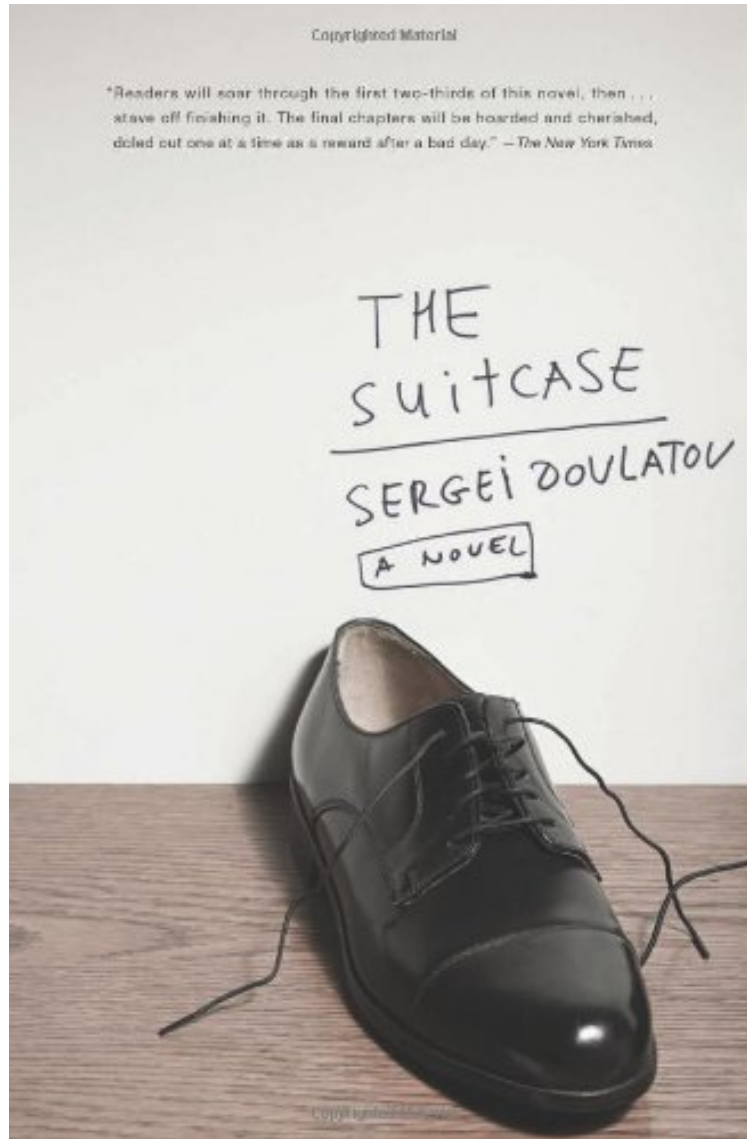


[FREE] The Suitcase: A Novel

The Suitcase: A Novel

Sergei Dovlatov

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Sergei Dovlatov : The Suitcase: A Novel before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Suitcase: A Novel:

3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. A Brilliant Lens Through Which to View Soviet LifeBy Alan L. ChaseSince my college days, I have been a voracious reader of Russian authors, especially the great classical novelists. I recently read and reviewed a book by a contemporary Russian author, and had an e-mail conversation with a close friend who lives and works in Moscow. When I told him the name of the author whose work I had recently

completed, he sneered and said, "Here in Russia, we consider this 'airport reading.' If you want to read a more modern Russian novelist, you should tackle Sergei Dovlatov." So, based on Vasya's recommendation, I ordered a copy of "The Suitcase." In reading this small novel, I experienced feelings similar to those I felt in reading Tim O'Brien's iconic book, "The Things They Carried." As was the case with O'Brien's book in demonstrating what it was like for an American to fight in Vietnam, each object described in "The Suitcase" evoked a deeper understanding of what it meant to live under the Soviet system. The conceit of the book is that the author has emigrated from the USSR to New York, carrying with him only a single suitcase, which he promptly stows in the back of the closet in his NYC apartment. A few years later, he has occasion to rediscover the suitcase. As he unpacks it, each of the eight objects prompts him to launch into a vignette that describes how he had acquired the object, and its meaning in his life - and by extension - its connection to life in the USSR. The book is a small gem, full of irony, self-deprecation, insight, humor and pathos. "The Finnish Crepe Socks" chapter is a wonderful example, leading to the unraveling of a tale of black market entrepreneurship run amok in a rapidly changing world in Russia. I cannot wait to order my next example of Dovlatov's writing and wit. Thank you, Vasya!

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Everyday items in a forgotten suitcase provide the chapters in a surreal Soviet autobiography. By keetmom. In sparse prose, Sergei Dovlatov shares chapters from his misspent Soviet youth in memorable style drawing everyday items out from a mythical suitcase that was all he was allowed to take out when he left Russia. There is no attempt to link his various experiences as a conscript, journalist, construction worker or small time black marketeer into any kind of narrative. Each chapter stands alone and captures moments bizarre, moving or confused of a corrupt system which brutalised its own people before falling victim to its own empty deceptions. Dovlatov spares no one, least of all himself, from his searing honesty, razor sharp commentary and mordant wit. It all combines in powerful literary cocktail.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Dark humor about dark times in Russia. By Rick Skwiot. A funny, caustic, clever and perceptive insider's view of Soviet Union dysfunction--and its dysfunctional, alcoholic people--crafted in a series of quasi-fictional vignettes by one of its victims. The book depicts the surreal, threadbare and hopeless lives of those cynically resigned to their dark fate in a corrupt and ill-conceived system that all strive to outwit, if only to get a free drink or warm hat. As Dovlatov writes: "Once I watched a documentary about Paris during the Occupation. Crowds of refugees streamed down the streets. I saw that all enslaved countries looked the same. All ruined peoples are twins..." Yet somehow the late Russian author was able to laugh about it, coldly.

Sergei Dovlatov's subtle, dark-edged humor and wry observations are in full force in *The Suitcase* as he examines eight objects—the items he brought with him in his luggage upon his emigration from the U.S.S.R. These seemingly undistinguished possessions, stuffed into a worn-out suitcase, take on a riotously funny life of their own as Dovlatov inventories the circumstances under which he acquired them, occasioning a brilliant series of interconnected tales: A poplin shirt evokes the bittersweet story of a courtship and marriage, while a pair of boots (of the kind only the Nomenklatura can afford) calls up the hilarious conclusion to an official banquet. Some driving gloves—remnants of Dovlatov's short-lived acting career—share space with neon-green crepe socks, reminders of a failed black-market scam. And in curious juxtaposition, the belt from a prison guard's uniform lies next to a stained jacket that once belonged to Fernand Léger. Imbued with a comic nostalgia overlaid with Dovlatov's characteristically dry wit, *The Suitcase* is an intensely human, delightfully ironic novel from "the finest Soviet satirist to appear in English since Vladimir Voinovich."