

literary fiction

Temptation

Novel. Arsis. Moscow 2016. 368 pages

Publishers: Bulgaria - Aviana, France - Belfond

The provincial town of Belorechensk is situated near Irkutsk at the confluence of two Siberian rivers. The cousins Katya and Nastya are young and pretty, healthy and self-confident. But Katya's father is critically ill and the family is in dire straits. And so the cousins consider trying their luck in far off Moscow. Mainly in the hope of earning some money for the family and also, perhaps, of having a chance of escaping the cheerless province for ever. Unaware of the price the moloch Moscow will demand they set off.

At home they were Russian citizens; in Moscow they are just refugees, like Tajiks, Azerbaijanis, Georgians. The novel tells the story of what it is like to be a migrant in one's own country. Contrary to the traditional approach of Russian literature, the melting-pot of Moscow is not sweepingly depicted as depressing or heartless. We view this Moscow from below in a series of nuanced close-ups. Above all it is with Katya's open-mindedness that the novel presents the common people, how they struggle to live and to survive – in both the big city and the province. Even the Siberian town of Belorechensk is not portrayed as paradise on earth, neither before the girls' adventures nor afterwards. And even the ending, when both cousins return pregnant to Siberia, cannot really be called happy.

Soberly and without exaggerated literary effects, the author shows us the naked truth about the life of the younger generation in Russia. Nothing seems to be imagined or added. It is, in principle, Katya's simple and guileless words that we hear. And hence the novel becomes authentic and believable, giving the reader an opportunity for sympathy. For us, ordinary, simple people like Katya, Nastya, Andrei and Aleksei are often not worth thinking about, in the same way as we do not consider the air we breathe. But in the novel they suddenly become fellow human beings. The novel is about the air that we all breathe; and about love in times of temptation.

TEMPTATION is, unlike Remizov's first novel FREE AND WILD, an airy and sensitive story for female readers.

"In the plethora on the shelves of the bookshops, novels about the lives of the common people in Russia are extremely rare. One of these rare books is Viktor Remizov's «Temptation». It is to be hoped that those in the corridors of power will look into such books. Perhaps then there would be changes for the better. Without villages or provincial towns such as described by Remizov, Russia will not have a future." *Roman Senchin*

Remizov was born in Saratov in 1958, where he studied geological prospecting at college. After serving in the army Remizov studied languages at Moscow State University. He worked as a surveyor in the taiga, a school teacher of Russian literature and – for the longest time of his professional career – as a journalist. Viktor Remizov lives with his family near Moscow.



THE AUTHOR

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6 languages

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Free and Wild

Viktor Remizov