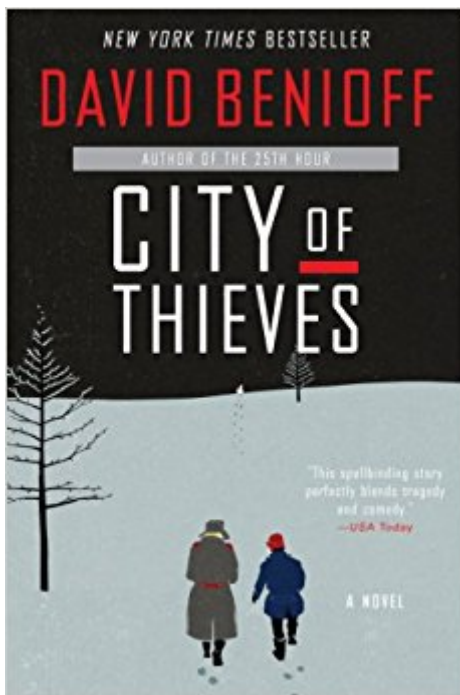


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# City Of Thieves: A Novel



## Synopsis

From the critically acclaimed author of *The 25th Hour* and *When the Nines Roll Over* and co-creator of the HBO series *A Game of Thrones*, a captivating novel about war, courage, survival, and a remarkable friendship that ripples across a lifetime. During the Nazis' brutal siege of Leningrad, Lev Beniov is arrested for looting and thrown into the same cell as a handsome deserter named Kolya. Instead of being executed, Lev and Kolya are given a shot at saving their own lives by complying with an outrageous directive: secure a dozen eggs for a powerful Soviet colonel to use in his daughter's wedding cake. In a city cut off from all supplies and suffering unbelievable deprivation, Lev and Kolya embark on a hunt through the dire lawlessness of Leningrad and behind enemy lines to find the impossible. By turns insightful and funny, thrilling and terrifying, the New York Times bestseller *City of Thieves* is a gripping, cinematic World War II adventure and an intimate coming-of-age story with an utterly contemporary feel for how boys become men.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Starred Review. Author and screenwriter Benioff follows up *The 25th Hour* with this hard-to-put-down novel based on his grandfather's stories about surviving WWII in Russia. Having elected to stay in Leningrad during the siege, 17-year-old Lev Beniov is caught looting a German paratrooper's corpse. The penalty for this infraction (and many others) is execution. But when Colonel Grechko confronts Lev and Kolya, a Russian army deserter also facing execution, he spares them on the condition that they acquire a dozen eggs for the colonel's daughter's wedding cake. Their mission exposes them to the most ghoulish acts of the starved populace and takes them

behind enemy lines to the Russian countryside. There, Lev and Kolya take on an even more daring objective: to kill the commander of the local occupying German forces. A wry and sympathetic observer of the devastation around him, Lev is an engaging and self-deprecating narrator who finds unexpected reserves of courage at the crucial moment and forms an unlikely friendship with Kolya, a flamboyant ladies' man who is coolly reckless in the face of danger. Benioff blends tense adventure, a bittersweet coming-of-age and an oddly touching buddy narrative to craft a smart crowd-pleaser. (May) Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

In the six years since his critically praised debut, "The 25th Hour," Benioff has produced a story collection and a handful of screenplays, including the blockbuster "Troy." The imprint of his film work is evident in this novel, a finely honed but too easily sentimental adventure story set during the siege of Leningrad. Lev, the mousy, virginal son of a disappeared Jewish poet, is jailed by the Russian Army for looting; in prison and awaiting execution, he shares a cell with a blowhard blond infantryman accused of desertion. When a strange colonel offers the pair an impossible task in exchange for their lives, they set off on a journey that takes them through a series of nightmarish war zones, populated by cannibals, prostitutes, starving children, and demonic Nazi chess enthusiasts. Benioff finds a good deal of humor amid the grisly absurdities of wartime, but does so at the expense of real emotional engagement. Copyright © 2008 Click here to subscribe to The New Yorker --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

