



Oksana, Behave!

Maria Kuznetsova

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Iowa Writer's Workshop graduate Maria Kuznetsova's OKSANA, BEHAVE!, which follows a feisty Russian-American girl's life from her childhood years in the new country and on through her bumpy and often humorous path into adulthood.

Oksana, Behave! Details

Date :

ISBN :

Author : Maria Kuznetsova

Format :

Genre : Fiction, Contemporary, Cultural, Russia

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From Reader Review Oksana, Behave! for online ebook

Jessica Lewis says

This was fine, but I'm glad I'm done reading it. More to come soon.

Jess says

I have very mixed feelings about this book. It was interesting and kind of... unflinching? I liked the way it was structured in sections over time, and I liked the way all the supporting characters were developed. I liked the overall themes of the book: the emigration, the confusion across cultures, the family that was kind of fractured but also not, the searching for how to build a life. And yet, I felt kind of at a distance the whole time. I felt like we kept watching Oksana make all these decisions and do all these things but we never really got into her head or understood her motivations. I didn't even really see her yearning for her homeland until the last 20 pages of the book or so. It almost felt like an academic exercise in some ways, which had the side effect of making it hard for me to get into the whole thing. I just don't know. There were a lot of positives, but I walked away feeling confused and not really understanding what the author was trying to get at.

Thanks to Random House and NetGalley for the ARC.

Jennifer says

I won this book from a goodreads giveaway. A fun way to try a new author. This was really unique compared to what I usually read and I recommend it if you're looking to freshen up your reading list!

Jeremy Cleghorn says

Great book! Quick read, loved the nostalgic feel from another perspective.

Chandra Claypool (wherethereadergrows) says

This is quite the interesting debut! Oksana and her family are from Ukraine and trying to make it in America. Oksana is trying to get used to the culture, the American slang, bullying and just all around fitting in with everyone else. In this process she makes a lot of unique choices.

The best part of this is her interpretations such as calling condoms "kingdoms" and testing to see if 9-1-1 really works by claiming her grandmother is trying to kill her. She has no filter (bless her heart) and never feels bad about how her actions impact others around her. Each chapter is a new part of her life, sometimes a new location, and always a new adventure. However, the plot never really seems to get anywhere. This is a novel that just expands in time and follows Oksana on her journey.

At times it's gritty and after a while it gets a bit tiresome. You think Oksana would indeed learn to behave but there's nothing to suggest that she actually does. I expected some more about her cultural background and her yearning for Ukraine... which we get a little bit in snippets at the end. I still have the question as to whether she always acted so selfishly or if this was a reaction to this big move her family made.

When it comes down to it, this is an absolute character read. If you're looking for an actual plot line, there is none. I'm a bit confused as to what the author was trying to give to her readers. It's somewhat relatable yet I couldn't connect to Oksana at any time. There was never a deep dive into exactly why she did what she did.

Delightful in some ways, this book is best suited for those who like to follow a girl childhood to adulthood and her experiences therein. And maybe, just MAYBE, that ending is where she actually begins.

Thank you Spiegel & Grau and Astoria Bookshop for this copy.

Anya Leonard says

This book was a breath of fresh air in an otherwise boring world. The story is of Oksana, who moves to the united states from Kiev as a young girl. The story is reminiscent of Everything is Illuminated, but in a beautiful and humorous way. Oksana's family is so richly wonderful and different from other literature I have read recently and I was glad to encounter them. The complex relationship between Oksana and her Baba was wonderful to behold. The story follows her as she progresses from child, to college student, to woman and chronicles how living in America as a first-generation immigrant was. I honestly enjoyed this book much more than I would have thought. The story was refreshing, the descriptions were beautiful and it moved quickly.

Check it out!

This ebook was provided by NetGalley in exchange for an honest review.

Aga Durka says

3.5 ???????, rounded up to 4.

Unique, quirky, and character driven story with a feisty main character, Oksana.

This is definitely not a book I would normally pick to read, but I needed something original, and with the story of Oksana, the immigrant from Kiev, I got a good dose of originality, eccentricity, and humor. Oksana is not a likeable character and I've cringed many times at her unapologetic behaviors, but in the end I could not stop rooting for her. We see her evolve from a little, rebellious girl into a grown woman with defined ambitions and stable family life, even though at times Oksana's self-destructive behaviors left me in doubt that she will ever succeed in her life. Her close relationship with her father was heartwarming and sad at times but it showed Oksana's soft side, which made her a little more likeable. I loved Baba, Oksana's grandmother, who was as honest as they come, and with her red hair and sassiness, she was determined not to settle for less than she deserved. Baba and Oksana's relationship was unique, comical, and unconventional, and I could not stop smirking every time these two got together.

This book was well written, character driven with a little plot, but it was well structured, and never tedious. It

is not a book for everyone and I think a lot of readers will find it odd and maybe a little off-putting, but I believe that we all need books like this one in our lives.

Thank you NetGalley, Random House Publishing Group, and the author, Maria Kuznetsova, for an opportunity to read an ARC of this story in exchange for my honest opinion.

