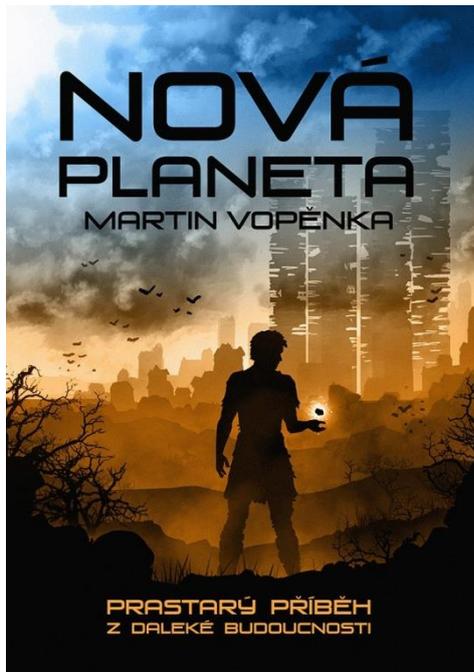


MARTIN VOPĚNKA COMPLETES NOVÁ PLANETA (NEW PLANET)

The novel will be published in October by Mladá fronta

Writer Martin Vopěnka has completed his new, sweeping novel about betrayal, love and civilisation. It is called *Nová planeta* (*New Planet*). Publishing house Mladá fronta is preparing to publish it in October.

The novel's main character is Daniel, a boy growing up in a technically advanced and entirely isolated civilisation that calls itself New Planet. The dehumanised society, divided up into the chosen and unchosen, pretends to have



left Earth while in fact having just built an impenetrable wall around itself. Chosen and privileged Dan loves his three step-brothers but does not realise that they despise him. Because of their betrayal, he finds himself one day on a pile of corpses under the wall of New Planet. There is no way back. The fight for survival in the primitive world on the other side of the wall begins. He soon discovers the terrifying foundations that the civilisation of New Planet has been built on and is forced to re-asses everything he has believed in until that point. Much like Josef from the Old Testament, Daniel becomes responsible for the lives of all the people, but an important reunion also awaits him. How will he contend with his unusual fate?

When did you first come up with the idea to write a coming of age story about a boy who finds himself in a completely different environment that he has ever known?

For me, the motivation to write any story is a strong emotional charge. I spent a number of years writing the *Spící město* (*Sleeping City*) trilogy, a story about four siblings helping each other in exemplary fashion in their fight for survival. **And then all of sudden I was excited by the idea of a story about the exact opposite: where the siblings will be the ones who become the traitors – the horribly incomprehensible betrayal by those you trust and love the most.**

Why did you decide to create a parallel of the Old Testament story of Josef?

That happened all by itself. Because if this kind of betrayal has an archetype, then it is the story of Josef and his brothers.

Did you get the inspiration for your story from your accounts of earth-bound civilisations during your travels?

Not so much. Its enough to be aware of the most urgent issues in today's world: Should we build an impenetrable wall around ourselves to ensure longer survival and relative prosperity? Even at the price that people will be dying on the other side of the wall because of this? Or to come to terms with gradual stagnation? I came up with these ideas some time before the refugee crisis in southern Europe began to escalate.

What do you think is the future of the Earth and our civilisation?

Both scenarios that I have outlined in *New Planet* are possible in my opinion. Our future, just like our present, will be oscillating between the wonderful possibilities afforded by our knowledge and technological advancements and dull, empty existence (consumerism) and barbaric, bloody destruction. Some sort of new messianism could enter the mix. And none of us can foresee which direction will prevail.