



Petropolis

By Anya Ulinich

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Sasha Goldberg is the ultimate outsider: she's a chubby, biracial Jewish girl from the Siberian town of Asbestos 2. Her father takes off for the United States, and leaves Sasha to navigate adolescence in a bleak apartment bloc with her overbearing mother. Sasha falls in love with an art school drop-out who lives inside a concrete pipe in the town dump. Following her heart gets her into trouble at home, so she flees Russia as a mail-order bride and lands in suburban Arizona. Sasha manages to escape her Red Lobster-loving fiancé and embarks on a misadventure-filled journey across America in search of her father.

Anya Ulinich has crafted an unforgettable story of familial fault lines, cross-cultural confusion, and the beguiling allure of new beginnings. *Petropolis* is a funny and poignant debut marking the arrival of a major new voice in fiction.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Ulinich's debut novel traces Russian-Jewish Sasha Goldberg's screwball coming-of-age and search for her long-ago disappeared father. Sasha, living with her mother, Lubov, in the gloomy Siberian town of Asbestos 2, is a disappointment to Lubov. Not musically inclined and is too chubby for ballet, Sasha is a messy, uncoordinated child with a passion for drawing. After Sasha is accepted into a local, cash-strapped art school, she becomes pregnant and has a daughter, Nadia. Though Sasha wants to raise Nadia, Lubov forces Sasha to attend an art school in Moscow and leave Nadia behind with her. Once in Moscow, Sasha begins scheming her way to America—where she believes her father lives—and soon is on a plane to Phoenix, Ariz., as a 17-year-old mail-order bride. Sasha flees after a year to Chicago, where she works as a live-in maid for the wealthy Tarakan family, though she is little more than the family's "pet Soviet Jew." Sasha's salvation lies in Jake Tarakan, the Tarakan's wheelchair-bound 18-year-old son, who helps Sasha locate her father. Though Sasha's mental letters home and some timeline hiccups work against the momentum, cultural assimilation humor is the order of the day, and Ulinich provides it by the bucketful. (*Feb.*)

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From [Booklist](#)

Starred Review When a coming-of-age novel is truly different, it can send shock waves through unsuspecting readers. This brave blend of satire, farce, and heart-wrenching realism delivers the necessary voltage to do just that. First-novelist Ulinich sets out as if she intends to lampoon the whole idea of coming-of-age. Teenager Sasha Goldberg, a pudgy parody of the archetypal outsider, is a mixed-race Russian Jew living with her mother in a mining camp called Asbestos 2, once a Stalinist model town but now a postglasnost embarrassment. When your entire universe, internal and external, needs escaping from, the very notion of escape becomes a bad joke. So it is for Sasha ("For a Jew, you sure look like a Negro," one of her friends tells her), whose every attempt at escape leads to an even more absurd reality than the one she left behind. A furtive romance results in pregnancy, but when her mother usurps the baby, Sasha decamps to America as a mail-order bride, landing in Arizona with an old-school husband whose Crown Victoria "is as long as Sasha Goldberg's whole life." From there it's off to Chicago, where, as the "pet Soviet Jew" of a rich Orthodox couple, Sasha trades one kind of servitude for another. One more escape lands our heroine in Brooklyn, in search of her father, who abandoned the family when she was an infant. Ulinich plays this absurdist immigrant's journey for all its black-comedic potential, but she never loses sight of Sasha's bedrock humanity. Her triumphs are attenuated at every turn by lingering levels of despair, but her ability to find a pulse of life in even the most outrageous turns of fortune lifts the novel as far beyond parody as it is beyond convention. *Bill Ott*

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Review

...Anya Ulinich's novel about this not-quite-black, not-quite-Jewish, chubby misfit from Siberia is captivating. And the observations...whew. -- *Jane Magazine*

Petropolis turns out to be the coming-of-age story of a less-than-promising protagonist - which of course makes it all the more affecting. -- *San Diego Union Tribune*

