



Kochanek Śmierci

Boris Akunin

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Senka Skorikov, orphan and urchin, has been abandoned to the badlands of Moscow. In a gangster district they call Khitrovka -- among dealers, bandits and whores -- he picks a pocket or two.

But everything changes when Senka sees a woman so beautiful he falls for her at first sight. Little does he know she is nicknamed Death, for the life expectancy of her lovers. Death is moll to the most feared bandit in Khitrovka -- a local celebrity called The Prince.

Senka joins The Prince's gang, prepared to do anything to get closer to Death. But as he climbs the criminal ladder, a spate of gruesome murders, and the chance discovery of precious metal, will send a Who's Who of Moscow gangsters to his door.

Fresh from their exploits at the suicide club, Fandorin and Masa must unweave a web of narcotics, fake identities and organized crime. But can they save Senka from a grizzly fate? And can Fandorin survive a brush with the ultimate Femme Fatale? It's Dickesn meets Lock Stock and Two Smoking Barrels in the darkest Fandorin to date.

Kochanek ?mierci Details

Date : Published 2004 by ?wiat Ksi??ki (first published 2001)

ISBN :

Author : Boris Akunin

Format : Paperback 303 pages

Genre : Cultural, Russia, Mystery, Fiction, Crime, Historical, Historical Fiction, Detective, Literature, Russian Literature



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From Reader Review Kochanek ?mierci for online ebook

Mauro says

7.5/10

Green Hedgehog says

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Peter says

Excellent look at the Khitrovka underworld.

Tiamat says

The translation is surprisingly bad, or rather, full of unbelievably strange mistakes. I think the translator didn't like this book very much, tried to get rid of the job as soon as possible and never even read the translation. There is no other explanation. I can understand why he didn't like it - I don't (because of thieves and their slang, also because of overdoing the pity part).

There is the list of the most glaring mistakes.

1. *They were on their way to the church to get married, she and her bridegroom, when suddenly these two black stallions, great huge brutes, darted right in front of their sleigh.*

What stallions? They were great black dogs. No wonder they startled the horses; moreover, a black dog is connected with Devil.

2. *Prokha legged it straight away, and Skorik and Filin never stuck their noses out of the gateway.*

They were Speedy and the Night-Owl a minute ago. These are their Russian nicknames which were translated. I didn't like Speedy and his full last name Spidorov – it sounds very bad in Russian. But I can hardly protest the necessity of translating meaningful names. Only please, translate them EVERY time.

3. *the Chinee had caught one of his stupid sandals on a bottle and gone sprawling flat out.*

Not on a bottle, but on a cobble, because it was a cobblestone pavement. Masa is not that clumsy.

4. *The hand went back down, but the sleeper still didn't turn towards them. Senka took off his cap and crossed himself - the wall was covered with icons*

Missing: In the third room. Looks like the icons were in the room with the sleeping man or in the hallway. There are also some other missing phrases, but at least they weren't quite necessary for understanding what's going on.

5. *And there was an ice-cream seller too, they ambushed his daughter, who was engaged*

She wasn't exactly engaged, she was simply of marrying age and quality, so to say. It's a slightly archaic Russian expression – 'doch' nevesta'.

6. *'Well, now what?' the Prince asked. Then, turning to Yoshka: 'Fire away, my little sharpshooter.*

No, 'Fire away' - that's what Deadeye said, not the Prince. It's obvious – he liked to talk pompously. The Prince didn't know words like 'sharpshooter' XD In Russian it's clear enough. And there are some other

episodes where who did what is mixed up, but I don't remember them exactly.

So my overall impression of the translation is quite bad, I even checked if the translator was the same.

Andy says

Part of the Summer reading vibe 2018

Part 2 or if you like the immediate follow up to “she lover of death” which I should likely have read soon after, I did mean too..... good intentions n all that & jus over a year has passed..... But now I am back with my good friend Erast Fandorin

OR are we?

