



## In the Shadow of Wolves

**Alvydas Šepikas**

**Romas Kinka, Translator**

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In the aftermath of World War II, as the Russian army rolled through East Prussia, many German citizens were displaced. Women were raped and children starved, their army husbands nowhere to be found, presumably dead or prisoners of war. In an effort to survive, children crossed the border into Lithuania to beg and work for food. Alvydas Šepikas' *In the Shadow of Wolves* breaks the long silence over these wolf children via a heartbreaking blend of historical facts and literary prose.

Eva and her children are among those pushed out of their family homes. They are forced to live in their woodshed. Amid the constant threats of the Russian soldiers, they wait for the return of Eva's son, Heinz, who has gone to Lithuania for bread and fatback.

When Heinz returns and regales them with wonderful tales from across the border, one of Eva's daughters, Renate, longs to make the next journey with him. Soon, though, the family is separated, with Heinz and Renate following different paths into Lithuania and Eva and her remaining children relocated by the Russians.

The bulk of the narrative follows Renate as she encounters friendly and unfriendly faces. Her quest to survive and regain her family is rendered in writing that is by turns brutally straightforward and soul stirring. Christian imagery tinges the pages with glimmers of hope, culminating in a beautiful episode with a Lithuanian couple who is on their way to Easter services. Each step along Renate's way builds empathy for her plight and for the plights of so many Germans who had no direct involvement in Hitler's march across Europe.

*In the Shadow of Wolves* opens the curtain on obscure history and curbs reader tendencies toward sweeping dehumanization.

MEAGAN LOGSDON (July/August 2019)

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