



Sonechka: A Novella and Stories

Ludmila Ulitskaya

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The Los Angeles Times said of Ludmila Ulitskaya's *The Funeral Party*, "In America we have friends, family, lovers, and parents—four kinds of love. Could it really be that in Russia they have more? Ludmila Ulitskaya makes it seem so." In *Sonechka: A Novella and Stories*, Ulitskaya brings us tales of these other loves in her richly lyrical prose, populated with captivating and unusual characters.

In "Queen of Spades," Anna, a successful ophthalmologic surgeon in her sixties; her daughter, Katya; and Katya's teenage daughter and young son live in constant terror of Anna's mother, a domineering, autocratic, aging former beauty queen. In "Angel," a closeted middle-aged professor marries an uneducated charwoman for love of her young son, raising the child in his image. In "The Orlov-Sokolovs," perfectly matched young lovers are pulled apart by the Soviet academic bureaucracy. And in the stunning novella "Sonechka," the heroine, a bookworm turned muse turned mother, reveals a love and loyalty at once astounding in its generosity and grotesque in its pathos.

In these stories, love and life are lived under the radar of oppression, in want of material comfort, in obeisance to or matter-of-fact rejection of the pervasive restrictions of Soviet rule. If living well is the best revenge, then Ludmila Ulitskaya's characters, in choosing to embrace the unique gifts that their lives bring them, are small heroes of the quotidian, their stories as funny and tender as they are brilliantly told.

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