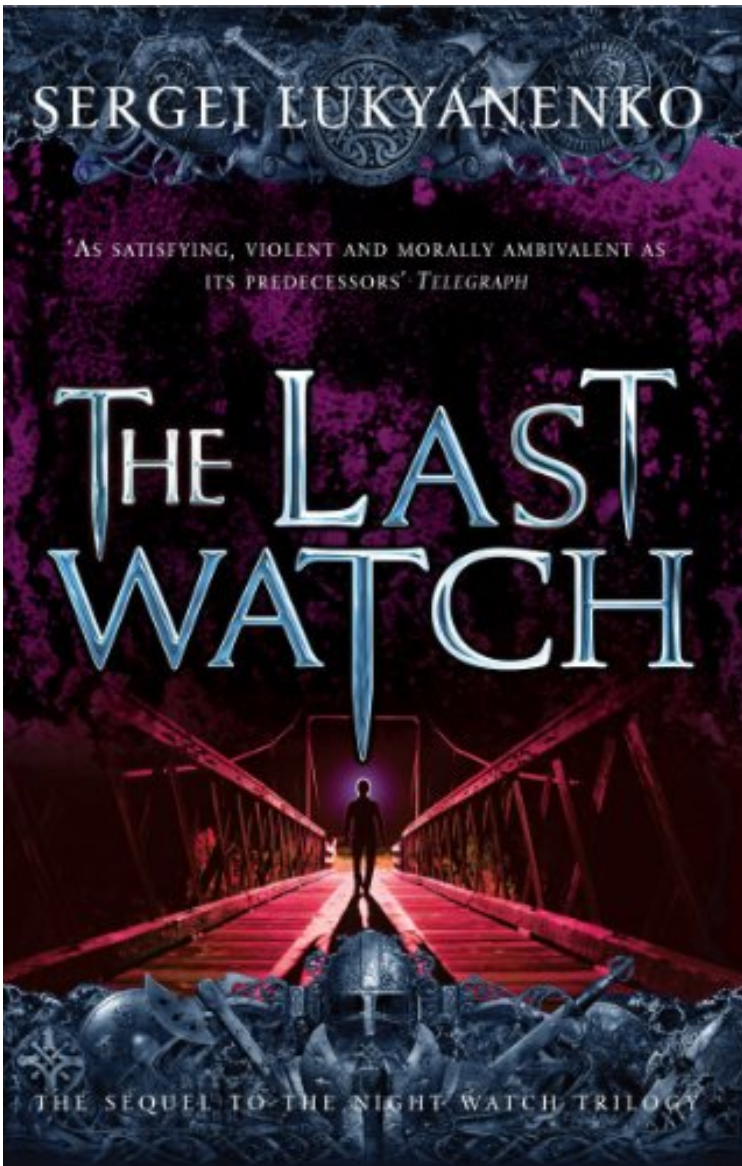


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## The Last Watch: (Night Watch 4)



*Par Sergei Lukyanenko*  
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### Description :

Prsentation de l'diteurThe Last Watch is the stunning sequel to the Night Watch trilogy, following the fortunes of the Others. Indistinguishable from normal people but possessed of supernatural powers and capable of entering the Twilight, a shadowy world that exists in parallel to our own, each Other owes allegiance either to the Dark, or to the Light...While on holiday in Scotland, visiting 'The Dungeons of Edinburgh', a young Russian tourist is murdered. As the police grapple with the fact that the cause of the young man's death was a massive loss of blood, the Watches are immediately aware that there is a renegade vampire on the loose. Anton - the hero of the Night Watch trilogy - is detailed to this seemingly mundane investigation, but begins to realise that there is much more to the story than a wildcat vampire and a single

murder, and discovers that a team of unlicensed Others are hunting for a fabled magical treasure, hidden in the sixth level of the Twilight by Merlin himself...ExtraitPROLOGUE

