



The Burned Tower

Marina Dyachenko, Sergey Dyachenko

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A truck driver on a lonely stretch of road, a hitchhiker, and an ancient curse -- a brilliant and moving tale, steeped in folklore, by the masters of modern Fantasy. In 1999 "The Burned Tower" was awarded the "Interpresscon" as the best short story of the year on the international SF-convention in St-Petersburg. Now, for the first time, in English.

The Burned Tower Details

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Author : Marina Dyachenko , Sergey Dyachenko

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From Reader Review The Burned Tower for online ebook

Sadie Forsythe says

This is the second piece I've read by Maryna Dyachenko and Serhiy Dyachenko. The first being *Vita Nostra*, which I loved (or I did once I'd sat on it long enough to figure out what the heck was going on). *The Burned Tower* didn't disappoint either. It's a creepy, modern folk tale using familiar mythical creatures to tell a thought provoking story of redemption and forgiveness.

There is a fairly lyrical quality to the writing that only has a tendency to fall apart on occasion. However, I strongly suspect this lies at the feet of the translator or is simply a failure of two languages to smoothly transition from one to another. Either way, it's a pleasure to read.

My only real complaint is that a lot was left unsaid. The reader is given enough hints to *suspect* things, but not always enough to *know* things. No doubt, this is purposeful on the authors' part, but as a reader it can feel a little unsatisfying.

I'm fast becoming a committed fan of this duo. The only English translation of their work that I haven't read yet is *The Scar*, but you can bet it's on my To Be Read list (toward the top even).

Leah says

In the past few years I have gotten into Russian fantasy and sci-fi. The first author I was introduced to was, naturally, Sergei Lukyanenko . I loved all of his books and ever since I have read whatever new Russian fantasy/sci-fi recommendations I have gotten.

I dont care what reviews they get, I will read them and make up my own mind about them. I have learned that foreign fantasy/sci-fi books and stories are often misunderstood or under appreciated by a lot of American readers.

So when I was given a copy of *The Burned Tower* by Sergey Dyachenko , I leapt at the chance to read a new author. Even though it was short, this book is amazing. Dyachenko is a magnificent storyteller, he is so descriptive. In most short stories you get the gist of the story, but the details, like rubbery fish or feeling as if you are actually driving down the Rusty Track (the battered road to Lur).

From now on Dyachenko is right up there on my favorite Russian authors with Lukyanenko.

H. P. says

The Burned Tower is, like the Dyachenkos' wonderful *The Scar*, essentially a fleshed-out fairy tale. Unlike *The Scar*, it's a novella, not a full novel. This one leans on an existing tale familiar to Western readers—the Pied Piper. Set in presumably modern times, a college student driving a van full of beavers for delivery

decides to cut a deal with the Pied Piper when he loses a valuable beaver (who better for rodent retrieval?). Of course he gives more than he bargained for.

The Dyachenkos are Ukrainians who write in Russian. Their books have only recently begun to be translated and published in English. As for The Scar, the translation here is readable and poetic. Let's hope both trends continue!

The Kindle version also includes a preview of The Scar.

Nadia says

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Jeff Miller says

I was not prepared for how good this story was and really it is closer to 5 stars. The use of the character of the Pied Piper seems quite strange from Western eyes, maybe there is a more developed Russian folklore involving him. Still though the story had a nice blend of folklore/fantasy and horror and as a short story was very satisfying in telling the story and not feeling cheated by only 30 or so pages.

This short story was released for free and contains a chapter of the next novel to be released. This is smart business sense since I will really want to read it.

Metaphorosis says

reviews.metaphorosis.com

3.5 stars

Guy, driving through the forest to deliver caged animals, stops by the side of a road deep in the forest. There, against his better judgment, he picks up a passenger who has the look of the folkloric Piper he's been warned about. As he feared, the trip gets complicated.

There's no question this story is Russian. Translated by one of the authors, it has the sound and the feel of

recent Russian SFF, which gives it a wordy, slightly exotic feel in English. It's a bit strange that a Russian story revolves around a Pied Piper figure, but it works nonetheless. It's well written, moves smoothly, and deals nicely with some weighty moral dilemmas - avoiding both superficiality and heavy-handedness.

The main flaw of the story is simply in its length. It would have been more effective as a shorter story, and not lost anything by it. Still, it's a pleasant sampler of what the Dyachenkos can produce, and worth picking up (free, by the way).

Sharon says

Not what I expected, but interesting.

Cindy says

A fable - I think - and I have never been good at figuring out the meaning of a fable - unless it's as plain as the nose on your face and this one was not.

osoi says

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annikeh.net

David says

Picking up everything I can get my hands on from Sergey and Marina Dyachenko, I feel like one of those snotty fans of obscure niche bands who pride themselves on being a fan before the band was "discovered." The Dyachenkos are big names in Russian SF&F, but thus far have only three works translated into English: *Vita Nostra*, *The Scar*, and the short story/novelette *The Burned Tower*.

The Burned Tower was originally written in 1998, but has recently been translated and published by Tor. (You can download it for **free**: go get it!)

The tone, and even aspects of the story, reminded me a great deal of *Vita Nostra*. An innocent young man named Guy, working as a truck driver transporting beavers (!) has an unfortunate encounter on the road, resulting in him having to take on board a sinister hitchhiker. This hitchhiker seems to be a classic Trickster figure, but it soon becomes evident there is another theme in this story, of punishment and forgiveness, as Guy is brought to a place where once a terrible crime took place.

