

# THE CAT AND THE GENERAL

BY NINO HARATISCHWILI

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**Die Katze und der General**

Novel. German.

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## Shortlist German Book Prize 2018 – Jury evaluation:

»Every sentence here attests to the joy of storytelling. From the first page, the reader is right in the middle of this novel of guilt and atonement, feverishly following the general's plan for revenge. He wants to atone for a crime in which he himself participated during the Chechen war. Narrative threads full of questions run below the novel's thriller-like surface: What effect does the ›toxic past‹ have on the present? Are wars never over? ... everything is told with powerful imagery and sensuousness: Great cinema!«

**Chechnya, 1995:** Nura is seventeen when a Russian unit enters the canyon where she lives with her family. With the outbreak of war in Chechnya, her dream of seeking freedom and autonomy, born on the day that Natalia handed her a Rubik's Cube and left, is shattered. She'd meant to escape the confines of the village where clans reign and Islamic guards have a watchful eye over everyday life, but the war ends up changing everything.

**Moscow, 1995:** The young Alexander Orlow fears for his future. An army issued backpack full of books and his mother's expectations on his shoulders, he leaves behind the love of his life to fight the war at the North Caucasian front, unaware yet that upon his return he will be a different person.

**Berlin 2016:** Alexander Orlow, who has, by this time, become a multi-billion-dollar oligarch, known as »the General« has turned his back on Russia and has moved to Germany with his daughter. The nineteen-year-old Ada is obsessed with her father's past and when she begins asking questions, the images of war suddenly come rushing back to Alexander. The darkest of them, the most violent of all nights, a night that left the young Chechnyan woman with nothing but a colorful cube and an unbearable sense of guilt, the shadow of which will never leave any of those present that evening. The day of reckoning is fast approaching, the General can feel it coming. but his plan can only succeed if he manages to convince »the cat«, a headstrong Georgian-born actress whose face triggers an ancient kind of pain inside of him, to support his endeavor.

After her celebrated epic novel »The Eighth Life (for Brilka)« Nino Haratischwili has once again turned towards the abyss that lies beneath the rubble left behind by the crumbling of the Soviet Union. »The Cat and the General« is a gripping psychological exploration of crime and punishment. As within a Rubik's Cube, the protagonist's fates revolve around a shared axis of love and guilt. The resulting clash is akin to that of a classic tragedy as the deadly game in which the protagonists are involved must come to a head.

**Nino Haratischwili**, born in 1983 in Tbilisi is an award-winning playwright, director and author of the celebrated family saga »The Eighth Life (for Brilka)« (FVA 2014) that has been translated into multiple languages and has become an international bestseller. She was awarded various literary prizes and grants, among them the Lessing Award and the Bertolt-Brecht-Award. »The Cat And The General« was shortlisted for the German Book Prize 2018.

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