

## FICTION

A secret teenage love, unfolding against the background of a crumbling Soviet Empire

# Portrait of an Unknown Girl

ALEKSANDR SKOROBOGATOV

Sasha, thirteen, is growing up in a sleepy village on the edge of the Soviet Empire, where the only light in his life is the incredibly beautiful Katia. Together, they discover love and one another's bodies.

What begins as a fight for love quickly becomes a fight against the dominant views and against the rules. The couple struggles against the fierce prejudices and opposition surrounding them. Then, when Katia becomes pregnant, their troubles start piling up. After five years, the relationship fails and Sasha seeks happiness in the completely different, slightly naive and childlike Nika. Just when that relationship finally seems to be turning out well, the girl is stabbed to death with a stiletto by her ex-husband and remorse and guilt feelings ensue.

**Skorobogatov carries you off and bewitches you with his lovely language \*\*\*\***

NRC HANDELSBLAD

Skorobogatov sets this chronicle of a doomed love, this dark romantic ode to fatalism, against the backdrop of a crumbling Soviet Empire.

'Portrait of an Unknown Girl' is not only a powerful story of the beauty and tragedy of first love, but also an uncompromising portrait of an inhumane epoch and an oppressive regime that breaks people, punishes innocence and integrity and ruins lives.

**A novel full of melancholy, intricate images and intoxicating phrases**

DE MORGEN



Aleksandr  
Skorobogatov

Portret van  
een onbekend meisje

Roman • Cossee

## AUTHOR



Aleksandr Skorobogatov (b. 1963), one of the most original Russian writers of the post-communist era, has lived in Antwerp since the 1990s. He has written short stories, essays and novels. His work boasts the most wondrous, absurd and violent plot twists and is full of long, meandering sentences. He is seen by many as an heir to Dostoevsky, Gogol, Bulgakov, Nabokov, Pelevin, and Sorokin – the surreal line of the Russian literary canon.

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