



The Magician of Lublin: A Novel

By Isaac Bashevis Singer

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The fiftieth anniversary of a lost classic?a deceptively sophisticated tale of sexual compulsion and one man's flight from love

Yasha Mazur is a Houdini-like performer whose skill has made him famous throughout eastern Poland. Half Jewish, half Gentile, a freethinker who slips easily between worlds, Yasha has an observant Jewish wife, a Gentile assistant who travels with him, and a mistress in every town. For Yasha is an escape artist not only onstage but in life, a man who lives under the spell of his own hypnotic effect on women. Now, though, his exploits are catching up with him, and he is tempted to make one final escape?from his wife and his homeland and the last tendrils of his father's religion.

Set in Warsaw and the shtetls of the 1870s?but first published in 1960?Isaac Bashevis Singer's second novel hides a haunting psychological portrait inside a beguiling parable. At its heart, this is a book about the burden of sexual freedom. As such, it belongs on a small shelf with such mid-century classics as *Rabbit, Run*; *The Adventures of Augie March*; and *The Moviegoer*. As Milton Hindus wrote in *The New York Times Book Review*, "The pathos of the ending may move the reader to tears, but they are not sentimental tears . . . [Singer] is a writer of far greater than ordinary powers."

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Editorial Review

Review

“Though *The Magician of Lublin* has major philosophical underpinnings, Singer excels at moving the story along like a compulsively readable thriller. Blessed with the gift of creating worlds, his narratives invariably feel not like they've been written but as if they are happening in front of our eyes. Part of this gift is Singer's facility for vivid characters. Whether it be minor bystanders who appear for a moment or major players like the brazen blond pimp Herman, 'a giant who knows himself invincible,' Singer never fails to conjure up people who get up off the page and walk around. Being a modern can be a sometime thing, but great writing engages and endures.” *Kenneth Turan, Los Angeles Times Book Review*

“Singer, far from being gentle and grandfatherly, was as shockingly modern a writer as Dostoevsky. He is a chronicler of spiritual disintegration, exploring the devastating effects of appetite and passion--even of thought itself--on souls unprotected by faith . . . The dark power of *The Magician of Lublin* is nowhere clearer than in its concluding message--that, for a modern man, to return to God may require a decision as violent and frightening as any crime.” *Adam Kirsch, Tablet*

“Singer's minute particulars, at which he is a master, invariably are Eastern European Jewish. His eye for detail is manifest throughout *The Magician of Lublin*.” *Harold Bloom, The New York Review of Books*

“[Singer] is a spellbinder as clever as Scheherazade; he arrests the reader at once, transports him to a far place and a far, improbable time and does not let him go until the end.” *Jean Stafford, The New Republic*

“A peerless storyteller, Singer restores the sheer enchantment with story, with outcome, with what-happens-next that has been denied most readers since their adolescence.” *David Boroff, Saturday Review*

“Singer is a genius. He has total command of his imagined world.” *Irving Howe, The New Republic*

From the Publisher

Like one of his mystical characters dancing between worlds of reality and fantasy, Isaac Bashevis Singer's literary legacy – ten years after the Nobel Laureate passed away – is being reborn.

Jewish Contemporary Classics, Inc. has now published THE MAGICIAN OF LUBLIN, one of Bashevis Singer's most famous novels, on as a six-cassette unabridged audiobook.

Veteran narrator and Broadway star Larry Keith reads this wonderfully crafted story of promiscuity and redemption, moving effortlessly among the voices of housewives, thieves and professors. The book is introduced by Bea Arthur, star of television's “The Golden Girls.”

From the Inside Flap

Awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1978, Isaac Bashevis Singer accepted the prize by first giving a speech in Yiddish, the language of his writing, and then delivered the following remarks in English.

“The storyteller and poet of our time, as in any other time, must be an entertainer of the spirit in the full sense of the word, not just a preacher of social or political ideals. There is no paradise for bored readers and no excuse for tedious literature that does not intrigue the reader, uplift his spirit, give him the joy and the

escape that true art always grants.

