



## **Beautiful Assassin**

*Michael C. White*

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“Michael White is a wonderful storyteller, and his work is long on atmosphere, and packed with action.”

—Kevin Baker, author of *Paradise Alley*

Michael White, author of *Soul Catcher* and the *New York Times* Notable Book *A Brother’s Blood* now brings us *Beautiful Assassin*—a stunning, relentlessly thrilling, and richly evocative historical novel. Fans of Sebastian Faulks’s *Charlotte Gray*, Ian McEwan’s *Atonement*, and Margaret Atwood’s *The Blind Assassin* will adore this gripping tale of secrets and suspicion—as a beautiful Russian woman, one of World War Two’s most decorated snipers, is caught between her government’s deadly intrigues and First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt.

## **Beautiful Assassin Details**

Date : Published March 30th 2010 by William Morrow (first published November 30th 2009)

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Author : Michael C. White

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## From Reader Review Beautiful Assassin for online ebook

### Chris says

This book would be really good if it dropped the love story at starts to develop late in the second half of the novel. While care is taken to develop it, it doesn't quite fully work.

Beautiful Assassin is the story of Tat'yana, a woman and a sniper in Russia during the Second World War. Because of her beauty and her amount of kills, she is sent to the US, to try to rally support for the war.

The most compelling part of the novel is the first part. This takes place during the German invasion of Russia when Tat'yana is shooting. When the focus shifts to her presence in the United States, the manipulation is well shown, but the section is weak by a love sub-plot that never fully gets off the ground.

Still a rather good novel.

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### Ben Philips says

Beautiful Assassin chronicles the great journey of Tat'yana Levchenko, from the miserable conditions of the Eastern Front at the Siege of Sevastopol to the elaborate residences of diplomats and world leaders. Tat'yana becomes involved in a conflict much more complicated than the simplicity of war against the Nazis. She is forcibly assigned to act as a spy for the Motherland during a long trip to America. Tat'yana will come to face the tough decisions of staying loyal to the Motherland, or breaking free of a tightening leash.

This is a great story of war, love, and misfortune told through the eyes of a young Ukrainian woman who was only seeking revenge from the German fascists.

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### Shaina says

I really liked this book. My two criticisms are that the ending was too neat and I didn't like the protagonist being referred to as an intelligent lady. In many of her conversations, she didn't come off so bright. And that bugged me.

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### SusanCope says

This was an amazing book, detailing the adventures of a fierce, female, Ukrainian soldier during early WWII. Historical fiction- this book gave me a lot to think about.

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### **Jennifer says**

This book certainly held my attention. I enjoyed it. While I don't think it was the best book ever, it was a bit of a novel concept with an interesting character and plotline. It felt a little out there at times, but the author was fairly good at pulling it off.

I wasn't super thrilled with the very beginning or the ending of the book. The book starts from the perspective of someone researching this beautiful assassin - a soviet army sniper in WWII, but then delves into the story of that person from her perspective entirely, with no call back to this "present day" initiation. At the end we do get back to this researcher as she "wraps up" her discussions with the elderly woman, but those parts just felt a little bit false to me, and didn't have much drama or conflict. I think the author could have just written the story as the story.

The ending also was a little dissatisfying to me. I kind of don't like that it was, because I don't feel like I'm the type of reader who needs things wrapped up in a bow and needs for everything to turn out OK for our hero/heroines, but in a way I did sort of want that for this book and the character.

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### **Ann Lardas says**

This is a good read on several different levels. Meticulously researched, the book shows the life of female fighters in the Soviet Union during WWII, the secret service, Eleanor Roosevelt, and the KGB. It's also an effective love story and a thriller. I enjoyed reading it, and highly recommend this book. The author is the founder of Fairfield University's MFA Program in writing, and you can see him read from and discuss how he researched the book here:  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H\\_aTF...](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H_aTF...)

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### **Sarah says**

As a teenager, I spent a summer fighting boredom by reading several collections of Reader's Digest Condensed Books from the mid-1960s. Beautiful Assassin could have fit right in with those--a not-too-challenging, vaguely guy-oriented war-themed escapist story.

I do not understand the use of an intro/epilogue framing device. Not only was it unnecessary, it eliminated any suspense that I might have had about the outcome of the final chapters.

