-review it.

Stephanie Jane (Literary Flits) says

I discovered F C Malby via Twitter and was interested to read her book set in the new Czech Republic at the time of its transition from Communism as this is a country and period that I don't know much about.

Our heroine, Jana, is a young Czech woman whose father died struggling against the former regime. Jana has absorbed his belief in democracy but is unable to adjust to the speed and breadth of the changes sweeping her homeland. This is a fascinating situation for a character to find themselves in and I was disappointed that it was not fully explored. Instead the main angle of the novel is Jana trying to decide which of two potential suitors she wants to begin a relationship with.

I enjoyed the descriptions of Prague and this is now definitely a city I would like to visit one day. The more rural Letovice was also easy to picture and it would have been nice to have learned more about it.

I was frustrated by the extensive repetition of both Jana's and Lukas' thoughts, especially when they were used in lieu of direct conversation that would have advanced the plot more successfully. At one point, Jana demands to know why Lukas betrayed her father, yet as soon as he begins to speak, she decides she won't listen after all and we read yet more meandering thoughts. I found this quite infuriating and was also disappointed that the story I really wanted to learn - that of Tatinek and Lukas - only ever played second fiddle to a traditional triangular romance that I don't think was convincing.

I think *Take Me To The Castle* is a reasonable read and I passed a pleasant couple of sunny afternoons with it, but it wasn't completely satisfying.

JennanneJ says

I was halfway through the book before I had the slightest idea of what was going on. Stories were told without giving us enough backstory to fully appreciate what was going on. Not just here and there, but throughout the entire book. I was frustrated as the book kept jumping forward in time without giving us much clue about what had passed in between. Even the ending felt quite abrupt and false.

Jonel Boyko says

This is one of those historical novels that is accurately and believably placed in the intended time period. The audience isn't left filling in political or historical pieces of information. The beginning of this story jumps around a lot to give the audience some background information. It makes the story a bit hard to get into. That said, about a quarter of the way out the story began a smoother progression, allowing me to get into the story some more.

As a reader you can accurately picture the landscape that surrounds the characters. Malby's depiction of the surrounding areas makes this very easy and pleasurable. Her physical descriptions of everything encountered makes you feel as if you've actually been there. Her descriptions also have a dark overtone that leads to the heavy feelings that are present in many of the characters. As an author she does a very good job of evoking empathy, sympathy, and even shock in her readers.

I really appreciate how you really get to know the histories of the different characters. That said, I found that you don't really get to know them as people. You know where they've been and what they've been through, but who they are remains a bit of a mystery. It's a bit of an odd feeling.

Overall, this was a well put together but heavy read. I must say, however, the ending left me wondering. What exactly was the letter?

Please note that I received this novel free of charge from the author in exchange for an honest review.

Meagan Hansen says

Lucky to have this as one of my Goodreads/Firstreads win.

I truly did enjoy this story and the glimpse it gave into communism and how the regime affected families. The beginning however was a bit on the slow side and I had a hard time following the plot at first due to all of the jumping back and forth between time. Once the story stuck with present time I was able to fully understand and follow.

I was a little more than half way through when I was really grabbed and found myself unable to put the book down. The ending was quite a surprise for me. I would have loved to read more about Jana and how she continued to grow and change in her life.

Kathy says

The thing that fascinated me most about this book is the vivid description of the recent history of quiet revolutions in Europe, in particular, the Czech Republic. The story revolves around Jana, who is coming to terms with the changes all around her and a recent personal loss. This is life during the fall of Communism. How far will citizens go to keep and protect their newly found freedom? Through this book, we follow Jana as she travels in this new world, finding distrust and dishonesty in fellow citizens who recently trusted no one in the regime. The plot of this story is intriguing and managed to grab me from the very beginning. I knew very little about the era and the country or culture, and now am determined to find out more about this historic time. The author managed to convey to me a sense of what had happened and what was happening, with an eye to the future of this country. If the reader wants to find out more about this slice of history while enjoying a good read, this is a good place to start. I am glad I started here. I received this book from Library Thing to read and review.

