



## The Death of Achilles: A Novel (Erast Fandorin)

By Boris Akunin

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### **The Death of Achilles: A Novel (Erast Fandorin) By Boris Akunin**

In 1882, after six years of foreign travel and adventure, renowned diplomat and detective Erast Fandorin returns to Moscow in the heart of Mother Russia. His Moscow homecoming is anything but peaceful. In the hotel where he and his loyal if impertinent manservant Masa are staying, Fandorin's old war-hero friend General Michel Sobolev ("Achilles" to the crowd) has been found dead, felled in his armchair by an apparent heart attack. But Fandorin suspects an unnatural cause. His suspicions lead him to the boudoir of the beautiful singer—"not exactly a courtesan"—known as Wanda. Apparently, in Wanda's bed, the general secretly breathed his last. . . .

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### Editorial Review

#### From Publishers Weekly

Set in 1882, Russian author Akunin's fourth novel to feature Erast Petrovich Fandorin (after 2005's *The Turkish Gambit*) consists of two parts that read like different books. In part one, the 26-year-old special agent comes to Moscow to investigate the sudden demise of national hero Gen. Mikhail Sobolev, who dies in the bed of an alluring courtesan. Fandorin learns of Sobolev's plan for a coup and of a missing suitcase full of a million rubles to fund it. The trail of the missing suitcase leads to the dangerous Khitrovka slums and then to Pyotr Khurtinsky, the scheming head of the secret section of the governor-general's chancellery. One step ahead of Fandorin is the mysterious Klonov, an assassin who may have once tried to kill our hero. As Fandorin closes in on Klonov, the narrative jumps to a retelling of the assassin's life. This shift brings a welcome change of storytelling, from the often stiff, theatrical language of the first section to a more natural, unembellished style. An exciting resolution only partly offsets this incongruity. (Apr.)

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#### From Booklist

Russian mystery buffs revere Akunin (the pen name for Russian-born essayist and critic Grigory Chkhartishvili), who renders smart, stylistic thrillers set in the late nineteenth century. In the author's fourth novel to be published in the U.S. (after 2005's *The Turkish Gambit*), -Sherlock Holmes-like special agent Erast Petrovich Fandorin investigates the sudden demise of his old war-hero friend, General Mikhail Sobolev, who died of an apparent heart attack in the arms of a German nightclub singer. Details soon surface about Sobolev's plans for a coup and a missing suitcase containing the rubles to finance it. Fandorin's pursuit of the loot leads to the slums of Khitrovka and the criminally minded head of the governor-general's secret chancellery. The hunter soon becomes the hunted, as Fandorin is tailed by Klonov, an enigmatic assassin. Although some readers may be rattled by the novel's abrupt shift in point of view (from Fandorin's formal style to a more lyrical retelling of the hired-guns life), Akunin's high-energy ending makes up for the narrative glitch. *Allison Block*

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#### Review

“[Akunin’s] novels feature a Slavic Sherlock Holmes who speaks Japanese and English, is skilled at martial arts and has ladykiller good looks. . . . Millions of readers have been seduced.”

—The Wall Street Journal

“[Akunin] writes gloriously pre-Soviet prose, sophisticated and suffused in Slavic melancholy and thoroughly worthy of nineteenth-century forebears like Gogol and Chekhov.”

—Time

“Critics on both sides of the Atlantic have praised [Akunin’s] clever plots, vivid characters and wit as sharp as the sword hidden in Fandorin’s walking stick.”

—Baltimore Sun

“Akunin’s wonderful novels are always intricately webbed and plotted.”

—The Providence Journal

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