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### **Rajeev Singh says**

What brought me to 'Beautiful Assassin' was the obvious theme of a *femme fatale*, a woman who could give a man a *hard* time (I just ran into this pun), and, on occasion, even take his life. Plus, there is the added frisson of reading about a killers' exploits, which, when in the right hands, could make some really interesting reading - a lady Jason Bourne in action, not with kicks and fists and body tackles, but her eyes on the safe end of a long-range rifle, her composure the stuff of legend, her gun an extension of her will, her

finger 'kissing' the trigger rather than pulling it, a skill that Tat'yana learns and perfects.

I wasn't wrong on any of these counts: Tat'yana Levchenko is every bit the dangerously seductive sniper, even when her 300 Nazi scalps have not all been taken up by the author, the cat-and-mouse game with the King of Death being more than enough. The author's prose is luscious and fluid, sparkling with gems that seduce with their simplicity, both impressive and soothing (at least for me), a glittering waterfall cascading from the cleavage of a greenery-clad mountain.

Her beauty, combined with her military glory, and perhaps eclipsing it, is what draws the attention of the top Soviet brass and the Man of Steel himself. Quite a shame, but understandable, especially when we know very well how women are treated as commodities in so many walks of life. No matter how many laurels they stack up, it's how well they are *stacked* that takes the prize.

(view spoiler)

Then there is Eleanor Roosevelt, the vivacious wife of the American President, a buddy for Tat'yana, whose leanings towards lesbianism are repeatedly hinted at, the one-handed and charismatic interpreter Captain Taylor, the love-interest of the Ukrainian lass - the duo destined to be star-crossed lovers - and so much political intrigue and sordid machinations casting a pall over everything that I could not but pity the poor girl caught in the web like an unsuspecting fly.

The book is historical fiction but set against the backdrop of reality, drawing upon it, presenting the world order of the early 1940s and speculating upon the emerging one that would be nuclear and bipolar, when two opposing ideologies, momentarily united against Fascism and Nazism would find themselves at loggerheads.

It's not just the brilliantly-told story of a female soldier who loves her country and not its scheming rulers, it's an insight into the low value put upon human life, not so much by the vagaries of battle, but the selfish motives and megalomania of men warming the seats of power.

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### **Tara Chevrestt says**

This was an awesome, exciting, and yes, pulse pouding read. Tat'yana Levchenko is a wife and mother who in the midst of world war two, loses her husband and child both. Filled with anger and hate for the Germans, she becomes a soldier, a sniper, and later, a spy. With 300 kills under her belt, she travels to America to promote the Soviet cause and appeal to Americans to get active on the front. I preferred the story when she was killing people, as harsh as that sounds. However, when Eleanor Roosevelt enters the picture, a fascinating figure herself, the book regains its excitement.

Tat'yana struggles between loyalty to her Russia and guilt for betraying her newfound friend. The Russian "higher ups" want Tat'yana to get information from the first lady. Tat'yana starts to wonder if she is in over her head tho. A handsome Captain enters the picture, only to make her inner turmoil and conflicting emotions even worse. Tat'yana must eventually choose. Her country or love? A life of secrecy or fear or a life of hiding?

Even if she does decide to "defect" to the other side, it won't be easy if even possible. I loved this book and its strong women characters. It is also a terrific look at the espionage system during world war 2 and the conspiracies going on behind the frontlines. Highly recommended.

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### **Barbara says**

It seems that I have been directed to Russia in my recent choice of reading materials. My last book was "A Mountain of Crumbs", a memoir, by Elena Gorokhova, who painted a vivid picture of her youth in the Soviet Union.

It is important to suspend one's belief system when reading this WW II era thriller. We are introduced to Tat'yana Levchenko, a lovely, but menacing sniper, who managed to kill off more than 300 Germans and thus became the darling of the Soviet government. The story traverses her life from early childhood through old age. In 1942, she is sent to the US on the ostensible mission to enlist the help and sympathy of the government to assist her country in their failing, desperate war efforts. Tat'yana faces many notables in the course of this book; Stalin, other Russian dignitaries and numerous American people of import, including Eleanor and FDR. Much of the novel encompasses her relationship with the First Lady, which is where I found difficulty in relating to the situation. One does not discover until reading the acknowledgements at the end, that our heroine's story is based on an actual person, Ludmilla Pavlinchenko, who was reputed to be a skilled assassin. It is unclear how much of her story relates to that of Tat'yana's.

White has obviously expended much effort in writing this book. Most of it is historically accurate. He has clearly conveyed the horrors of life for the average Russian citizen and the grueling, hopeless situation for their army. There is a strong tension throughout the narrative, creating an enjoyable, suspenseful reading experience.