I would never have dreamed that a story set during the WW II Siege of Leningrad could be as engaging and darkly humorous as this book, but the Author has done a fine job of bringing a diverse set of characters to life, two of whom have been given an impossible mission (find a dozen eggs!) in an unbearable situation (the Blockade of Leningrad, and its consequent famine). I have over a dozen books on the Siege of Leningrad (for a project I'm working on), and I have to say that the Author portrays the siege with accuracy, if not with full depth - in large part because the story is told from the viewpoint of Lev, a 17 year old boy. This doesn't give the reader an omniscient overview of "the big picture", but it certainly provides a very specific perspective on life in and around the city, and one well worth reading. It's an "impression" of life during the city, and I have to say that with one exception - Lev would have been much hungrier and weaker in real life - a fairly accurate one. Readers of "The 900 Days" will recognize the inspiration for a specific scene, (Hint: Beware of well fed men in a famine) but how the characters react to what happens makes the action their own. And

what characters! The two main characters that carry the book deserve to be remembered as a classic pairing. Their interactions, observations and the journey they take on their absurd quest are one that I will remember for a very long time. Lev, the narrator, will remind most adult men of their own awkward youth. Wry, dry, frustrated and a little plodding, he is enormously sympathetic, while seemingly always in the process of doing a "Straight Man's Slow Burn" in a comedy routine. Kolya, an accidental Red Army deserter, is overly confident, irresistibly charming and scatologically minded. Imagine a dirty minded Bugs Bunny come to life as a 6ft tall, Blond hair Blue eyed Russian and you're not too far off. By the end of the story, these two have formed a real bond and friendship - one that seems real, rather than forced for the sake of the story. The supporting characters are all given real weight - you feel that this really could have happened, and that these aren't just puppets the author is manipulating, but real people. Is it serious? Yes. Is it a war story? Yes. Is it funny? Yes. Is it a coming of age story? Yes. Is it historically accurate? Yes. It's simply got quite a lot to offer to any reader. I highly recommend it to both the general reading public and to WWII buffs.

I don't usually read historical fiction, especially novels about war. I've never watched Game of Thrones. Yet somehow I was intrigued by the premise of this novel by David Benioff. I tried a free sample and I was hooked. I never thought of choosing a novel about the siege of Leningrad, wherein the two protagonists are a Jew and a deserter from the Red Army, who meet by happenstance when they are captured and imprisoned overnight then released to attempt to complete a special task for a Colonel. The story is narrated by Lev, a seventeen year old Jewish boy. It could be a coming of age story, or "buddy road trip", but it isn't. The banter between the two young men is amusing and natural, and it helps to offset some of the heavier parts, but this is a story of a dark time in history. In spite of the subject matter, I found this to be an easy read and a quick read, mainly because I couldn't put it down. I wanted to get to the end and find out how it was concluded.

This is one of the best books I've ever read. Loved it from beginning to end. The characters are so rich and real, and the reader is immersed into a plot with palpable tension. The story takes place over just a week or two, so you can imagine the intensity of every interaction and exchange. It is the story of a 17 year old boy in WWII during the siege of Leningrad, when the city is cut off from all supplies including of course food. He is given an impossible task to complete by a Soviet officer: bring back a dozen eggs for my daughter's wedding cake. This is a time of extreme desperation, where the starving people were eating pets, and even each other. So finding a dozen eggs is truly

an impossible task. Lev gets another young man as a companion for the search and their adventure is one you will not forget. When you finish the book, immediately go back and reread the first chapter to bring the story full circle. This is an amazing work!

I loved this book. David Benioff sure can write! Whether you're interested in WWII and the siege of Leningrad, or if you're just looking for a suspenseful, warm, creative, funny/tragic story, I recommend without hesitation. I stayed immersed in the story from the first sentence to the last, not a moment dragged, and it far exceeded my expectations.

A remarkable WWII story. The tale of two young men trying to survive the siege of Leningrad (St. Petersburg). I started the book at 8:30 one evening and finished it at 3:00 am. Beautiful, if graphic, writing. It is a fact if a shame that so much of what happened on the Russian Front is not known in the US. The horrors visited upon the Russian people seldom get the kind of attention they deserve. I highly recommend City Of Thieves to anyone wanting to better their understanding of the terrors visited upon humanity by the Third Reich.

I don't think I'll ever look at a dozen eggs the same way again. I'll always think of Lev, and Kolya will be one of the people I would pick to Have lunch with. The war was always present of course. But it was about it in a way that made light of the horrors, through Kolya, because that's what some people did to survive without going insane. The plot was really unique, if course. I mean, eggs? All of the characters were amazing. I was truly sad to see some of them go. I won't be forgetting them anytime soon. This is a book that tugged at my heart.

Random purchase on a friend's reco. Figured since the author is a creator of GoT, how bad can it be? It's a cracking read. In fact, in the scene with the chess game, for the first time in ages a book literally made me feel tension! I actually put the book down for a moment, then started it again! Plenty of the good ol' Benioff twists and turns and unexpected bits. Fast, fun, well-written...big thumbs up!

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