Lera looked at Victor and smiled. Inside every man, no matter how grown-up, there was still a little boy. Victor was twenty-five years old and of, course, he was grown-up. Valeria was prepared to insist on that with all the conviction of a nineteen-year-old woman in love. Dungeons, she said straight into Victor's ear. Dungeons and dragons. Oo-oo-oo! Victor snorted. They were sitting in a room that would have been dirty if it wasn't so dark. Jostling all around them were excited children and adults with embarrassed smiles. On a stage decorated with mystical symbols a young man wearing white make-up and a long flowing black cloak was making frightening faces. He was lit up from below by a few crimson light bulbs. Now you are going to learn what real horror is like! the young man drawled menacingly. Aagh! A-a-a-agh! Even I feel afraid at the thought of what you are going to see! He spoke with the precise articulation that only drama college students have. Even Lera, who didn't know much English, could understand every word. I like the dungeons in Budapest, she whispered to Victor. They have real old dungeons there . . . it's very interesting. And all they have here is one big room of horror. Victor nodded guiltily and said: But at least it's cool in here. September in Edinburgh had turned out hot. Victor and Lera had spent the morning in the royal castle, a centre of tourist pilgrimage. They had had a bite to eat and had drunk a pint of beer each in one of the countless pubs. And then they had found somewhere to take shelter from the midday sun . . . Sure you haven't changed your minds? the actor in the black cloak asked. Lera heard someone crying quietly behind her. She turned round and was surprised to discover that it was a grown girl, about sixteen years old. Standing there with her mother and little brother. Several attendants surfaced out of the darkness and quickly led the entire family away. There you have the other side of European prosperity, Victor said didactically. Would any grown girl in Russia be frightened by a room of horror? Westerners' lives are too calm and peaceful, it makes them afraid of all sorts of nonsense . . . Lera frowned. Victor's father was a politician. Not a very important one, but very patriotic, always taking every chance to demonstrate the shortcomings of Western civilisation. But that hadn't stopped him sending his son to study at Edinburgh University. And Victor, who spent ten months of the year away from his homeland, stubbornly repeated his father's rhetoric. You would have to look very hard to find another patriot like him even inside Russia. Sometimes Lera thought it was funny, and sometimes it made her angry. Fortunately the introduction was over now, and the slow procession through the Dungeons of Scotland began. Under a bridge beside the railway station some enterprising people had partitioned off the bleak concrete premises into small cages. They had put in weak light bulbs and draped tattered rags and artificial cobwebs everywhere. On the walls they had hung portraits of the maniacs and murderers who had run riot in Edinburgh over its long history. And they had started entertaining children. This is the bootikin! howled a girl dressed in rags their guide for this room. A terrible instrument of torture! The children squealed in delight. The grown-ups exchanged embarrassed glances, as if they had been caught blowing soap bubbles or playing with dolls. To avoid getting bored, Lera and Victor stood at the back and kissed while the guides babbled. They had been together for six months already, and they were both haunted by a strange feeling that this romance would turn out to be something special. Now well go through the maze of mirrors! the guide announced. Strangely enough, this turned out to be really interesting. Lera had always thought that those descriptions of mirror mazes in which you could lose your way and run your forehead straight into the glass were exaggerated. How was it possible not to see where there was a mirror and where there was an empty space that you could walk into? It turned out that it was possible. In fact, that it was very possible indeed. They laughed as they jostled against the cold mirror surfaces and waved their arms about as they wandered around in the noisy clamour of the group, which had suddenly been transformed from a handful of people into a crowd. At one point Victor waved in greeting to someone, and when they eventually got out of the maze (the door was slyly disguised as a mirror, too) he gazed around for a long time. Who are you looking for? Lera asked. Ah, it's nothing, Victor said, with a smile. Just nonsense. Then there were a few more halls with the sombre trappings of medieval prisons, and then the River of Blood. The hushed children were loaded into a long metal boat that set off slowly across the dark water to the Castle of the Vampires. The darkness was filled with malevolent laughter and menacing voices. Invisible wings flapped above their heads, water gurgled. The impression was only spoiled by the fact that the boat sailed about five metres at the very most after that the illusion of movement was maintained by fans blowing air into their faces. But even so Lera suddenly felt afraid. She was ashamed of her fear, but she was afraid. They were sitting on the last bench, there was no one else beside them, ahead of them were actors groaning and giggling as they pretended to be vampires, and behind them . . . Behind them there was nothing. But Lera couldn't get rid of the

feeling that there was someone there. Vitya, Im afraid, she said, taking hold of his hand. Silly girl . . . Victor whispered into her ear. Just dont cry, all right? All right, Lera agreed. Ha-ha-ha! Evil vampires all around! Victor exclaimed, imitating the voices of the actors. I can sense them creeping up on me! Lera closed her eyes and clutched his hand even tighter. Boys! They were all boys, even when they had grey hair! Why was he frightening her like that? Ai, Victor exclaimed very convincingly. Then he said, Theres someone . . . someone biting my neck . . . Fool! Lera blurted out, without parting her eyelids. Lera, theres someone drinking my blood . . . Victor said in a mournful, despairing voice. And Im not even afraid . . . Its like a dream . . . The fans kept blowing their cold wind, the water slapped against the sides of the boat, the wild voices howled. There was even a smell of something like blood. Victors hand went limp. Lera angrily pinched him on the palm, but he didnt even twitch. Im not afraid, you blockhead! Lera exclaimed almost at the top of her voice. Victor didnt answer, but he tumbled softly against her, and that made her feel a bit less afraid. Ill bite your throat out myself! Lera threatened. Victor seemed to be confused. He didnt say anything. Then Lera surprised even herself by adding: And Ill drink all your blood. Do you hear me? Straight after . . . straight after the wedding. It was the first time she had mentioned this word in connection with their relationship. She froze, waiting to see how Victor would react. A single man simply had to react to the word wedding! He would be either frightened or delighted. Victor seemed to be dozing on her shoulder. Did I frighten you? Lera asked. She laughed nervously and opened her eyes, but it was still dark, although the howling had begun to fade away. All right . . . I wont bite you. And we dont have to have a wedding! Victor still didnt say anything. A mechanism creaked and the iron boat floated another five metres along the narrow concrete channel. The clamouring kids piled out onto the shore. A three- or four-year-old girl who was holding on to mummy with one hand and sucking one finger of the other kept turning her head and staring straight at Lera. What could have caught her attention? A young woman talking in an unfamiliar language? No, that couldnt be it, they were in Europe . . . Lera sighed and looked at Victor. He really was asleep! His eyes were closed and his lips were set in a smile. Whats wrong with you? Lera asked and gave him a gentle shove. Victor started slowly slumping over, with his head falling straight towards the iron side of the boat. Lera squealed and managed to grab hold of him (what was happening, why was he so limp and flabby?) and lay him down on the wooden bench. An attendant immediately appeared in response to her cry black cloak, rubber fangs, cheeks daubed with black and red make-up. He jumped down agilely into the boat. Has something happened to your friend, miss? The boy was very young, probably the same age as Lera. Yes . . . no . . . I dont know. She looked into the attendants eyes, but he was bewildered too. Help me! We have to get him out of the boat! Maybe its his heart? The lad leaned down and tried to take hold of Victors shoulders then he jerked his hands away, as if he had taken hold of something hot. Whats this? What kind of stupid joke is this? . . . Revue de presse" As satisfying, violent and morally ambivalent as its predecessors." (Telegraph) "...the book maintains the high standards set by its precursors admirably, and we can't help but hope that it will not be the last in this exceptional series." (SciFi Now Magazine)