



Yuri Druzhnikov *Madonna from Russia*

FICTION

68,000 WORDS

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Lily was a beautiful young prostitute recruited by the Bolsheviks to service the Communist elite.

As a result of a fortuitous marriage to Andrei Bourbon, famous poet, Futurist and artistic associate of Malevich and Mayakovsky, her own verse is delivered to the official communist newspapers – together with an entirely invented revolutionary biography. Before long, she is made poet laureate and fêted as an idealized symbol of the Soviet era, while Andrei, after being incarcerated in a mental hospital by Lily, disappears in the purges.

After the collapse of several marriages – and the Soviet Union – she leaves Russia for the United States. This is where we meet her, still striking-looking and engaged to a naive American, starting out again at the age of ninety-six. Following further bizarre and picaresque adventures, she reaches for her greatest honour yet: to be made 'Queen Lily the First' of the brand new island state of Grande Bravo. Yuri Druzhnikov's books have sold in their hundreds of thousands in Eastern Europe. *Madonna from Russia* is in its third Russian edition and was nominated for the 'Russian National Bestseller' prize in 2002.

'Madonna From Russia is Druzhnikov's gutsy response to the challenge of his precursors . . . the heroine, Lily Bourbon, is an elderly woman of extremely easy virtue who has done nearly everyone of importance in the Soviet Union from Lenin onwards. Essentially, Druzhnikov's trick has been to turn Nabokov on his head and write Granny Lolita - the 96-year-old Lily still has the power to cause craziness in many men. Lily is the star of the novel and, since she is so monstrously selfish and manipulative, strangely admirable . . . his writing is at times reminiscent of Solzhenitsyn - indeed, he has a guest role - but Druzhnikov has a lot more humour (well, he missed the gulag) and even offers a whiff of magical realism.' – Tibor Fischer, *Guardian*

Continuing the literary traditions of such prolific Russian authors as Mikhail Bulgakov and Alexandr Solzhenitsyn, Druzhnikov's sublime work mirrors Soviet corruption in its engaging prose. It is the tale of prostitute Lily's engaging rise to poet laureate status while her husband Andreï becomes a victim of the purges and the consequences that this produces. Satire shrouded within an unbelievable narrative and this allegorical novel is a transcendent allegorical epic' - *Big Issue*

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