

Sous-Sol (Paris)

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Émilienne Malfatto, novelist and grand reporter, was born in 1989. In 2015, she was awarded the Prix France Info-Revue XXI for her news story *Dernière escale avant la mer in Bodrum, Turkey*. Her work has been published on the front page of *Washington Post*. She received the Goncourt Debut Novel Prize in 2021 for her novel *Que sur toi se lamente le Tigre* and the Albert-Londres Prize for *Les serpents viendront pour toi : une histoire colombienne*.

THE COLONEL DOES NOT SLEEP

EMILIENNE MALFATTO

Emilienne Malfatto (Goncourt Debut Novel Prize), photographer and grand reporter (Albert Londres prize) has penned a second novel – a vertiginous story about war and what it does to men.

In an anonymous basement in big city of a country at war, day after day, the colonel toils away at his drudgery. He is an expert torturer, content to hide and obey orders from the Counter Conquest and from distant battles.

At night, the colonel does not sleep, plagued by his own ghosts. An army of shadows and voices, his victims have taken his dreams hostage. The rain outside is incessant. The landscape and faces have turned to ash – a sort of waking nightmare painted in the grey hues of disillusionment. Shadows dance and three men on the road to perdition answer: the tortured torturer, the henchmen silently lie in wait, and, in a huge palace, in the middle of a large, empty room, a general slowly turns mad.

A cruel fable about mental illness, war and men. A powerfully written tour de force, it is elliptical, syncopated, repetitive and melodic, and builds in a disturbing crescendo. Its treatment of the threat of war that never becomes reality, of invisible enemies and the vacuousness of orders is reminiscent of Buzzati's *The Tartar Steppe* and of Hubert Mingarelli's *Four Soldiers*.

Densely austere, *Le colonel ne dort pas* has everything to become an instant classic.

Previous titles's rights sold: Portuguese Brazil (Nos), Italian (Sellerio), Spanish (Minúscula, Metalúcida) Catalan (1984), German (Orlanda), English UK (Les Fugitives), Croatian (Sandorf).