



by Cordula Simon
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Fiction

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Neubauer

Der Neubauer

review

Neubauer is the intriguing story of a young man who entangles himself in a web of lies, in a desperate attempt to fit in with his group of superficial friends. Only when his lies are revealed does he realise that appearances can be deceptive and that there is more to life than just status. The novel is witty and gripping with a dark and mysterious vein, holding a mirror up to the modern phenomenon of the social-media-addicted hipster community.

The book begins with the unnamed narrator losing his job as a sales assistant in a supermarket because his phone keeps ringing during working hours. This seemingly trivial mishap soon reveals more about his personality, character and background. Anxious to fit in with a group of rather shallow upper-class friends, he pretends that money is never a problem for him. Strutting around in expensive suits and uttering a few appropriate platitudes seem enough for the clique to accept him as one of them. Little do they know that his actual living conditions are rather different. No longer able to afford his flat, the narrator claims to have got into trouble with a 'tattooed man' and that he now needs to keep a low profile. The narrator's friends assume that he must be involved with the mafia and rumours begin to spread like wild fire. The story takes a surreal turn when the reader learns that the narrator is able to read minds whenever he is drunk. Aware that his friends constantly think 'mafia' when they see him, he becomes increasingly paranoid but is still too afraid to tell the truth.

The 'Neubauer' of the title remains a highly elusive character who

only appears at the end of the novel, even though he seems to be the person everyone is talking about at the parties the narrator goes to. In that closing scene, one of the girls accompanying Neubauer claims to know the narrator from the supermarket, and the truth about his lifestyle is finally revealed. While the whole clique laughs at him, the narrator's girlfriend remains loyal. Together they run away and begin a new life, providing a pleasantly unexpected romantic twist at the end of the novel.

Neubauer is an original book which launches a strong critique of contemporary society through its story of a young, troubled man with a supernatural power. Entertaining and disturbing in equal measure, this tragicomic tale keeps readers guessing until the end.

An English-language review of *Neubauer* from Literaturhaus Wien is available here:

<http://www.literaturhaus.at/index.php?id=12087>

press quotes

'Like all of Cordula Simon's novels so far, Neubauer is witty, fast-paced and loaded with surprising plot twists. Written with panache but without excessive flourishes, this page-turner is hard to put down.' – Gerald Lind, Literaturhaus Wien

about the author

Cordula Simon was born in 1986 in Graz. She studied German and Russian studies in Graz and Odessa, where she lived from 2011-2015. Simon is a member of the literary group 'plattform' and coordinates the Jugend-Literatur- Werkstatt Graz for young writers. She has published numerous articles in publications including *manuskripte*, *lichtungen*, *Zeit-Campus*, and *Fleisch*. In 2013 she took part in the 37th *Tage der deutschsprachigen Literatur*. Simon has received the literary advancement award of Graz (2012) and was a fellow of the Literarisches Colloquium Berlin in 2013.

Previous works:

Wie man schlafen soll (2016), *Ostrov Mogila* (2013), *Der potemkinsche Hund* (2012)

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