



by Olga Grjasnowa
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Fiction

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All Russian Men Love Birch Trees

Der Russe ist einer, der Birken liebt

review

In this exciting and overtly political novel, Grjasnowa perfectly captures the mood of a younger generation who cannot escape the trauma of their past.

Originally from Azerbaijan and haunted by her childhood experiences of the civil war there, Mascha is now studying in Germany to become an interpreter. She lives with her partner, but he dies and Mascha leaves her adopted country for a job in Israel. The atmosphere is oppressive from the outset. Many Israelis are hostile to Mascha because she speaks Arabic but not Hebrew. She has some contact with distant Russian relatives there, but they are barricaded into illegal settlements because they had no idea of the politics when they first arrived. Although she had seen Israel as a way out, Mascha now feels increasingly pressurised by her personal and political situation. Asked to join a group of activists as an interpreter on a trip into the West Bank, Mascha is brought face to face once again with her traumatic childhood memories.

Despite the real sadness and hopelessness of the novel, Grjasnowa has managed to infuse it with sympathy and a subtle humour. This is a deeply affecting work that is guaranteed to gain an international readership.

about the author

Olga Grjasnowa was born in 1984 in Baku, Azerbaijan. In 1996 she emigrated with her family to Germany. She studied prose and

guarantee.

dramatic writing at the Deutsches Literaturinstitut Leipzig and spent several semesters abroad: at the University of Warsaw and at the Maxim-Gorki Institute of Literature and Creative Writing in Moscow. Her work has been published in several magazines and anthologies. She has also worked in the field of New Media Art. She has been awarded numerous prizes and scholarships. Grjasnowa is currently studying dance at the Berlin Free University.

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