



The House by the Dvina: A Russian Childhood

Eugenie Fraser

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The House by the Dvina is the riveting story of two families separated in culture and geography but bound together by a Russian-Scottish marriage. It includes episodes as romantic and dramatic as any in fiction: the purchase by the author's great-grandfather of a peasant girl with whom he had fallen in love; the desperate sledge journey in the depths of winter made by her grandmother to intercede with Tsar Aleksandr II for her husband; the extraordinary courtship of her parents; and her Scottish granny being caught up in the abortive revolution of 1905.

Eugenie Fraser herself was brought up in Russia but was taken on visits to Scotland. She marvellously evokes a child's reactions to two totally different environments, sets of customs and family backgrounds, while the characters are beautifully drawn and splendidly memorable.

With the events of 1914 to 1920 - the war with Germany, the Revolution, the murder of the Tsar and the withdrawal of the Allied Intervention in the north - came the disintegration of Russia and of family life. The stark realities of hunger, deprivation and fear are sharply contrasted with the adventures of childhood. The reader shares the family's suspense and concern about the fates of its members and relives with Eugenie her final escape to Scotland.

In *The House by the Dvina*, Eugenie Fraser has vividly and poignantly portrayed a way of life that finally disappeared in violence and tragedy.

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