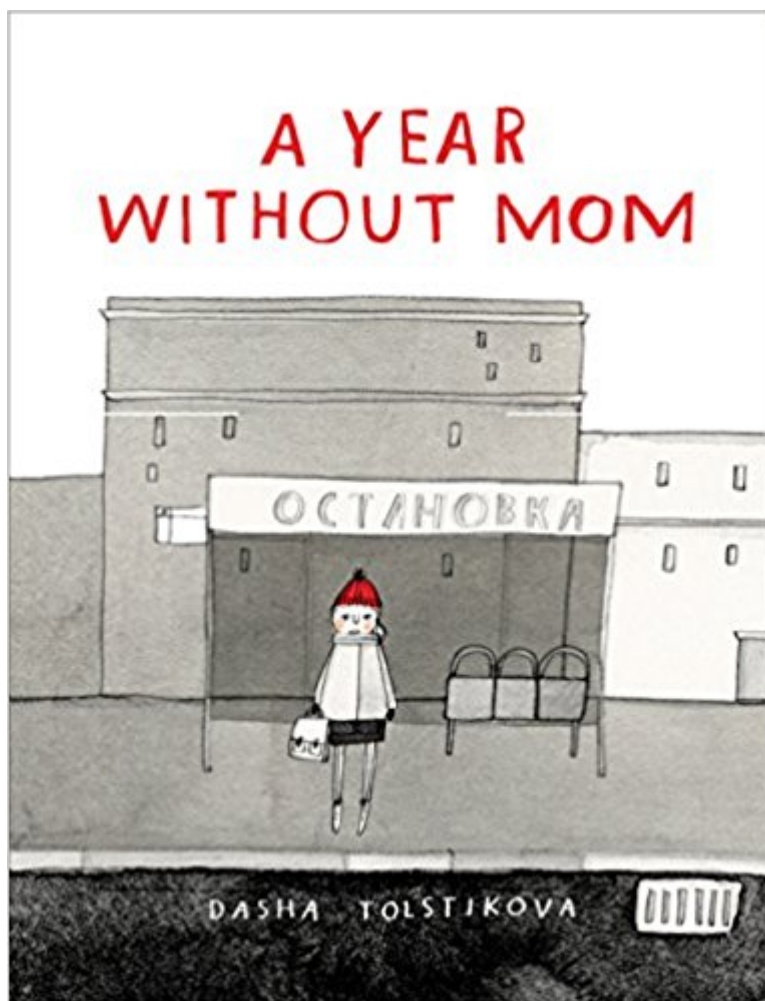


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A Year Without Mom



Synopsis

A Year Without Mom follows 12-year-old Dasha through a year full of turmoil after her mother leaves for America. It is the early 1990s in Moscow, and political change is in the air. But Dasha is more worried about her own challenges as she negotiates family, friendships and school without her mother. Just as she begins to find her own feet, she gets word that she is to join her mother in America – a place that seems impossibly far from everything and everyone she loves. – This gorgeous and subtly illustrated graphic novel signals the emergence of Dasha Tolstikova as a major new talent.

Book Information

Lexile Measure: 690 (What's this?)

Hardcover: 176 pages

Publisher: Groundwood Books (October 6, 2015)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 1554986923

ISBN-13: 978-1554986927

Product Dimensions: 6.6 x 0.7 x 8.6 inches

Shipping Weight: 1.6 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.3 out of 5 stars 5 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #495,791 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #37 in – Books > Children's Books > Comics & Graphic Novels > Biographies #204 in – Books > Children's Books > Education & Reference > History > Europe #341 in – Books > Children's Books > Geography & Cultures > Explore the World > Europe

Age Range: 10 - 14 years

Grade Level: 4 - 9

Customer Reviews

Gr 5 Up – In this fully illustrated novel, 12-year-old Dasha lives in Moscow and is unhappily surprised when her mother decides to spend a year in America, leaving her with her grandparents. Especially since her father moved to Los Angeles, she has really depended on her mom, and the absence of her actual parents is both freeing and painful as Dasha experiences the year – the same year that Gorbachev leaves and Yeltsin takes over what becomes the Russian Federation. Friends, relatives, and a crush on an oblivious boy all help Dasha cope, but what matters are the details of life in Russia. Dasha is delightfully portrayed in pencil-and-ink

drawings with a gray wash. Spots of color attract the eye and provide emphasis. The accomplished drawings are loose without being fuzzy, and the slightly amateur look makes sense considering Dasha's age. Dasha is not an angel, nor is she particularly badly behaved. Her parents seem loving but engrossed in their own lives. The interplay of drawings and text sometimes highlights an emotion and at other times conveys a conversation or mood, keeping the pages turning quickly with each scene. VERDICT A lovely portrayal in words and art of a year in the life of an engaging tween girl from the other side of the world. —Carol A. Edwards, Formerly at Denver Public Library, CO

