



The Devil is a Black Dog: Stories from the Middle East and Beyond

Sandor Jaszberenyi

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In the nineteen extraordinary stories that comprise *The Devil Is a Black Dog and Other Stories*, writer and photojournalist Sándor Jászberényi shows us the human side of war and revolution in the contemporary Middle East and Africa, and of the social upheaval that has held Eastern Europe in its grip since the fall of communism. Characters contemplate the meaning of home, love, despair, family, and friendship against the backdrop of brutality. From Cairo to the Gaza Strip, from Benghazi to Budapest, religious men have their faith challenged, and people under the duress of war or traumatic personal memories deal with the feelings that emerge. Often they seem to suppress these feelings . . . but, no, not quite.

Set in countries the author has reported from or lived in, these stories are all told from different perspectives, but always with the individual at the center: the mother, the soldier, the martyr, the religious man, the journalist, and so on. They form a kaleidoscope of miniworlds, of moments, of decisions that together put a face, an emotion, a thought behind humans who confront war and conflict. Although they are fiction, they could have all happened exactly as they are told. Each story leaves a powerful visual image, an unforgettable image you conjure up again and again.

Jászberényi is able to do all this so convincingly, in part, because he himself is not a "helicopter journalist" but rather lives in a residential Cairo neighborhood. He is, moreover, from a corner of Eastern Europe where cynicism almost equates with survival, and yet his writing evinces not only wry humor but great sensitivity and a profound sense of beauty. He speaks Arabic (in addition to English and his native Hungarian) and immerses himself in the society he reports on. But, in doing so, he still remains a reporter, and as such the stories are approached with the clinical, observant eye of an outsider. Whether addressing the contradictions of international humanitarian work or the moral dilemmas faced by those who seek to improve the health and lives of women and girls, he does so in a singularly provocative and yet intelligent manner.

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