



The Big Green Tent: A Novel

Ludmila Ulitskaya

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The Big Green Tent epitomizes what we think of when we imagine the classic Russian novel.

With epic breadth and intimate detail, Ludmila Ulitskaya's remarkable work tells the story of three school friends who meet in Moscow in the 1950s and go on to embody the heroism, folly, compromise, and hope of the Soviet dissident experience. These three boys—an orphaned poet; a gifted, fragile pianist; and a budding photographer with a talent for collecting secrets—struggle to reach adulthood in a society where their heroes have been censored and exiled. Rich with love stories, intrigue, and a cast of dissenters and spies, *The Big Green Tent* offers a panoramic survey of life after Stalin and a dramatic investigation into the prospects for individual integrity in a society defined by the KGB. Each of the central characters seeks to transcend an oppressive regime through art, a love of Russian literature, and activism. And each of them ends up face-to-face with a secret police that is highly skilled at fomenting paranoia, division, and self-betrayal. A man and his wife each become collaborators, without the other knowing; an artist is chased into the woods, where he remains in hiding for four years; a researcher is forced to deem a patient insane, damning him to torture in a psychiatric ward. Ludmila Ulitskaya's novel belongs to the tradition of Dostoevsky, Tolstoy, and Pasternak: it is a work consumed with politics, love, and belief—and a revelation of life in dark times.



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