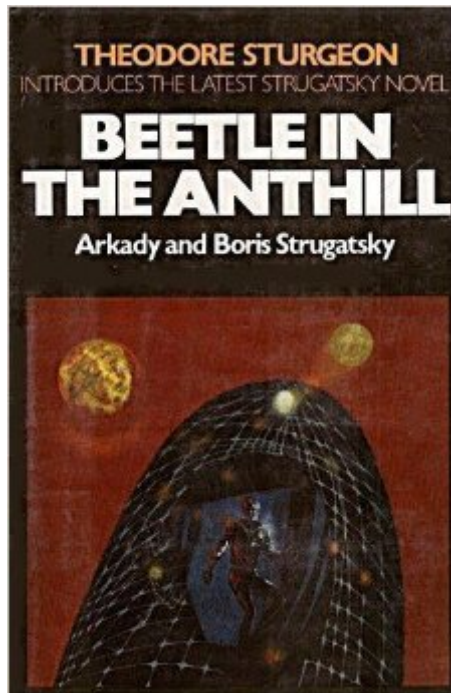


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Beetle In The Anthill (Best Of Soviet Science Fiction)



Book Information

Series: Best of Soviet Science Fiction

Hardcover: 192 pages

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Customer Reviews

This is not a joke. This is not an exaggeration. I've been reading sci-fi in two languages for almost 50 years, and here is my humble opinion: Beetle in the Anthill is in a class of its own (of course, I read the Russian original but from what I hear the English translation is quite good). It affected me so much that in 1989 I wrote a book myself trying to emulate its unique genre and its unique style (see Hippolyta's Belt here at the)...Beetle in the Anthill is a combination of a darkest mystery and a most disturbing sci-fi which will not let you put it down until you learn EVERYTHING. But you won't. You'll be left guessing. Guessing and re-reading every episode of the book again and again, every time discovering new layers of ethical and philosophical problems...I envy those of you who are starting this journey. Good luck!

This book is set in Utopian (aka "Communist" but really anarchic-meritocratic) Earth of 22nd century. There is no coercion, no government nor police exist, and everyone do as they please - yet no one finds pleasure in "bad" stuff, because everyone is brought up to be a responsible individual member of high morals society, engaging in full self-actualization without harming anyone else. Automation is full and all-pervasive so there's no strife for survival nor for any material gains which are readily available to everyone for free anyway (there's no money either). The only problem which remains is dangers present (or perceived) in an unchecked scientific exploration - for which reason the Control Commission begrudgingly exists that does try to keep it in check. When one experiment

out of many - but this time the one performed on us, by seemingly all-powerful aliens some 30,000 years ago, - seems to go awry, the main protagonist is faced with age old dilemma: should one life be sacrificed for the security of many - and possibly of the whole Planet Earth itself?

I borrowed this book from the library years and years ago. I wish I owned it. Maybe I haven't tried hard enough to get a copy but someday.... The creativity and intelligence of this novel is astounding and to get into a description would only create spoilers and I wouldn't want to do that. Who/what is Lev Abalkin? Detonators, sarcophagus, Golovans, Progressors, and most importantly the alleged super civilization whose inhabitants are only known as the Wanderers? And what do the Wanderers want from Earth and any of the intelligent civilizations mentioned in the book? There is a short poem at the beginning of one chapter that for me summed up the nature of the story. It was written by the central character Lev Abalkin when he was ten years old. It goes something like this: Animals sat by the door they did not hide. People shot them And they died. It's a book worth the investment of time.

I have read all the books written by brothers A&B Strugatskii and would name them among my favourite authors. This particular book is actually a second and probably the most popular part of a trilogy where the main character is Maxim Kammerer. In spite of that it can be easily read separately. The story will keep even the ones who do not like science fiction preoccupied for a few hours. The authors explore our fear of the unknown. What is the real purpose of the alien world and its beings? Are they offering a friendly hand or are they here to destroy us? Or, may be, they are merely passing by... To make matters more complicated, the potential alien does not know that he might be a walking bomb as Earth is the only home he had ever known...

Why would a Superman (or X-man) want to stick around on the little Earth, getting the poor humans out of various boring problems? May be, because he (or she) does not realize his (or her) powers. Or, because, he feels grateful or has some other emotional attachments. But these things can not keep him for too long...

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