

[PDF] The Joke (Definitive Version)

Milan Kundera - pdf download free book



Books Details:

Title: The Joke (Definitive Version)
Author: Milan Kundera
Released: 1900-01-01
Language:
Pages: 336
ISBN: 006099505X
ISBN13: 978-0060995058
ASIN: 006099505X

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Description:

From Publishers Weekly In this new English-language version of Kundera's classic first novel, completely revised by the author to incorporate the most accurate portions of two previous translations plus his own corrections, the narrator Ludvik wonders, "What if History plays jokes?" This politically charged question, coupled with Ludvik's fate as an unintentional dissident, struck a chord in Czech readers; the novel's 1967 publication was a key literary event of the Prague Spring. Looking back on the tense, McCarthy-like atmosphere of the late 1940s, it chronicles the disastrous results of Ludvik's prankish postcard to a girlfriend criticizing the Czech communist regime. He is expelled from the Communist Party, forced to leave the university and join a special army unit with

other enemies of the state. Years later, after he has resumed his studies and become a successful scientist, his lingering anger at the man who engineered his expulsion culminates in an act of destructive sexual revenge that serves only to show Ludvik he has never really understood any woman and is indeed the butt of one of history's many cruel jokes. The fresh descriptions and masterful employment of several narrators testify to Kundera's power as a novelist, unmistakable even in this early work.

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From Library Journal This fifth English-language version of the ingenious first novel by the best-selling author of *The Unbearable Lightness of Being* (LJ 5/1/84) is based on Michael Henry Heim's translation (Harper & Row, 1984), which Kundera originally praised but found wanting after more careful review. The new version replaces words and phrases with more idiomatic or precise substitutes, occasionally recasting whole sentences. As a result, the narrators are better differentiated and the language more alive and natural, particularly in the reflective passages. The story of Ludvik Jahn's misfired joke, which ruins his life by giving him a reputation as an enemy of the state, and his equally misfired attempt at revenge (seduction of the wife of the Party official he holds responsible for his misfortune) is well worth reading--and purchasing--again in this definitive version fully revised by the author.

- *Marie Bednar, Pennsylvania State Univ. Libs., University Park*

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