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Foreword Review HISTORICAL

Foxhunt

Luke Francis Beirne
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In Luke Francis Beirne's immersive novel *Foxhunt*, cultural ideals are overwhelmed by geopolitical realities and covert operations.

In 1949, Milne, a Canadian writer, attends Paris's International Day of Resistance to Dictatorship and War. During his visit, he agrees to join the board of a fledgling literary magazine, *Witness*, that is poised to celebrate the creative expression of a free society while providing a defiant contrast to dictatorial oppression.

Witness is at first an exciting, collective venture. Milne persuades Marguerite, another Canadian, to move to London and be part of its editorial team. Other members include Milne's American friend and fellow writer, Eric, and Carson, a British poet.

As the months pass, however, Milne develops the unnerving feeling that he's being watched. He autographed a copy of his novel, *The Foxhunt*, at the Paris event; he later finds the same inscribed book at a British inn. Marguerite's frequent interactions with other single women are noted, with the advice that she keep her sexual orientation "discreet." Postwar London, which is rumored to be filled with spies, is soon shadowed by suspicion and violence.

Foxhunt's tension increases with the advent of the Cold War. Eric reports with anxious contempt that the Russians have developed an atomic bomb. Berlin is divided; the Korean War begins. The idealism behind *Witness* is diverted, and Marguerite questions the magazine's mysterious sources of funding.

Foxhunt focuses on a close, engaging circle of intellectual friends who are caught up in a troubled political climate. Lovely images of "light snow on wreaths and ribbons" alternate with stolen documents and forced interrogations. There are also those already "broken by the weight" of the twentieth century, having lost loved ones during the Russian Revolution and to the Nazi regime.

Against a seamless historical and literary backdrop, *Foxhunt* balances compelling intrigue with vulnerable human emotions.

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