A Kirkus Best Middle-Grade Book of the Year
A Kirkus Best Middle-Grade Graphic Novel of the Year
A USBBY Outstanding International Book
A Bank Street College of Education Best Children's Book of the Year
"A perceptive story about change, aloneness, ambition and, ultimately, resilience."
"Deceptively simple, but with great narrative sophistication . . . Fascinating and heartfelt."
"Soviet-era Russian realities are only hinted at, backgrounding Dasha's story but never overwhelming it."
"An absorbing graphic memoir. . . . Readers will wish the sequel were available instantly."
"The excitement of meeting a teen actor, the agony of a crush, the pain of changed friendships & all this resonates cross-culturally."
"A lovely portrayal in words and art of a year in the life of an engaging tween girl from the other side of the world."
"The author includes authentic details . . . and, with personality and sincerity, creates an accessible, truthful, and relatable record for readers of a different generation."
"A quiet, moving, and contemplative story of growth."
"Told in quiet fragments, sewn together with ribbons of girlhood."
"The excitement of meeting a teen actor, the agony of a crush, the pain of changed friendships & all this resonates cross-culturally."
"My mom really loves her job, but she always talks about how advertising in Russia isn't so good. 'I cannot write about bread factories for the rest of my life' she says. Now, America that's what advertising is all about!" She says this quite a lot, but I don't really think about it until one night I overhear her talking to my grandmother. She will be fine, we will take good care of her. You have to take this opportunity. Says my grandmother. What is going on? Are they talking about me? Why do I need to be taken care of?"
from the book

A Year Without Mom is absolute perfection. Every word, so carefully chosen, is like having Dasha Tolstikova sit across from you, telling her story, holding your hand, cutting deep into your heart. In the best way, I mean. The text is extraordinary, crafted in a way that conveys the emotional depth of the story right to your soul. You feel everything 12-year-old Dasha feels. This is no easy feat: To be able to write such an accessible story that carries such huge big emotion. The illustrations carry the text perfectly. Tolstikova's style captures Moscow and adolescence like no one else's ever could. Amazingly perfect. Let's talk about pacing. You could teach a class on the pacing and page turns and white space in this book. It's part of what makes it seem like Tolstikova herself is telling the story into your ear, and is a master class in how to vary the speed of a story, and when, and why. The pacing carries you through, tells you when to speed up and when to slow down, takes your hand on this ride. Brilliant. I will not be the first person to say this, but: the genius thing about A Year Without Mom is that the trials 12-year-old Dasha goes through are common, and ones that we all can relate to. Friendships, crushes, family, trying to find our way, and going through life from places where you feel content and places where you do not. What makes this book extraordinary, and extraordinarily interesting, is the history and the setting. Astoundingly excellent. Highly highly HIGHLY recommended, for everyone who likes books.

It is so interesting has pictures has a nice storyline not boring very addicting it is nice and short and makes you want to read a lot

Simple words used and easy to read. Book is ok for a 7th grader. I was hoping for harder book reading for my 13 yr old.

Summary: 12-year-old Dasha is crushed when she learns that her mother is spending a year at the University of Illinois, leaving Dasha with her grandparents in the Soviet Union. Her father is living in Los Angeles, so Dasha feels lonely, although her grandparents are loving and she has two best friends. During the year, she goes through some friendship difficulties, develops an unrequited crush on an older boy, and works hard to get into a better school. Meanwhile, political unrest results in a few anxious days as Boris Yeltsin replaces Mikhail Gorbachev as the Soviet leader. Things are beginning to fall into place by the spring, when her mother returns, announcing that Dasha will be joining her for the second year of her master's program. The book ends on an uncertain note, as Dasha arrives in Urbana, Illinois, and meets a girl who just might be a new friend. 168 pages; grades 5-8. Pros: Even though she is from a different place and time,

Dasha's feelings will be familiar to 21st century American tweens. A cross between a graphic novel and an illustrated chapter book, *A Year Without Mom* will appeal to both reluctant and avid middle school readers.

Great story about coming of age, changes, and how similar life can be over a span of many years. Relatable to many kiddos-especially those dealing with unexpected change.

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