We start with a street urchin AND lady Death herself, both new characters not present from the prior in the series & it's their tale we follow from the start with "guest" appearances by Erast Fandorin along the way, who doesn't really enter the dialogue until well past the 50% mark. Its a somewhat familiar style to me by now, in that the author doesn't necessarily feature the MC in the story/book. The street urchin called Semka is very engaging & acts far wiser than his years as first he joins a notorious gang before moving on in the world as an "entrepreneur" in his own right. Lady Death is very alluring to all that cross her path, her monika giving a tell to what happens to all that do. I must admit I wasn't sure where the story was going at first as Fandorin normally makes an appearance early doors (even if only a brief one) to give clarity & direction to the story, not so here but it certainly doesn't detract as he has created a superb character in Semka & his allies/foes which we encounter.

I can say no more for fear of revealing too much but if you like Sherlockian style sleuths, femme fatales, gangsters (Russian) of the early 1900's, corruption, double dealings & tales of derring-do then this is a series for you.

A very worthy addition to the Erast Fandorin series which gets better with every read, onwards I go

4.5 stars for me rounded down to 4

Polina says

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Nancy Oakes says

And now we've come to number nine in the Fandorin series. This time the story is told in a third-person narrative, as seen through the eyes and experiences of a member of Moscow's criminal underworld, Senka Spirodov. And FYI, whoever wrote the blurb for the dustjacket cover put his name as Skorikov. I noticed that on Amazon UK, one reviewer repeated that name ... is it just my copy that has him as Spirodov?

The action takes place at the same time as Fandorin's involvement in the suicide club investigation from She Lover of Death, and involves another young person infatuated with Death. However, in Senka's case, Death is the nickname of a living person, a beautiful young woman whose lovers all ended up dying -- not by her hand, but from different causes. After a while Death gained a reputation, leaving people who walked by her to cross themselves or to spit over their shoulders. Now she lives in the Khitrovka district of Moscow, where decent people don't venture and where the criminal organizations are pitted against each other in a struggle for control. Senka ended up here after family circumstances left him orphaned and with an uncle who used him for free labor and other abuses; a desire to do a good deed ultimately got him into trouble and he had to run away. Where better than Khitrovka, where no one would dare come to find him? It is there where he becomes infatuated with the woman called Death, whose intervention sends him into the employ of The Prince, the leader of one of the two top crime organizations in the area, and a lover of Death as well. On an errand of mercy for Death, Senka discovers the location of a treasure buried in the labyrinthine tunnels underneath the city -- and realizes that he has a ticket out of the criminal life. However, others who inhabit Khitrovka are not so lucky -- there are a series of ghastly murders occurring there. Enter Erast Fandorin, who must get to the bottom of these horrible crimes, and who knows that Death is the key to uncovering the truth.

He Lover of Death is much more of an adventure story than a mystery, although there is plenty of crime and a growing list of suspects as the novel progresses. There might possibly be more humor in this installment than in the others preceding it, as Fandorin and Senka team up for some crazy adventures and Senka is roped into helping to solve the crimes. Quite a bit of time is given over to Senka's character and his changing life before Fandorin actually gets involved. The reason: he's been very busy with events from She Lover of Death, and now and then the author references some of that story in this one.

It's a fun read that will keep you turning pages, not so much for the mystery but to find out what's going to happen to Senka next. It's almost like a rags-to-riches story where the hero finds himself in one desperate plight after another, but with the added interjection of humorous situations that you just know Akunin had a great time inventing.

Again, my suggestion is to read these books in order, but you can get by with this one as a standalone if you don't want to go back and read the books that came before. This one may be the most fun book in the series - less mystery really, but all the same, a good time will be had by all who poke their noses into this novel.

Vanessa Delamare says

I liked the writing style, especially the beginning full of slang. I sometimes had the impression of being in an Audiard's film as dialogues are very imaged (even if it was sometimes difficult to understand). As we go along the rise of Senka, the dialogue becomes more chastened, which makes the book more easy to read and allows us to support Senka its social progress.

