

# The Wedding Anniversary

**Novel.** AST Publishers. Moscow 2011. 181 pages

It is Nefedov's wedding anniversary. Not the first one but not the tenth either. He couldn't say exactly. Actually, he doesn't even know that today is the day as he leaves the company as usual. Nevertheless, he heads in precisely the right direction, straight home, as he has done for decades after leaving the office. At the moment, anyway. Then he meets his friend who takes him off for a spin in his resprayed sports car. New colour, new girlfriend. The eternal bachelor and the wellbehaved husband land up in a sports stadium, which is in fact closed, the only place in their provincial backwater for an undisturbed celebration with a mate and a bottle or two. Nefedov's wife Nadezhda is also back from work as an archivist in the literature museum, the former home of a classic writer. The archivist and her staff use original furnishings in an attempt to conceal from the visitors and from themselves the fact that the true soul of the museum has been lost: the ominous but stolen manuscript by the town's most famous resident, an allegedly clairvoyant pamphlet on Russia's future as a demilitarised zone between China and Europe. While their teenage daughter is putting on her makeup before leaving the house, the wife is preparing the traditional wedding anniversary roast as a dinner for two. And waiting. When her spouse arrives home very late from his little escapade it is all too late. So he leaves again. And that is the start of the big escapade that takes Nefedov to faraway Moscow. The turbulent paths he travels are paved with thousands of memories of his wife, however. And with a real corpse as well. When Nefedov returns home some forty eight hours later he has observed the wedding anniversary with his yearning memories of the loveliest moments in his marriage more intensely than the usual wedding anniversary roast ever did. And he brings with him a wedding anniversary present the likes of which the provincial museum and his wife have never seen. Has Nefedov stopped at nothing in order to save a botched wedding anniversary? The story has not quite reached its happy ending yet.



## THE AUTHOR

**translations**  
3 languages

**awards**  
Big Book Award longlist 2011  
Big Book Award shortlist 2010  
Russian Booker Prize shortlist 2004

**sample translation available**  
full english

**other works**  
Petrovich  
Walks in the Park  
Sergeev and his Town  
The Wedding Anniversary

"The author has drawn tremendous attention to someone driving the wrong way down a one-way street - and then it turns out that there is in fact no sign at all prohibiting anyone from proceeding against the flow of 'contemporary literature'." *Lev Danilkin*

"He loves his characters not because he sympathises with them but because he loves them. His heroes do not manage to become completely bad. They pause shortly before the fall from grace, like a dust particle suspended in a ray of sunlight." *Lev Pirogov*

"Zaionchkovski's new piece of prose is everything at once: brutal and touching and sad and happy." *Novy Mir*

Zaionchkovski was born in Kuibyshev, now Samara, in 1959. After leaving high school he worked as an inspector in an aircraft factory. He has been writing prose since his youth but it is only recently that his work has been published. His second novel "Sergeev and The Town" reached the Short List for The Booker – Open Russia Literary Prize in 2004. Zaionchkovski lives in a small town near Moscow.

# Oleg Zaionchkovski