I have wavered in my choice of a rating. Although I have given it 4 stars, it probably would be a better fit for 3.5.

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### **Trudy says**

After loosing her family in the war Tat'yana joins the military as a sniper to shoot the Germans. She makes her mark and witnesses first hand the cruelties of war. Eleanor Roosevelt hears of this women from the Ukraine and invites her to the US. Even though the Soviet Union and the US are Allies, the cold war looms in the distance. Tat'yana becomes a pawn for the Soviets trying to find out secret information. Interesting how nothing is what it seems--Tat'yana offers hope to her comrades. She has to make decisions hard to imagine--leaving one's country, friends etc.

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### **Sam Vanhoutte says**

This was an awesome book! It gave new insights about WWII that are less common in most fiction books about that war. Getting insights in the Russian side of things, the life of a female soldier and the way of working of a sniper. And most of all, the building of the cold war...

Very catchy book that I truly enjoyed

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## Wendy says

For all the books I have read over the years set around or during World War II, I have yet to explore every facet of it. The Soviet Union's involvement is one such area I am still relatively new to. And so, when the opportunity arose to read and review Michael C. White's novel, *Beautiful Assassin*, I was quick to volunteer. The novel opens with an American journalist on her way to meet who she believes is the namesake of the novel, a woman she has long been searching for. The two women talk long into the night as Tat'yana tells the story of her life all those years ago.

Tat'yana was once a Soviet Hero, having killed over 300 soldiers. She had come to the United States as a guest of Eleanor Roosevelt, but under the watchful eye of the Soviets who dictated just about every word she spoke and every move she made. She had been told her purpose was to draw support from the Americans and to encourage the U.S. to become more active in the war, to fight the Germans alongside the Soviets. Only, she soon learned that she was to also glean as much information as she could from her new friends. Tat'yana did not want to be a spy as it went against her very nature. She was loyal to her country, but she also knew the faults of her government. She was put in a difficult situation, having to choose between her country and a new one.

Tat'yana is not someone anyone would expect to become a soldier. She was an academic, a poet. When tragedy befell her family, however, she was desperate and full of rage. The only thing she wanted to do was strike out at the enemy. Her skills in marksmanship proved an asset in the war.

Although women fought alongside men in the Soviet Union, Tat'yana and other female soldiers did not have it easy. There were those who did not believe a woman's place should be on the battlefield and they made life difficult. As Tat'yana tried to prove herself in a man's world, she quickly learned that it would be an ongoing battle. While others sought to keep her in her place, Eleanor Roosevelt had other ideas. First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt instantly takes a liking to Tat'yana, a capable, strong woman, as does Tat'yana to Mrs. Roosevelt.

There was so much I liked about this book. Tat'yana is an interesting character who evolves as a person over the course of the novel. Because Tat'yana is telling her story in hindsight, she has insight into the events that took place all those years ago, and so she comes at it from a place of maturity we might not have seen from her younger self. Tat'yana is by no means perfect. She is strong and yet vulnerable. She did not always make the best or even the most heroic choices.

At 464 pages, this novel has a lot packed into it; it is at once a war story, a political thriller, and a historical novel with a touch of romance. Although I enjoyed nearly every aspect of the novel, my favorite time was spent when Tat'yana was in the Soviet Union. I felt like I got to know Tat'yana best during that time as well as her family, including her husband and her relationship with him.

Once Tat'yana arrived in the United States, I felt as if the plot began to overshadow the characters. I found the later romance portion of the novel difficult to buy into if only because Captain Taylor was not as well-developed a character as I would have liked. He is charming and mysterious, and while I could understand the attraction between Tat'yana and him, I never felt like I got to know him as well as I did her character. I never lost my fascination and interest in the story and of Tat'yana, however, and I was anxious to see how it all turned out in the end.

*Beautiful Assassin* was a satisfying read overall. I enjoyed the time I spent with Tat'yana and look forward to exploring the author's other novels.

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**Mona Bradley says**

I will admit that I grade on a curve for literary fiction...If I could give half or quarter stars, I think I would give this a 3.5. Michael has another winner on his hands. Each of the three novels I have read by him have been so very very different from the one before. Beautiful Assassin has a great tone and voice. Also, I learned a lot about the USSR and WW II. As always, it was wonderful to see and talk to Michael at my Book Club meeting. He is such a nice person--very smart and well read--but down to earth.

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**Asha Stark says**

Started off blah, got progressively more ridiculous as it went on. The last couple of chapters were absolute fucking clangers and have ensured I won't be coming back to this author.

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