The chapters begin with a title which describe the action to follow, even if sometimes what we imagine is not what happens: the author plays with words to destabilize us and keep us from being too confident about our ability to know in advance what will happen. The titles all contain the name of Senka, since it is through him that we live history. An example title: "How Senka became mamzelle" (A mamzelle is a prostitute).

The plot goes slowly but surely. Because we follow the investigation through Senka and not Fandorin, we do not have all the cards in the progression of thought. We do not know what the detective does when he's not

with Senka, making us witnessing the outcome, so it is difficult to find the culprit by yourself.

Last point to add, this book make us live from the inside (through Senka) what life in Russia was at that time, with its codes, its hierarchy, its neighborhoods. Life was harsh and corrupt, at least in slums as beautiful areas were protected. It feels a little like in Les Miserables - Russian version - and with an investigation for bonus.

An author worth reading that allows us to discover a brutal Russia and to enjoy a nearly extinct language nowadays. Besides, I take hats off to Paul Lequesne (the French translator) who did a remarkable job to find the French slang which corresponds to that used by Akunin.

An investigation in which the twists abound. A Russian detective as British as can be. A true atmosphere specific to the author. In short, Akunin, considered the idol of Russian literature, collects readers and I understand why: to try!

Irina Garbuz says

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Colleen says

And I think it is 100% official now--I have read all of his books that were translated in English. For some reason this one skipped past me when I was doublechecking the list--since so close to She-Lover of Death, which this book is something on a companion to. It's not necessary to read either one together, and that actually makes the concept that much more clever, but both books take place over the same period of time--although the POV of both books never actually crosses over.

While Fandorin is busy infiltrating a nihilist death cult, Masa is busy mentoring a wayward street kid--one with an Oliver Twist like background of abusive foster parents, hardscrabble life on the lam, petty thief in the slums, who gets in over his head and has to be rescued. The book is from Senka's POV and it's nice to see more of Masa and how Fandorin is seen through the kid's eyes.

The main villain somewhat surprised me, though I guess in hindsight it was obvious, but these, like most or all great murder mysteries (thinking of the Flavia de Luce series in particular), the investigation is almost irrelevant when done right.

Golan Schzukin says

Out of the first 9, I enjoyed this one the most.

Andrea says

This book took me a lot longer to engage with than the earlier Fandorin novels. This may be because my Russian proficiency has weakened somewhat, but despite that I think that the plot takes a particularly long time to develop in this novel. Once it did begin to develop it was an interesting story, but on the whole I don't think that this is the strongest of Akunin's writings. I would be interested to read it in English if it is ever translated, to see if I may have missed something.

Malcolm says

I have really enjoyed Akunin's work from the outset, and in this case he has stride again. Exciting and adventurous, Akunin's ability to shift narrative voice between each novel (and in the Fandorin series his homage to style of authors of great detective fiction) is impressive. An excellent addition and a great way to spend a lazy day, immersed in Moscow's early 20th century underworld.

Drayton Bird says

I have read every book I can by this man. He gets better and better.

The early ones were interesting because they gave an insight into Tsarist times, with an engaging hero along the lines of Sir Percy Blakeney.

This one is the best yet. It has a new dimension, as it introduces you to the Moscow underworld - which makes the behaviour of the mafia seem relatively genteel.

For me, one of the measures of a good book is whether it makes me want to know more about the world it describes. This had me prowling through the internet (with very little success so far).

Also it has a sexy, crazy heroine. Always good!

Assaph Mehr says

This and 'He Lover of Death' are two intertwined novels, as can be guessed from the names. While the two mysteries are separate, they happen at roughly the same time. When Fandorin disappears from one book for a few days, he's busy on the other case - while the other cast continue on their separate paths.

'She' is a bohemian, slightly absurd mystery of a death cult. 'He' is a tale of low-life criminals and gangs, an almost rags-to-riches treasure hunt. Both have their femme fatales, as well as plot twists.

What to Expect

Each novel is written as a different type of mystery. Akunin set out to rectify the low-brow reputation of the mystery genre in post-USSR Russia by writing worthy literature and exploring the wide gamut of sub-genres. Each novel is therefore excellently written as a different type of detective case. While there is continuity in the protagonist's life between the novels, each is very different in themes and tones.