Aimee Dars says

Oksana Konnikova moved to the United States from Kiev with her parents when she was a child. Although her father was a Math Olympics champion in Russia, while working as a physicist in Gainesville, Florida, he had to deliver pizza to make ends meet. Her mother, struggling to find work as an accountant, often fell into depression. And she shared a room with her sassy grandmother who enjoyed the catcalls she received while walking down Prostitute Street. They affectionately call Oksana “fool” or “idiot” but it speaks to a distance between her and her family, perhaps most sadly illustrated when her parents and grandmother go out to dinner to celebrate but leave her behind in the apartment, alone.

Each chapter is written almost as if a self-contained short story and jumps forward in time with only the characters in common. The structure was interesting, and I got a kick out of seeing the brief mentions of Oksana’s high school friend, Lily, and her changing careers, throughout the book. At the same time, the quality and impact of the chapters was uneven. It also offers a less intimate view of the characters since we see them in bits over many time periods.

Oksana certainly is badly behaved. As a child, testing if the police will really come if she calls 911, she reports that her grandmother is trying to kill her. When a tween, she severely injures a bully when protecting a younger child from his abuses. As she ages, her behavior becomes both more selfish and more self-destructive, leaving a swath of cruel destruction in its wake. Even at the end of the novel, when her life has changed dramatically, her choices have not, and it isn’t clear she’s learned anything from the pain she’s caused.

I had also expected much more mediation on the immigrant experience. Her name and other people’s difficulty pronouncing it, her family’s food preferences, and her travel to the Ukraine are embedded in the story, but I’m not sure if we are to take Oksana’s bad behavior as a manifestation of her immigrant experience, her personality, or the result of her upbringing.

Also, I’d hoped for more information on her grandmother’s experiences in the war. From the description, I thought this would play more of a role. Certainly, this history was important to Oksana, but it wasn’t included in the novel but for a paragraph or two.

Maria Kuznetsova does have some wonderful passages and heartrending dialogue, but I found myself empathizing much more with Oksana’s victims than with her. I hoped she would develop and change over the course of the novel, but she never seemed to learn to behave. Maybe, though, the end was just the beginning.

Thank you to NetGalley and Spiegel & Grau, a division of Random House, for an advance reading copy in exchange for an honest review.

...aka darzy... | Twitter | Facebook | Instagram

df parizeau says

I really enjoyed this read. The humor may be lost on those who are not familiar with the Russian literary tradition, but I found it to be an endearing ode to the 20th c. masters of the past. Oksana is a tempestuous heroine perfectly suited to undermine the modern reader's expectations of "the immigrant's journey." A wonderful debut novel.

Jenn says

I won a copy of this book.

I'm torn on this book. Oksana is a bizarre child; She doesn't seem to care about the consequences of her actions. She's this way because her parents are mean to her. Her grandmother stops talking to her at one point because she feels betrayed.

So, overall, it was an interesting read but I don't feel I ever really connected with Oksana.

Tory says

Oksana was kind of a spoiled bitch. She didn't seem to care about the consequences of her actions and I had a hard time giving a shit about her. There was some humor in this book, but not enough to make up for the fact that I just didn't get what the point was supposed to be. No plot, really; just the growing-up of a third-culture kid into a selfish, useless English major.

Liz says

Via my book blog at <https://cavebookreviews.blogspot.com/>

Maria Kuznetsova has written a funny, ironic novel about immigrants from Ukraine. The central character is a young girl, Oksana, who like her grandmother doesn't have a filter for her criticisms or judgments. It doesn't matter if it is in the USA or Ukraine. Oksana sees through all the nonsense both societies foist on its citizens.

Oksana jumps around to many different places in the USA from disgusting Florida with all its lizards across the country to a somewhat final destination on the west coast. Oksana's father was a Math Olympics champion in Russia, but in the USA he teaches at a second rate school and delivers pizza at night. Oksana's mother is depressed, and nothing brings light to her life. Oksana does not follow her father's footsteps academically. She doesn't care about being wildly successful as her father was.

Oksana, Behave! is a witty debut novel that I enjoyed and I think it will be well received when it is published.

I received an advance copy of this novel from the publisher through NetGalley. Thank you.

Lauren says

There's something repulsive yet charming about Oksana, a Ukrainian immigrant struggling throughout her childhood into her young adulthood to find herself. It's relatable in a fucked up kind of way; Oksana is not a likable character yet still manages to drag me into her woes and escapades as she and her family move from city to city until she winds up back in the Ukraine with her eccentric grandmother.

It's a gritty novel. Easy to plow through but odd in its characterization of Oksana and her family. The timeline and location pops around a lot as well. There are chunks missing that barely get filled in. But it works that way.

Cindy H. says

Thank you NetGalley and Publisher, Spiegel & Grau for providing me with an ARC. In exchange I offer my unbiased review.

There is something refreshing in these pages. Oksana and her boisterous Baba (grandmother) are unruly misfits and bewildered immigrants. Leaving Kiev and moving to swampy Florida provides a series of unexpected plights and situations that are both comical and somber.

Each chapter jumps in time as Oksana & her family members age and grow from Soviet dreamers to hardened realists. The story starts to shed its lighter hues as the pages grow darker with cynicism and bitterness.

I felt like much of Oksana's escapades were probably born from real experiences of the author, but I appreciated the grittiness and authenticity.

This is definitely a character driven story with little plot but plenty of pluck. While Oksana is not likeable there is something compelling about her, that kept me turning the pages.

I enjoyed this debut.

Melissa says

I won this as a giveaway!

3.5 stars

Variety of themes that float through this book. Interesting ending that challenged my liking for Oksana.
