

Archangel

By Robert Harris

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The murderous search for Josef Stalin's personal notebook takes an American professor to the vast forests of northern Russia, where Stalin's final, shocking secret waits to be discovered...

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review
Archangel is a remarkably literate novel--and simultaneously a gripping thriller--that explores the lingering presence of Stalin amidst the corruption of modern-day Russia. Robert Harris (whose previous works include *Enigma* and *Fatherland*) elevates his tale by choosing a narrator with an outsider's perspective but an insider's knowledge of Soviet history: Fluke Kelso, a middle-aged scholar of Soviet Communism with a special interest in the dark secrets of Joseph Stalin. For years, rumors have circulated about a notebook that the aging dictator kept in his final years. In a chance encounter in Moscow, Kelso meets Papu Rapava, a former NKVD guard who claims that he was at Stalin's deathbed and says that he assisted Politburo member Beria in hiding the black oilskin notebook just as Stalin was passing. Before Kelso can get more details, Rapava disappears, but the scholar is energized by the evidence Rapava has provided. As Kelso begins to pursue his historical prize, however, his investigation ensnares him in a living web of Stalinist terror and murder. It soon becomes clear that the notebook is the key to a doorway hiding many secrets, old and new.

Harris's understanding of Soviet and modern Russian is impressive. The novel rests on a seamless blend of fact and fiction that places real figures from Soviet history alongside Kelso and his fictional colleagues. Especially disturbing are the transcripts from interrogations and the excerpt from Kelso's lectures on Stalin; the documents provide chilling evidence to support Kelso's claim: "There can now be no doubt that it is Stalin rather than Hitler who is the most alarming figure of the twentieth century." --*Patrick O'Kelley*

From Publishers Weekly
As in his first thriller, Fatherland, Harris again plunders the past to tell an icy-slick story set mostly in the present. Readers are plunged into mystery, danger and the affairs of great men at once, as, outside Moscow in 1953, Stalin suffers a fatal stroke, and the notorious Beria, head of Stalin's secret police, orders a young guard to swipe a key from the dictator's body, to stand watch as Beria uses it to steal a notebook from Stalin's safe and then to help bury the notebook deep in the ground. These events unfold not in flashback proper but as told to American Sovietologist C.R.A. "Fluke" Kelso by the guard, now an old drunk. Following a lead from the old man's story as well as other clues, Kelso, soon accompanied by an American satellite-TV journalist, goes in pursuit of the notebook and, later, the explosive secret it contains; others, including those who cherish the days of Stalin's might, are on the chase as well. With this hunt as backbone, the plot fleshes out in muscular fashion, fed by assorted conspiratorial interests and a welter of colorful, if sometimes too obvious (Stalin as madman; Beria as sadist), characters. The crumbling ruin that is today's Moscow comes alive in the details, which continue as Kelso's search moves north into the frozen desolation of the White Sea port of Archangel. Sex, violence and violent sex all play a part in Harris's entertaining, well-constructed, intelligently lurid tale, which, along with his first two novels, places him squarely in the footsteps not of "Conrad, Green and le Carre," as the publisher would have it, but of Frederick Forsyth. And, like Forsyth, Harris has yet to write a novel without bestseller stamped on it?including this one. Simultaneous audio book; optioned for film by Mel Gibson.
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From Library Journal
Harris's first novel, Fatherland (LJ 4/1/92), an international best seller, supposed that Hitler had won World War II. His second, Enigma (LJ 10/1/95), another success, hinged on code-breaking in the same war. In Archangel, Harris switches to modern, unstable Russia and raises another what-if?suppose a very real pro-Stalinist cult wanted to bring "back" to power one of Stalin's sons. A discredited Oxford historian and an American TV journalist stumble over papers suggesting such a possibility. They stay barely one jump ahead

of sinister competing forces in pursuing a twisting tale that keeps the reader turning pages almost past the bizarre surprises at the end. A former journalist and author of several nonfiction works, Harris skillfully mixes historical detail and fiction. This is likely to be as big a hit as the earlier two suspense tales, and libraries everywhere should be prepared.
-?Roland C. Person, Southern Illinois Univ. Lib., Carbondale
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Users Review

From reader reviews:

John Carter:

This book untitled Archangel to be one of several books that best seller in this year, this is because when you read this e-book you can get a lot of benefit in it. You will easily to buy this book in the book retail outlet or you can order it by means of online. The publisher on this book sells the e-book too. It makes you more readily to read this book, as you can read this book in your Smartphone. So there is no reason to your account to past this publication from your list.

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