I've written a condensed review of the whole series on my website.

What I liked

I like the writing style. The prose is intelligent and flowing, the mysteries are complex, and the cast is varied (though those that make repeat appearances tend to die). Fandorin himself is a great character, even though as a main character he still remains an enigma - a tantalising mystery in itself that keeps readers engaged and clamouring to know more.

I love the historical background. Akunin has done his research into Russian culture, mannerisms, environment, personalities, etc. of the late 19th century / early 20th century. Most of the stories take place around Moscow, and Fandorin gets to meet and associate with the people of the times (from the low-life criminals of Khitrovka, to the grand-dukes of the imperial family). In a few cases, Akunin also has Fandorin active around notable events of the era, at times filling in details where history has left us stumped.

Akunin is also a Japanophile, and has Fandorin spend a few years in Japan. While details are sketchy (and we want more! More!), it is clear that he has a great love and deep knowledge of that culture and times.

What to be aware of

Be aware that each of the novel is told in a different style. Besides the obvious (something new and different in each volume), one keyword is 'told'. They are almost all in 3rd person perspective, and quite often not from the point of view of Erast Fandorin (which is both tantalising and frustrating at times). It's this distance that keeps Fandorin an enigma, and keeps us coming back to learn more.

Fandorin has a Sherlockian intellect and impressive physical prowess. He is not without his faults (most notably hubris), but as a hero he is certainly a cut above the rest. He also tends to get involved with a different femme fatale in each book. This suits the detective genre perfectly, regardless of modern sensibilities.

While the books are not really related and have few continuing characters, I'd still strongly recommend to read them in order.

Lastly, and this has nothing to do with Fandorin, since these are professional translations (amazingly done by Andrew Bromfield) via a traditional publisher, the price of ebooks and hardcovers is almost the same. The ebooks are also missing some of the illustrations and other typographical effects that are present in the print. I'd definitely recommend reading the print edition, where possible.

Summary

Should you read these novels? Yes! By all means, if you love historical mysteries these novels are a must read. It is an intelligent, engaging, and just different enough series to be in a class of its own. It's not surprising that in his home country of Russia, Akunin out-sells JK Rowling. In fact, since it's been a few years since I've read them, I think I'll go back and re-read my favourites (Winter Queen, State Counsellor,

and The Coronation).

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Assaph Mehr, author of *Murder In Absentia: A story of Togas, Daggers, and Magic* - for lovers of Ancient Rome, Murder Mysteries, and Urban Fantasy.

Bill says

A thoroughly enjoyable historical mystery novel. Seen through the eyes of a young boy, Akunin gives us a vibrant account of the Moscow underworld in 1900. As in *She Lover of Death*, Akunin's series character, Fandorin, is presented from the outside allowing us to see him at a distance. Happening concurrently with *She Lover of Death*, with Fandorin off stage in his other plot most of the time, this book focuses on Senka - the poor orphaned lad who struggles with the conflict between his inherent goodness and the evil and dishonest life he is forced to live. The story moves at a quick pace, giving us memorable characters including a femme fatale called Death and a more fleshed out look at Fandorin's Japanese assistant, Masa. A lively book and while it may not be the perfect book to start one's fascination with Akunin and Fandorin, it isn't necessary to have read any of Akunin's previous books to enjoy this one. (*Murder on the Leviathan* would be my recommendation for an entry into Fandorin's world.)

Jen says

Another great Erast Petrovich Fandorin novel. Two Moscow gangs who prey on the local population are pitted against each other as they try to extort a living from the pimps, whores and shopkeepers in the district. To further the confusion, the police are also on the take. A series of gruesome murders brings Erast Fandorin into the story. He has Masa befriend a local orphan, Senka, who has joined one of the gangs and who has found a long lost treasure trove of silver. More confusion, all the main characters are in some way involved with Death, a beautiful cocaine addicted courtesan, who is the lover of both the leaders of the gangs, and of the police superintendant and his deputy, and is also loved by Senka. This is a wonderfully noir novel. Can Fandorin sort out the two gangs, return the silver to the Mint, save Senka from the revenge of his former gang leader as well as saving Death from death, which she believes is the just fate of all her corrupt lovers? Perhaps it is even too hard for Fandorin...