Audacious, clever and lively, *Petropolis* abounds in precise and pointed descriptions, rapid-fire dialogue and unpredictable interactions among intriguing characters...Ulinich has written fresh and nifty social satire in the spirit...of Tom Wolfe, Aleksandar Hemon, Gish Jen, Gary Shteyngart and Lara Vapnyar. Not only does

Ulinich take sharp aim at racism, she also skewers sexism, philanthropy for all the wrong reasons...and the myopia of privilege. -- *Chicago Tribune*

Breezily entertaining...the textured characters and heartfelt narrative will leave you pondering the unexpected connections that create a family and the faraway places that we end up calling home. -- *Bust Magazine*

Bursts with artful details of an immigrant's youth and quest for home-the grappling for the strong woman inside of the lost girl -- *Ms. Magazine*

For a girl from a bleak Siberian town, Ulinich's protagonist Sasha Goldberg has a surprisingly big heart and a hysterical view of life in America. *Petropolis* is a compassionate and unusual novel about motherhood, immigration, and religious fanaticism. -- *Laura Dave, author of London Is The Best City In America*

It's refreshing to see something like a new American dream appear in Anya Ulinich's first novel *PETROPOLIS*. Here, it's no longer a matter of material success or even educational opportunities, but about finding a place for one's misfit heart... Ulinich has a wry sense of the absurd that usually turns the commonplace on its head. ... At each turn, Sasha's role becomes something new: a fellow Russian, a big black girl to be feared, and first and foremost a Jew. The absurdity of these preconceptions, and the freedom to escape from them, is what shapes Ulinich's narrative and what forms its great optimism. No matter how out of place you might feel, there's surely a place for you somewhere. -- *San Francisco Chronicle*

This novel, as do most good ones, leaves readers feeling they've accompanied the protagonist on a rewarding journey, while still wondering what lies ahead for her. -- *Bookpage*

Ulinich has a knack for the tragicomic ... *Petropolis* is engaging, funny and genuinely moving in all the right places. It is a sparkling debut, a unique comic novel of Homo post-Sovieticus. In negotiating the territory between coming-of-age and satire, the novel risks a great deal and succeeds, thanks in no small part to Ulinich's storytelling skills and pitch-perfect sense of the bittersweet. -- *Los Angeles Times*

Ulinich is unflinchingly funny, sensitive, and a superb new talent. -- *Akhil Sharma, author of An Obedient Father*

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Stacy Perry:

Information is provisions for anyone to get better life, information presently can get by anyone at everywhere. The information can be a knowledge or any news even a concern. What people must be consider whenever those information which is from the former life are hard to be find than now is taking seriously which one would work to believe or which one the actual resource are convinced. If you get the unstable resource then you have it as your main information there will be huge disadvantage for you. All of those possibilities will not happen inside you if you take *Petropolis* as the daily resource information.

Carl Speed:

Why? Because this *Petropolis* is an unordinary book that the inside of the publication waiting for you to snap

the item but latter it will shock you with the secret that inside. Reading this book beside it was fantastic author who have write the book in such awesome way makes the content inside of easier to understand, entertaining method but still convey the meaning totally. So , it is good for you because of not hesitating having this anymore or you going to regret it. This unique book will give you a lot of gains than the other book get such as help improving your skill and your critical thinking method. So , still want to hold off having that book? If I ended up you I will go to the publication store hurriedly.

Irene Gonzales:

The book untitled Petropolis contain a lot of information on this. The writer explains your ex idea with easy technique. The language is very straightforward all the people, so do not worry, you can easy to read it. The book was published by famous author. The author gives you in the new time of literary works. It is easy to read this book because you can continue reading your smart phone, or gadget, so you can read the book within anywhere and anytime. If you want to buy the e-book, you can open their official web-site and order it. Have a nice examine.

Erica Lewis:

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