Angie Taylor says

This was a very interesting book especially since it covers a time in history that I actually was alive for, but didn't really know too many of the details of.

This story tells the story of three different families that lived during the time of Communism in Czechoslovakia, and the beginning of the Czech Republic, and what went on with the secret police arresting citizens for speaking out against the government, and what happened to those people while in prison. The story focuses on what it was like for these families before, during, and after.

I really enjoyed the writing and thought the author put into this story. I was very well researched and the plot and characters were very well developed. I liked this book because it felt like I was learning something along the read.

However, the last 10% of the book didn't work for me at all. It felt rushed and some of the decisions made were not believable, or maybe I didn't think they were genuine. I wish I could change the ending by tweaking

some details here and there and then it would be a 4-5 star rating. But other than that, it is a very well written story.

Leyli says

Enjoyed reading this book! Elaborate interweaving of historical events with personal stories of the skillfully created characters made it an interesting, thought provoking read. All in all a solid debut. Looking forward to reading more of FC Malby.

Rebecca Bradley says

Take Me to The Castle focuses on Jana, her loves and passions and her confusion as the Czech Republic goes through massive political changes and the influence the father she has lost, has had on this. Malby navigates these difficult waters with ease and you are transported into not only an emotional quagmire, but a moral one as people make life decisions that have far reaching effects on the lives of others. Brilliantly done.

L.F. Falconer says

I was provided a copy of this book in exchange for an honest review.

Based in Prague during the fall of communism and the shift into democracy, this is a poignant look into a young Czech woman's inner turmoil as she tries to deal with the death of her father and some conflicting love interests. A great deal of the story is told through thoughts and conversation, a lot of meandering of the mind which often lead me into bouts of sleepiness--a little lacking in action for my own personal tastes. It is evident that F.C. Malby has a strong command of language, yet the descriptions provided of the city, the cathedrals, bridges, countryside, etc., lacked any vivid details, leaving me only with blurred images. Also, the characters themselves were rather vague. I found the first six chapters confusing as I was forced to jump back and forth from place to place and through time with some undefined characters, and it wasn't until chapter thirteen that the story began to capture my interest and the plot then progressed with an intriguing little turn of events.

The character of Lukas was the most strongly appealing, while Milos' character was nearly non-existent. Jana's character, though fraught with turbulence, seemed to drag on in an almost whiny, wallowing fashion. She did not strike me as a very strong person and I felt little empathy for her, despite the troubles she faced. I was shocked by an ending I hadn't seen coming, yet it almost seemed contrived as an easy out for Jana's quandary.

All in all, well-written with a fascinating plot, but left me in disenchantment.

Charlotte says

this book is a really slow starter for me but I had heard it got better so I pushed through. I found some of the

history parts boring as they seemed to take over everything but I become attached to jana & her story to move on through her loss & betrayal although it literally stayed with her till the end I was happy she got her happy ending. had the normal love triangle which I loved as it did not take over the whole book it just went right along side all the other story lines. I wouldn't re-read or say it's a favourite but it's good if you enjoy history

Floqueta says

At the beginning it is difficult to get into this story, because we learnt, simultaneously, about things happening in the past and nowadays and things can then be rather confusing. But after this, I became very engrossed with the story of Jana, her father (the recently deceased dissident), Lukas and Miloš.

I must congratulate the author for depicting so well the anguish caused by having one's door knocked at dawn and a loved one be taken away. Terrible thing to be a dissident, political prisoner or whatever you may call a person that has to suffer being prosecuted by his/her ideas for a better society and a different kind of government.

The author also describes very well Lukas' musings and stand point, before taking the final decision that changes his life forever:

'I was tired of the dictatorship. I just couldn't sit back and wait. I couldn't wait for something to happen, or for someone else to do something. There were nights in prison where I would dream of being in another country, a country that was free. But we needed freedom in our own country.'

(view spoiler)

This is a book of deep feelings, of the capacity to forgive, of being able to stand up against injustice, about treason (denuntiation). It packs several very serious matters. No light reading, but I liked it.
