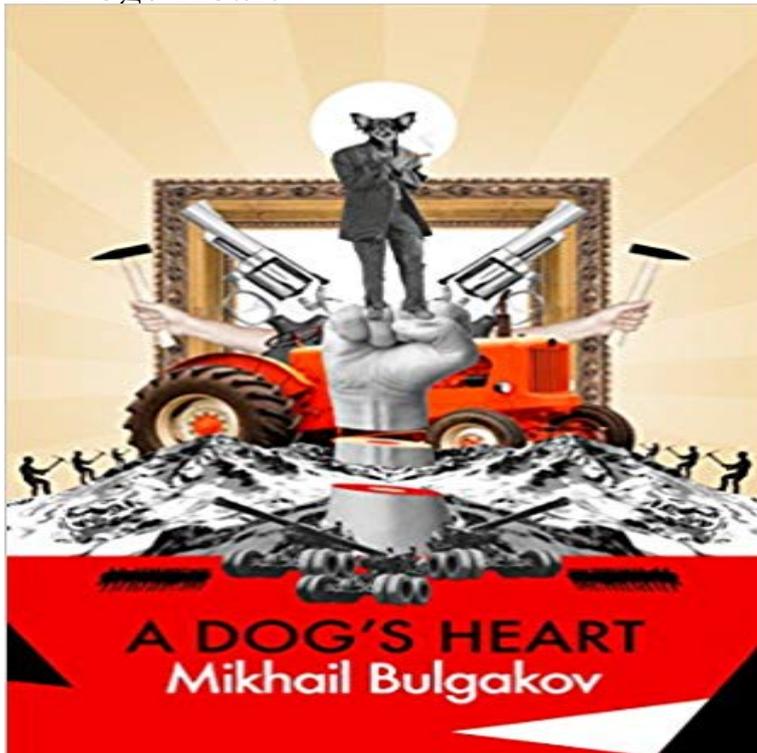


## A Dogs Heart



Lauded Russian author and playwright Mikhail Bulgakov's *A Dog's Heart* (also translated as *The Heart of a Dog*) is a zany, violent, and whimsical satire of the failures inherent in the dream of a Communist utopia, following dog-turned-human Sharik as he tries and fails utterly to live a life of goodness and virtue but goodness and virtue as defined by whom? Both a nod to the Frankenstein myth and a vicious critique of the Soviet government's attempts to reshape and redefine personhood during and after the Russian Revolution, the popular tale poses the question, what taints Sharik's thoughts and actions? Is it the heart of the dog, the corrupted flesh of the human man he was transformed with, or the attempts by his creators to turn Sharik into a model citizen and human being? Like many of Bulgakov's novels and plays, *A Dog's Heart* was rejected for publication by censors in 1925, but was circulated via samizdat (the clandestine production and distribution of literature that had been banned by the state) for years until it was translated into English in 1968; it would not be officially published in the Soviet Union until 1987. To this day, the book remains one of Bulgakov's most controversial novels, although it is widely read and highly regarded alongside the famously sharp-witted author's most famous work, *The Master and Margarita*. The Alma Classics edition of *A Dog's Heart* is translated by Antonina W. Bouis with the authorization of the Bulgakov Estate and Andrew Nurnberg Associates. Antonina W. Bouis is an accomplished translator, working with several major publishing houses such as University of Texas Press, Alfred A. Knopf, and OneWorld Classics Ltd. to bring the best of Russian literature to English readers. Her translation reflects the clear, humorous, and profound language of the original with colloquial English idioms and phrasings. Readers without previous experience in Russian

literature will find this translation to be accessible and fun, even though the subtext of Bulgakovs works is the murky, mysterious underbelly of Soviet culture. About the Author Mikhail Bulgakov was a Russian playwright, novelist, and physician best known for his satirical classic, *The Master and Margarita*. Born in Kiev in 1891, Bulgakov was drawn to both literature and the theater from his early youth. As a young man, Bulgakov studied to become a doctor and volunteered with the Red Cross during the First World War. He practiced medicine for some years after WWI, and was eventually drafted as an army physician during the Russian Civil War. He contracted typhus and nearly died at his posting, and after a shaky recovery he began his professional transition from physician to playwright and author. From 1919 until his death in 1940, his plays, short stories, and novels enjoyed degrees of critical and popular success, but Bulgakov also endured a great deal of criticism and censorship due to his propensity to mercilessly satirize the ethical and political shortcomings of life in the Soviet Union. His witty, biting, and frequently grotesque storytelling style caught the eye of Joseph Stalin, earning him some degree of political immunity. By the end of the 1920s, however, Bulgakovs career had ground to a halt due to a government ban on the performance or publication of his work. Bulgakovs relationship with Stalin protected him from arrest and execution, but he could not publish any of his works or stage his plays for the remaining years of his life. Over the next decade, the ailing writer began work on *The Master and Margarita*, which would be his last major creative effort before his death. A brilliant satire of Soviet society, it was not published until 1966, 26 years after his death. Although he never experienced stable success and renown during his life, Bulgakovs body of work is now firmly situated within the pantheon of great 20th century Russian literature and theater.

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## A Dogs Heart

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