

(Read now) Living a Life: Absurd Tales

## Living a Life: Absurd Tales

Valery Ronshin

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**Valery Ronshin : Living a Life: Absurd Tales** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Living a Life: Absurd Tales:

0 of 1 people found the following review helpful. "Totally Absurd Tales" -- Agreed!By UrsiformCertainly Russian literature has a strong vein of the absurd. From Gogol animating a nose on, Russian writers have called upon the absurd to make many a point. (And, often, to avoid the censor.) But absurdity as its own reward requires some

contemplation. We quickly learn that this author sees little difference between the living and dead in Russia. In fact, they seem to live together, and only odd circumstances allows one to recognize the other as the other. Any string of strange occurrences seems possible. I often found myself wondering what psychotropic the author was ingesting. Many of the characters are dead, but reanimated. I suppose, today in America, we'd call them zombies. So maybe Ronshin is ready for an American revival. We are assured, in the scholarly introduction, that this is great stuff. "Disarmingly simple, reliant on archetypes such as the intellectual, the sexy ingenue and the mysterious foreigner, Ronshin's stories evoke the stark realia of Russian urban life, while superimposing a comedic and unpredictable fantasy world." But the preface is an excerpt from a piece titled "Necrotopia: Discourses of Death Dying in Late/Post-Soviet Russian Culture" by Jose Alaniz. (Alaniz also translated some of the stories.) Uh, right. Reading one or two of the stories might cause one to ponder the recent state of Russia. Reading all of them causes one to ponder the coherence of the author. The same bleak points are hit over and over, and the sense is less of insight than incoherence and repetition. I've read a lot of Russian literature from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. These stories are trite and annoying. 2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Shining black humour By R. H. Chandler Authentic Russian black humour in a tradition that includes Gogol, Dostoevsky and Daniil Kharms. The stories are fantastic but never self-indulgently so, and they always bear a relation to real life. 'How I became a fly' -- about a shop-assistant who gradually sells off every part of their body to a mysterious stranger -- is especially memorable. The stories are excellently translated.

Death is a frequent presence in Ronshin's brilliantly crafted stories but it invariably appears in some funny guise, a toy character in a toy world of innocent violence. His characters often feel as if they themselves were not really real. In Ronshin's world the dead live side by side with the living without suspecting that they are dead.

"Hilariously funny black humor . . . A brilliant writer of absurd tales." --Sobesednik