



The Underground

Hamid Ismailov

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Named one of “the best Russian novels of the 21st Century,” *The Underground* is the unforgettable story of an abandoned mixed-race boy navigating the wondrous and terrifying city of Moscow before the Soviet Union’s collapse.

“I am Moscow’s underground son, the result of one too many nights on the town.” So begins the story of Mboobo, the precocious 12-year-old narrator of this captivating novel by exiled Uzbek author and BBC journalist Hamid Ismailov. Born to a Siberian woman and an African athlete who came to compete in the 1980 Moscow Olympics, Mboobo must navigate the complexities of being a fatherless, mixed-raced boy in the shaky terrain of the Soviet Union before its collapse.

With echoes of Ralph Ellison’s *Invisible Man* and Fyodor Dostoevsky’s *Notes from Underground*, Ismailov’s novel tackles head-on the problems of race and the relationship between the individual and society in a thoroughly modern context. While paying homage to great Russian authors of the past—Dostoevsky, Turgenev, Gorky, Nabokov, and Pushkin—Ismailov emerges as a master of a new kind of Russian writing that revels in the sordid reality and diversity of the country today. Named one of “the best Russian novels of the 21st Century” (*Continent Magazine*), *The Underground* is a dizzying and moving tour of the Soviet capital, on the surface and beneath, before its colossal fall.

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