



by Saša Stanišić?
Luchterhand Literaturverlag
May 2024 / 256pp
Fiction

🏆 #2 Spiegel Bestseller,
over 82,000 copies sold in
German

🏆 Wilhelm Raabe-
Literaturpreis 2024 winner

When the Widow Wants Someone To Talk to Her, She Puts the Watering Can on the Grave with the Spout Facing Forward

Möchte die Witwe angesprochen werden, platziert sie auf dem Grab die Gießkanne mit dem Ausguss nach vorne

review

New from the winner of the German Book Prize (*Where You Come From*, translated by Damion Searls), this unusually titled collection of short stories displays Saša Stanišić's literary flair and strong imagination. Filled with sharp observations, offbeat humour and a playful engagement with German poetic tradition, *If the Widow Wishes* is an inventive study of everyday lives on the fringes of society.

A cycle of interconnected stories that can be read as individual tales while combining to create a whole, *If the Widow Wishes* begins with a conversation between four teenage boys. All "foreigners in Germany", they discuss the idea of a room that could give someone a ten-minute glimpse of their future.

The chapters that follow relate absurd events that happen to various

characters connected to the boys. For Dilek, a mother and cleaner, time stops suddenly during a normal day at work. Georg, a middle-aged man, becomes increasingly desperate when he finds himself unable to beat his son at Snap. Mo is catapulted out of his routine when he unexpectedly receives a tank in the post. The titular character, a widow named Gisela, has a series of strange encounters when visiting her husband's grave. Meanwhile, an autofictional character named Saša lies to his friends about a holiday to Helgoland, inventing adventures that later help him to become a writer.

The book concludes with a glimpse of the future-testing room, where we learn what the characters experience and whether they decide to save that future. We are then given an alternative version of the opening conversation, in which Saša tells his friends the truth: he won't be going on holiday at all, but staying right where he is.

Finding themselves in highly imaginative and absurd situations, the responses, worries and obligations of the wide-ranging cast of *If the Widow Wishes* are relatable and add a degree of normalcy to an otherwise fantastical narrative. Hallmarked by Stanišič's playful prose, send-ups of German literary greats like Heine, and effective use of satire, this is an engaging and nuanced read that is open to many potential interpretations.

Rights sold: Poland, Klimaty; Turkey, Iletisim

press quotes

'A lightning bolt of a book!'

ARD Das Erste – Druckfrisch

'Saša Stanišić is a majestic word conjurer and a sharp judge of human nature.'

Tagesspiegel

'A virtuoso narrative full of ingenious refinement, delivered with a lightness of touch.'

Berliner Zeitung

'The tone he has brought to contemporary German literature is unique, entirely unaffected and yet highly artistic, playful and sad, gentle and gripping.'

NDR Kultur

about the author



© Magnus Terhorst

Saša Stanišić, born in Višegrad in Bosnia-Herzegovina in 1978, has lived in Germany since 1992. His novels and stories have been translated into more than 30 languages, and have won numerous awards, including the 2019 German Book Prize (for 'Where You Come From') and the 2014 Leipzig Book Fair Prize (for 'Before the Feast'), as well as the Eichendorff Book Prize, Schiller Prize and Hans Fallada Prize. He lives in Hamburg.

Previous works: *Wie der Soldat das Grammophon repariert*, Luchterhand Literaturverlag (2006); *Vor dem Fest*,

Luchterhand Literaturverlag (2014);
Fallensteller, Luchterhand Literaturverlag
(2016); Herkunft, Luchterhand
Literaturverlag (2019); Möchte die Witwe
angesprochen werden, platziert sie auf dem
Grab die Gießkanne mit dem Ausguss nach
vorne, Luchterhand Literaturverlag (2024).

Previous works translated into English: How
the Soldier Repairs the Gramophone, Grove
Atlantic (2009)/Pushkin Press (2015),
translated by Anthea Bell; Before the Feast,
Pushkin Press (2015) translated by Anthea
Bell; Where You Come From, Tin House
(2021)/Jonathan Cape (2021), translated by
Damion Searls.

Find out more on Instagram:
[@howtowaitforalongtime](#)

rights information

Penguin Random House Verlagsgruppe

Contact: Gesche Wendebourg

gesche.wendebourg@penguinrandomhouse.de

Tel: +49 (0)89 41363313

www.penguinrandomhouse.de