

Everything Happens as It Does

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Stambolova's intricately detailed prose beguiles and dazzles while opening one's eyes to the grander image of fate, destiny, and self-awareness.

Entangled in an odd, fraying family, the main characters in this unusual novel approach self-realization through the process of understanding their relationships to one another. As the story progresses, it grows more and more divergent, even as the pieces of the puzzle begin to fall together.

The book has no plot but is rather driven by the characters' relationships to each other: Mr. V. needs Maria to learn how to love his wife again; Maria needs Boris to triumph as a woman; Boris needs Margarita to forge a path through life for himself; Margarita and Valentin, twins, need each other to become whole, separate people; and Valentin needs "the baby" to discover his integrity and responsibility. Putting the puzzle of their relationships together begs an analysis of the details, but the larger vision weaves a portrait of some grand inner universe.

Though the story twists and turns and gathers layers, the gorgeous prose propels the book's labyrinthine relationships into the realm of the sublime. Each word is decidedly and necessarily placed, yet there is a sense that the words surround but are not fully capable of expressing the moods and insights the characters feel: "Margarita was peering at the people and things around her, gripped by a new feeling she was aware she could never put into words ... After all, she and words travelled their journeys separately." Often, sentences are loaded with rich metaphors that work to more exactly pin down the elusive emotions the characters feel: "The space between them filled with strange ambiguity, a thick cloud annihilating all possibility for shared thrills and desires. When either of them managed to pierce through the cloud ... both behaved like amateur actors unexpectedly forced into an unfamiliar play. They tried to guess what their lines should be, to keep things from falling completely apart."

That the book is a translation begs the question of the intricacy of the original, but based on the precision and depth of this English version, there is no doubt the Bulgarian is just as beautiful. Follow the serenely logical trails of *Everything Happens as It Does* and leap into the inner world of unique and decisive characters.

AIMEE JODOIN (Winter 2014)

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