

Russian literary fiction

The Jump

Novel. AST. Moscow 2017. Shortened version approx. 320 pages

Publishers: Serbia - Russika

Young Vedernikov is a natural talent. He hops, skips and jumps and nothing can keep him on the ground. Defying gravity is his thing. He wins all competitions in the long-jump and is the next great hope for the European championships. One day on his way to his training session he notices how a young boy inattentively wanders in front of a car. Vedernikov sprints and jumps. He saves the child. His life-saving jump is a new record. But in the process he is run over by the car and loses both his legs.

Contrary to expectations, the novel is neither empathic nor critical about the difficulty of being disabled in Russian society. Vedernikov spurns the attempts of his trainer who wants him to enter in the Paralympics. He spurns his affluent and pragmatic mother who, instead of really looking after him, provides him with money and the latest artificial limbs. He lacks nothing except a meaning of life. And what follows is a merciless parable about good and evil based on a twist of fate that has evidently spared the wrong person.

His carer Lida looks after all of Vedernikov needs. And she eagerly takes on the role of a surrogate mother for Zhenya, the boy Vedernikov saved, whose parents neglect him and who Vedernikov has taken under his wing. By bringing Zhenya up, Vedernikov wants at least to give this young life a reason for living, a reason he cannot give himself. But as Zhenya grows up it becomes more and more apparent that the young ward is a good-for-nothing and a monster. And Vedernikov's evil shadow. And even Vedernikov was never really thoroughly decent. To give life some meaning, he plans to murder his ward. But it all ends with another long-jump of destiny and a completely unexpected twist of fate.

Slavnikova's cutting analysis does not miss an opportunity to expose, with irony and detachment, but without illusion, her protagonists' intersecting motives and relationships whether they be between Vedernikov, his mother, the carer Lida, her husband Aslan who does not want to have a child with her, the ward Zhenya and his parents or Vedernikov's trainer. THE JUMP is neither idyllic nor tragic, it has no contradicting truth and lies, but instead illustrates the clash of many different truths meeting on the solid ground of harsh reality.

"An angry Nabokov." *Literaturnaya Gazeta*

"Probably the best novel of the year." – *Litteratura*

"... no naive babbling about Russia. From the passings of time and fates Slavnikova weaves such a dense tapestry of characters that the reader feels drawn into a powerfully dramatic space, which is immediately recognizable as common or garden, consisting only of the too well-known." *Tatyana Moskvina*

Slavnikova was born in 1957 near Ekaterinburg. She writes reviews and essays for *Novy mir*, *Znamya*, *Oktyabr*. She was a member of the Russian Booker prize jury in 1999. In 2000 she was part of the board for the *Novy mir* Prize for short stories and now organizes the Debut Prize of the *Pokolenie* fund. Her novel "Strekoza, uvelichennaya do razmerov sobaki" was shortlisted for the Booker prize in 1997. "Odin v zerkale" won the Bazgov Prize and was nominated for the Booker Prize in 2000. Slavnikova lives in Moscow.



THE AUTHOR

translations
20 languages

awards
National Bestseller shortlist 2018
Gorky Award Italy 2012
Gjenima Prize (US) 2006-2007
Russian Booker Prize 2006

other works
Lighthouse
The Immortal
2017
Love in the 7th Train

Olga Slavnikova