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THE COLD LIGHT OF DISTANT STARS

BY ANNA GALKINA



Das kalte Licht der fernen Sterne

Novel. German.

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English sample available

»This powerful book gets under your skin! This original, vibrant debut is the Russian-German equivalent of Jonathan Safran Foer's *Everything is illuminated*, Elene Gorokhova's *Mountain of Crumbs* or Frank McCourt's *Angela's Ashes*.« New Books in German

A youth spent in late 1980s Soviet Union, a story of love and disappointment, of farewell and departure. Anna Galkina's perspective on the harsh realities of life in Russia is so unrelenting and fearless that it goes straight to the heart.

Tamara, the matronly director of a library who is revitalized by her relationship with the sickly Wiktor; Sergej with his faux leather sandals whose barn is a popular hangout for the youth; and the three "sluts": Lena with her mustache, Dina whose father is in jail and Oksana who is an expert when it comes to abortions.

Nastja has been observing them ever since she was a little girl. She lives with her mother and grandmother in a small town not far from Moscow that is long past its prime. Meat and dairy products are just as hard to come by as a private telephone line or running water. The residents dwell in small wooden shacks, surrounded by buckets and canning jars, they drink bitter beer and moonshine, they curse and delight, they love and hit each other. At first, the narrator Nastja seems to be above it all, but then she is sucked right into the pop-up panorama of the Russian province. She lives through stories full of poetry and violence, tragedy and humor, episodes with unknown outcomes – until she falls in love with the young soldier Dima and it seems as though her life is about to take an unexpected turn.

The Cold Light of Distant Stars is an unusual and vibrant debut, an outstanding novel of rare charm. Anna Galkina's voice is both adamant and lighthearted and she tells the tales of her protagonists with such great warmth and humor that they continue to resonate for a long time.

Anna Galkina, born and raised in Moscow, came to Germany with her parents in 1996. After receiving a degree in computer science she has been working as a software test engineer, a painter and a photographer. Galkina lives in Bonn and writes in German. *The Cold Light of Distant Stars* is her first novel, her second novel *The New Life* has been published by FVA.

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