The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Russian Publisher Admits Removing LGBT Plot from Hit U.S. Fantasy Novel

August 14, 2017



Writer Victoria Schwab **Bruce Matsunaga / Flickr**

The Russian publisher of the hit American fantasy series Shades of Magic has admitted it redacted one of the books to comply with the country's "gay propaganda" law.

American fantasy writer Victoria Schwab last week accused the Russian publisher Rosmen of a breach of contract after she found out it had "redacted the entire queer plot [without] permission."

"I was absolutely horrified. Wouldn't have known if not for a Russian reader who read both editions," she said on Twitter. "Publisher in total breach of contract."

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> The Russian edition of Shades of Magic has been my favorite. This week I learned that they redacted the entire queer plot w/out permission.

— Victoria/V.E. Schwab (@veschwab) August 9, 2017

In comments to the Vedomosti business daily, Rosmen on Sunday admitted it had censored a romantic scene between two characters in the second book of the Shades of Magic trilogy to comply with Russian legislation.

"We only did this so that we wouldn't violate the ban on gay propaganda for minors," the publishing house's spokesperson Natalya Brovchuk told Vedomosti. "But we kept the romantic plotline as a whole."

They said they had notified Schwab's literary agent of the changes.

Russia introduced nationwide legislation banning "the promotion of non-traditional relationships to children" in 2013. The law, which has been widely condemned by human rights groups, can see individuals fined up to 100,000 rubles ($1,700) and companies up to 1 million rubles.

In the final part of the trilogy, the romance between the LGBT characters is one of the central plotlines, Brovchuk said. The Russian version of the book, which has yet to be published, will either have to be heavily edited or be marked 18+, she said.

In comments to Vedomosti, Schwab said she would have "never agreed to any redacting of [even] one scene."

"It would have been better not to publish the book at all," she wrote, adding she intended to end her deal with the publisher.

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