



TIN SKY

Ben Pastor

Giles Morgan

Major Martin Bora has survived the horrors of Stalingrad. It is now 1943 and Bora is stationed in Ukraine preparing for the Kursk counter-offensive. The Wehrmacht Major and aristocrat is serving as a counterintelligence officer investigating partisan actions and a series of grisly killings in a local woodland called Krasny Yar.

Whilst other soldiers are damaged and broken mentally and physically by their war-time experiences Bora seems able to retain a lucid focus on his duties through steely determination and self-discipline. However, still suffering from bouts of malarial fever and desperately missing his wife Dikta, the cracks in Bora's resolve are beginning to show.

During this uneasy pause in hostilities a Russian general called Khan Tibyetsky unexpectedly defects to the German side and Bora is charged with his protection and safe conduct to senior German army figures. Khan brings not only important tactical knowledge and information but makes his arrival in a T-34 tank.

The T-34 is at this point the most advanced tank in the field and the German side is desperate to get their hands on one and scrutinise it in detail.

But events do not run smoothly as his prisoner is unexpectedly seized by the local Gestapo. Matters worsen for Bora when Khan is reported dead in his cell and another Russian general he has been questioning also dies in his custody.

Bora finds himself surrounded by enemies on all sides as the Gestapo blame him for the death of Tibyetsky and begin unearthing details from his past to use against him, such as assisting his Jewish piano teacher to escape the clutches of the Nazi's. Meanwhile, the threads of Bora's investigations all seem to lead to the eerie woodland of Krasny Yar and its bloody secrets.

This is the fourth in the Major Martin Bora series and yet again Ben Pastor impresses with the authenticity and detail that she invests in her locations and settings. Delving into Russian mythology and superstition Pastor evokes an atmosphere of creeping unease and grotesque horror. The Bleak war-torn landscape of Ukraine provides the perfect setting for this psychologically disturbing and well-crafted thriller.

TIN SKY

Ben Pastor

Bitter Lemon Press, £8.99, 9781908524515

Giles Morgan