Erin says

Another typical Fandorin mystery. It hits the notes you expect and doesn't have too many twists or surprises like the other books. Senka is a fun addition to the cast of characters. I wonder if he continues on in *The Diamond Chariot*. I think what I would like best is a book from Erast's point of view. The last 3 books have been from a outsider's view of Masa and Erast. It's feeling repetitive. Erast seemed very remote and distant in this book. Of course, Senka bonded with Masa rather than Erast. There are some great scenes there. But I think Erast wasn't the Erast we all love. He seemed off his game or rather Senka didn't see him as we do from the other books. Although this is a companion piece to *She Lover of Death*, there's not much to link the two. Erast vaguely refers to another case and Senka does spot Columbine. However, you could really read the 2 books without realizing they go together. Off to the next adventure, I love reading them all and

recommend everyone to read the tales of Fandorin.

Jess says

Mosca, 1900. Il giovane Senka Spidorov, orfano e in fuga da uno zio che lo maltratta, trova rifugio in una delle aree più malfamate di Mosca, Chitrovka, e comincia a farsi strada come laduncolo, fino ad entrare nella gang di uno dei criminali più temuti, il Principe, grazie all'intercessione dell'amante di lui, la bella e misteriosa Morte. La carriera di Senka ha vita breve: tra uno sgarbo al Principe, la scoperta di un antico tesoro nelle fondamenta di Chitrovka e dei brutali omicidi ad esso collegati, Senka sarà costretto a nascondersi e a fare affidamento su quelle che per il lettore saranno due vecchie e ben ritrovate conoscenze.

He Lover of Death è uno dei romanzi meno riusciti della serie, anche se decisamente superiore agli ultimi due. Nonostante trovi Senka snervante, devo ammettere di aver apprezzato molto l'adattamento di registro linguistico e ritmo al personaggio dal cui punto di vista viene raccontata la storia. Conseguenza di questa scelta è il ritrovare di nuovo Fandorin nell'angolo, sempre sfuggente, protagonista non protagonista, e non dipende solo dal fatto che questo romanzo e il precedente (*She Lover of Death*, per la cronaca) raccontino storie parallele, perché in entrambi subisce lo stesso destino. Bisogna aspettare almeno un centinaio di pagine prima che entri effettivamente in scena e solo allora la storia decolla davvero, anche se non molto.

Dei personaggi che animano la storia non ce ne sono di memorabili, temo, ma Morte merita una menzione speciale. Nessuno sa il vero nome di questa sfortunata ragazza a cui promessi sposi e amanti muoiono come mosche e che ha preso così seriamente il suo soprannome da decidere di circondarsi dei peggiori criminali ed essere la loro morte (literally). In teoria le carte in regola per essere interessante le ha, ma Akunin è sempre Akunin e Morte è l'ennesimo personaggio femminile-love interest sensazionale mal riuscito. Per quanto Fandorin possa essere affascinante, sia dentro che fuori, trovo surreale che tutte cadano ai suoi piedi come nulla fosse, ma ancor di più che lui si senta autorizzato a fare il moralista e dirle come vivere la sua vita, nonostante le buone intenzioni. Di positivo, forse, c'è che Morte (view spoiler) ma va tutto in fumo quando (view spoiler)

Infine, *He Lover of Death* è un libro mediocre: non imperdibile, ma neanche da buttare; godibile stilisticamente, ma carente di personaggi particolarmente carismatici o che non facciano alzare gli occhi al cielo davanti determinate uscite. Se siete alla prima lettura, consiglio di leggerlo subito dopo *She Lover of Death*, in modo da potervi almeno divertire a completare il puzzle.

Helen Cranberry says

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