The story straddles the line between dark fantasy and horror. As with the full-length novels I've read by the Dyachenkos, there seems to be a lot going on beneath the surface and it's not always fully explained. They like teasing the reader with the dark undercurrents of a psychological thriller and mixing in a fantasy element. The whole thing is quite a mind trip.

Because of its length, I was a bit unsatisfied; it felt like perhaps an early draft of *Vita Nostra*, with ideas developed more fully in that book. But it's still a moody piece of dark fantasy unlike anything you are likely to find Western writers writing today.

If you found my reviews of *The Scar* or *Vita Nostra* intriguing, go download this 50-page freebie and see if you like it. If you enjoy it at all, I guarantee the Dyachenkos' two (translated into English) novels are much better. I am hoping to see more of their extensive body of Russian-language fantasy translated into English, so I can say "I was a fan before they became big in the U.S...."

Sergio says

An effective little modern folk tale. I wish I was more familiar with the Russian or Ukrainian sources, but they aren't necessary. I'm aware of the Pied Piper of course, but the characters seems quite different.

The story has a very strong Weird Tales vibe with a sense of suspended dread all the way to the end. I'm sure something was lost in translation, but this was still very creepy throughout, and the themes of loneliness and

guilt come through. I'm not sure if it was intentional, but one aspect that worked very well was the very generic, unspecified location. Even before Guy meets The Piper, it wasn't clear to me where or when any of this was taking place. Even the translation of the protagonist's name to 'Guy' added to that sense of dislocation.

I wasn't familiar with the Dyanchekos, but from the strength of this story I've added The Scar to my to-read list.

Mia Darien says

Sergey and Marina Dyachenko are solidifying themselves as some of my favorite authors. Their writing has this wandering, lyrical quality to it (even when their editors--at Tor, really, guys?--let them down) that you don't know where the story is taking you and you don't care, you're just glad to go along for the ride.

As shorter fiction does to me, this one left me a touch more confused about everything that was going on...but then, so was the main character, so that may have been on purpose. I still really enjoyed it.

It didn't get 5 like "The Scar" did because (like between Koryta's "The Ridge" and "The Cypress House") there wasn't that *something* in "The Burned Tower" that spoke directly to me. Egert's fear and everything that came with it spoke to me in the "The Scar," plus as longer fiction, it allowed for more build-up to an ending that I still remember with gasping awe.

So, this one is still very good, and I'm definitely going to be keeping my eyes out for more of their work being translated. I already have "Vita Nostra" and am very much looking forward to it.

Ubiquitousbastard says

Wow, I adored this. That's kind of shocking, since I haven't loved something I've read in a very long time. I suppose I shouldn't be surprised since this book is the product of the authors, who wrote The Scar, which I also loved.

It was a bizarre little story, but I liked how it was just unapologetically weird. I also admit that I was completely absorbed in the raw emotionality that the Dyachenkos are so good at delivering. (Even in translations from the native language, so kudos to the translator as well). It helps get me caught up in what's happening, so much that I was almost one hundred ebook pages in when I looked to see how much I read, and was shocked and disappointed that I was almost done.

Overall, I really need to read more from these authors, because this was an awesome literary gem and now I want more.

Alice says

An eerie, modern retelling of the Pied Piper with elements of mystery and mysticism. The translation is quality but it remains a difficult read; it's so thick with symbols I imagine it's a challenge to even fully absorb

the original.

That said, it's still enjoyable even at the surface level. The writing, even translated, is gorgeous, and the imagery is darkly whimsical. Dyachenko effectively sustains an atmosphere that is ominous and dreamy with the feeling if one were trudging through a thick mist, especially as memories are depicted fading and flashing through consciousness.

There's a horrific aspect to it too. Nevermind the Pied Piper's original tale, there are many gruesome scenes throughout this novella, and the I couldn't help but to feel the plot advancing steadily toward certain doom. (view spoiler)

But the ending wasn't enough. Like too many short stories, *The Burned Tower* asks questions it doesn't bother to answer (view spoiler); in any case, it doesn't feel complete. I had difficulty identifying with Guy throughout the story actually, but at the conclusion we were one and the same: still bewildered, not quite satisfied, and left hanging. (view spoiler) Keeping the possibilities open can be satisfying, but it was overly done here in my opinion. I'd like to know why the Pied Piper concerned himself with this particular case. I'd like to know if it were all, indeed, were just a dream. (Which I would be highly disappointed by, but still, I'd like to know.) Heck, I'd like to know what on earth was the morbid beast that was not a woman but a "but a blind tube, looking like the stump of a snake's body and a bag of skin with a cluster of thin, jointed tentacles that had so believably simulated black human hair"--but then again, this is fantasy, so it may not be on earth at all.

That's right. This is fantasy. So how much explanation should I ask of it anyway? Perhaps it would be more enjoyable to not think so much, suspend all belief.

Shannon Mawhiney says

Because it's a translation from Russian (and well done, but still pretty obviously a translation), I do feel that I maybe missed some of what the story was trying to say. Despite this though, I enjoyed it. The Piper was unearthly and creepy (and exactly how I imagine someone of his supernatural persuasion would act), and poor Guy's story weaves from being about an average schmo driving a delivery van to a series of questions about heaven and hell, life and the afterlife, reality and monsters, and even time.

I will definitely be keeping these authors in mind for future reading.
