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My Estonia 3: What Happened?



Synopsis

This is the story of a man looking for his way. New York did not satisfy his soul, so he moved to Estonia, with his crazy wife, a kid, and six suitcases. Within 24 hours he found a home and had to learn how to make a fire. It did not satisfy his soul for long. Soon he had a house with four furnaces, and was making fires around the clock. His crazy Estonian wife started a publishing house that turned out well. Too well. He decided to become an academic. It did not satisfy him for long, but at least he met a real elf who inspired him. Then he decided to dabble in diplomacy. It did not feel right either. And he got depressed. There were too many drunks and neo-Nazis in this country, not to mention all the mice, lice, and ice. Writing books - bestsellers! - about those problems seemed to satisfy his soul. He thought he had found his niche, as a writer in a small town teeming with cafes and characters. Then, overnight, it all collapsed. The action in Justin Petrone's new book takes place mostly in two Estonian towns, folksy Viljandi and teacherly Tartu. It takes place from the year 2007 (the Bronze Soldier riots) until 2013 (when Petrone left Estonia amid a national scandal).

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I wish only the very best for the Petrone family. After a fabulous two day read of the adventures of Justin, his family, and friends I feel like they are my long lost relatives. It was a delightful read and as charming as the first one. anxiously waiting for the 2nd one to arrive.

Those of us who have had the good fortune to marry an Estonian usually consider ourselves very lucky, with one caveat - neither Estonian women nor the country itself come with an instruction

manual. Fortunately, into this gap has stepped Justin Petrone, a young New Yorker with Italian roots whose My Estonia books (of which this is the third) have become the de facto (and very funny) user manuals for anyone with an Estonian wife or considering moving to the country. My Estonia 3 is mostly set in Tartu and Viljandi where by now, after several years living in the country, Justin has made serious efforts at integration. He speaks fluent Estonian, reads Estonian literature and even does a course in Baltic Studies at the University of Tartu. He's pretty much gone native - although there are some things about Estonia that are still difficult for a foreigner to get used to. You can feel his pain when a pile of firewood collapses on him, or he trudges off to the local cafe to get coffee to go for himself and his wife, only to find that have exactly one styrofoam cup left - and no lids. As with the previous books, you don't learn much about Justin's reason for moving to Estonia - his wife Epp - from this volume. She mostly pops up to make a sarcastic comment when the author does something stupid and disappears again. Several times she is referred to as "crazy" - including twice on the back cover! - but she nevertheless manages to juggle starting a publishing company (and a pretty successful one at that, judging by the number of "My ..." titles on sale in Estonia's bookshops) with looking after a young family. Not so crazy as all that, I'd say. Towards the end of the book you can sense that the author is growing frustrated with small town life in Estonia, although it's not clear if he suffers from depression or is just plain fed up. I don't want to give away too much about the ending (although if you're Estonian, you probably know what happened anyway) but the author gets into trouble with the authorities, and the family has to take a difficult decision. Nevertheless you have to admire Justin's guts in choosing to brave the long, harsh winters in Estonia, and the even longer and harsher path to speaking Estonian, for the woman he loves. My Estonia 3 is an engaging and highly readable book and at the end, only one question is left unanswered: does the author ever get an Estonian driving licence? I guess we'll have to wait for the next volume to find out.

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