

# The Good Mayor

By Andrew Nicoll  
(Black & White)

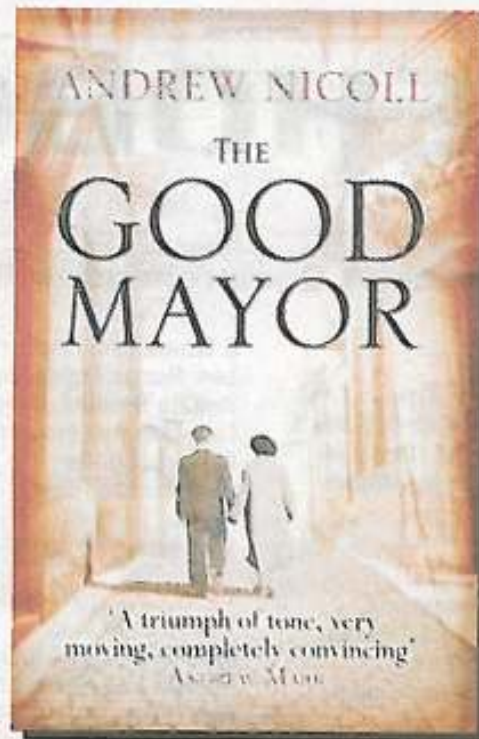
In telling this story of love and its myriad facets, Andrew Nicoll presents us with the issues that beleaguer us humans as we run the race of life.

Set in the mythical town of Dot, nestled in a forgotten part of the northern Baltics, the story centres the mayor of the title, Tibo Krovic – a middle-aged man who has never married, and has been mayor of his small town for almost twenty years. Krovic is an honest, diligent and upright man, earning him the title of the 'Good Mayor' from his townsfolk.

However, unbeknownst to them, he falls in love with his secretary Agathe Stopak, a woman unhappy in her marriage following the death of her daughter.

In a town where reputation is everything, there is nothing Krovic can do about this love – until the day her lunch falls into the town fountain, propelling the good mayor in a direction that changes their lives forever.

The terrain of love is well charted by Nicoll as the fable progresses,



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his characters dedicated to illustrating the internal psychology of life. At the same time, the terrifying fear of losing one's social identity runs throughout the narrative, as the Dotians take their cues from what their arch rivals in the neighbouring country of Umlaut think or do.

In reading this tale, I want to believe that Nicoll intends us to re-appraise our society and our place and/or purpose in it. In the pursuit of life and happiness, what are the values and boundaries?

But in attempting to answer these questions, we have to bear in mind that nothing really is as it seems. After all, the story is narrated by the patron saint of Dot, St Walpurina, who sacrificed herself to save the town from the rampaging Huns.

This twist gives the sense of a higher power watching over proceedings, observing how humans deal with the contrasts and contradictions of life.

Overall, *The Good Mayor* is a very beguiling, finely written and humorous debut.



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