“Nevertheless, it is also true that the serious writer of our time must be deeply concerned about the problems of his generation. He cannot but see that the power of religion, especially belief in revelation, is weaker today than it was in any other epoch in human history. More and more children grow up without faith in God, without belief in reward and punishment, in the immortality of the soul, and even in the validity of ethics.

“The genuine writer cannot ignore the fact that the family is losing its spiritual foundation. All the dismal prophecies of [German philosopher and historian] Oswald Spengler have become realities since the Second World War. No technological achievements can mitigate the disappointment of modern man, his loneliness, his feeling of inferiority, and his fear of war, revolution, and terror. Not only has our generation lost faith in Providence, but also in man in himself, in his institutions, and often in those who are nearest to him.

“In their despair a number of those who no longer have confidence in the leadership of our society look up to the writer, the master of words. They hope against hope that the man of talent and sensitivity can perhaps rescue civilization. Maybe there is a spark of the prophet in the artist after all.

“As the son of a people who received the worst blows that human madness can inflict, I have many times resigned myself to never finding a true way out. But a new hope always emerges, telling me that it is not yet too late for all of us to take stock and make a decision. I was brought up to believe in free will.

“Although I came to doubt all revelation, I can never accept the idea that the universe is a physical or chemical accident, a result of blind evolution. Even though I learned to recognize the lies, the clichés, and the idolatries of the human mind, I still cling to some truths which I think all of us might accept someday. There must be a way for man to attain all possible pleasures, all the powers and knowledge that nature can grant him, and still serve God—a God who speaks in deeds, not in words, and whose vocabulary is the universe. “I am not ashamed to admit that I belong to those who fantasize that literature is capable of bringing new horizons amid new perspectives—philosophical, religious, aesthetical, and even social. In the history of old Jewish literature, there was never any basic difference between the poet and the prophet. Our ancient poetry often became law and a way of life.

“Some of my cronies in the cafeteria near the Jewish Daily Forward in New York call me a pessimist and a decadent, but there is always a background of faith behind resignation. I found comfort in such pessimists and decadents as Baudelaire, Verlaine, Edgar Allan Poe, and Strindberg. My interest in psychic research made me find solace in such mystics as your Swedenborg and in our own Rabbi Nachman Bratzlaver, as well as in a great poet of my time, my friend Aaron Zeitlin, who died a few years ago and left a spiritual inheritance of high quality, most of it in Yiddish.

“The pessimism of the creative person is not decadence but a mighty passion for the redemption of man. While the poet entertains, he continues to search for eternal truths, for the essence of being. In his own fashion he tries to solve the riddle of time and change, to find an answer to suffering, to reveal love in the very abyss of cruelty and injustice.

“Strange as these words may sound, I often play with the idea that when all the social theories collapse and wars and revolutions leave humanity in utter gloom, the poet—whom Plato banned from his Republic—may rise up and save us all.”

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Destiny Hunt:

Book is usually written, printed, or illustrated for everything. You can recognize everything you want by a reserve. Book has a different type. We all know that that book is important issue to bring us around the world. Adjacent to that you can your reading talent was fluently. A e-book The Magician of Lublin: A Novel will make you to become smarter. You can feel far more confidence if you can know about every little thing. But some of you think in which open or reading a new book make you bored. It is not make you fun. Why they could be thought like that? Have you searching for best book or suitable book with you?

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James Johnson:

In this period globalization it is important to someone to acquire information. The information will make someone to understand the condition of the world. The health of the world makes the information better to share. You can find a lot of referrals to get information example: internet, paper, book, and soon. You can view that now, a lot of publisher that will print many kinds of book. The particular book that recommended to you personally is The Magician of Lublin: A Novel this book consist a lot of the information on the condition of this world now. This kind of book was represented just how can the world has grown up. The terminology styles that writer use to explain it is easy to understand. The writer made some analysis when he makes this book. Here is why this book appropriate all of you.

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