



Inga's Zigzags

Vica Miller , Ruslan Lobanov (Photographs) , Yelena Ebel Tmr Design (Design)

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"In this well-written debut novel... Miller engagingly presents a heroine caught between contradictions: New York and Moscow; flashy glamour and self-pitying nostalgia; certainty and doubt. A sexy tale with plenty of Russian atmosphere.."

-- Kirkus Reviews

"A thrilling ride that zigzags right to your heart." -- Lara Vapnyar, Author of The Scent of Pine

Inga's Zigzags is the story of a 28-year-old Russian woman who, after a decade in New York, returns to post-perestroika Moscow to start her own business. When her prospects fall through and she finds herself far from the heart of the action, she meets Emma and Alexandra, a pair of wealthy and well-connected magazine publishers, who lure Inga into their bed and then propose to launch a company together. When the threesome starts to fall apart, Inga is forced to make some difficult choices to find her way through the labyrinth of Moscow's intrigues and heartbreaks, to reclaim her destiny. The book is about evolving, finding one's place in life, about a yearning to belong and feel accepted. Inga Belova is a New Yorker who has an MBA but feels misplaced. She is a double single - as in, divorced with no boyfriend - but then she finds double love. Yet she continues to feel in between - countries, jobs, lovers. She questions her sexuality, national identity, career and loyalty. Will she ever settle? Whom does she love? What is her life's calling? To find the answers, we follow her from New York to Moscow to St. Petersburg to Miami to London and then to Moscow again. "Tradition demands that heroines in Russian literature fare poorly. Tolstoy's Karenina jumps in front of a train; Karamzin's Poor Liza drowns herself in a pond, Pasternak's Lara dies in the Gulag. In Inga's Zigzags, Vica Miller's saucy first novel, that tradition may have met its match. Meet Inga Belova, love child of Perestroika, Glasnost, and the global economy, whose vocational ambitions are exceeded only by her appetite for sex. Inga doesn't throw herself in front of trains; she is the train." - Peter Selgin, author of Drowning Lessons, winner of the 2007 Flannery O'Connor Award for Fiction

Inga's Zigzags Details

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From Reader Review Inga's Zigzags for online ebook

Denise says

Very interesting book. The cover helped compel me to read it and I'm glad I did. The characters were interesting and the many twists and turns kept me wanting to find out what would happen next. I enjoyed learning bits and pieces of Russian culture as well.

Barbara Rohde says

Supplied to me through Netgalley, this was a very disappointing read. I read an electronic copy which proved to be difficult as some letters were missing. For instance, 'ff', 'fl', and 'fi' were all absent throughout so 'o ce' was 'office', and 'guru' was 'figure'. 'Th' was also missing. So a frustrating start until I got used to it.

Basically it's about a young Russian woman who has been living in New York and returns to Russia to spearhead her career. Thus it describes how westernisation has affected the country. However, it does this very poorly and only really centres on a certain business sector of society.

It is not particularly well-written and the plot is very thin. However, there is some authenticity demonstrated with the immigrant experience.

Becky says

I really enjoyed this book. A bit different to my usual read and I was lucky to receive it for free through the Goodreads program to check out and review. I was unsure for the first 30 pages or so if I was going to be able to get into it but then it took off and kept me interested from that point. Inga's Zigzags is well written, exciting, seductive and was a page turner for me.

Amanda NEVER MANDY says

I received this book for free through Goodreads First Reads.

Unusual was the first word to come to mind after reading this book, but then the more I thought about it the less I felt that it accurately described it. Maybe the locations and lifestyle were unusual to me, but not the basic story of craving love and success and making it your life's goal to find them. I applaud the author for choosing to write about a path less traveled and praise her even more for her ability to do so by weaving dark and light together so perfectly.

Katbyrdie says

This book had some up and downs. I liked Inga's uncertainty about everything. Maybe it's because I'm a mess at the moment too, but I definitely bonded with her. Miller also did a great job at making Inga's sexuality very fluid. Inga doesn't question her own sexuality or suddenly denounce her previous relationships. Miller just makes her new relationship a fact and Inga goes with it. Yes, Inga starts to wonder why she suddenly is falling for a woman/women, but Miller doesn't make that the sole theme of the book. As a reader, it's a relief. My biggest issue came at the end with who was eventually paired with one of the minor characters. It felt like a slap in the face to the character's sexuality, and to queer-ness in general.

I admit that I based my initial assessment of this book on the cover, and wow was I wrong! I thought it would be set in the 1920's, but it was set in the 1990's! Despite the time switch, I immediately became hooked. I wanted to know if Inga would ever figure things out, and where life would lead her. What made me give this a 3/3.5 rating was mostly the fact that while I bonded with Inga, I also found her very immature. She acted like a high school or college student when it came to relationships. She was also a complete fool when it came to business. It was astounding that she got anywhere in life. That made the "happy ever after, perfect-and-tied-with-a-bow" ending all the more frustrating.

Karen A says

Quick read. I felt that Inga's story of trying to find certainty in her life is relatable. Recent graduate, divorced and single, finding a sense of belonging as an immigrant, and feeling comfortable with her sexual orientation. The author did a good job of portraying these conflicts and feelings that would lead Inga to evaluate her life and find belonging and peace. I would have liked to know more backstory on the development of Emma and Alexandra's relationship and Vlad and Alexandra's relationship.

Lolly K Dandeneau says

This isn't my usual choice but I wanted something different and was happy to read it via Netgalley. It isn't going to be a story for everyone. Inga, a 28 yr old divorced singleton moves back to Russia and meets successful business women Emma and Alexandra who promise her opportunities in and out of the bedroom. Predictably, the threesome sort of crumbles and the reader goes along for the ride. I think what I enjoyed and related was how Inga was split, longing to return to her home where she could speak her language again and be understood, not have to explain herself or live under erroneous assumptions about her culture and yet still have that lingering other person she became, that 'Americanness'. You never return to the person you were before you left, everything you experience stains or polishes you. She seems adrift, and most women can relate to that. This novel deals with sexuality, career, country and all the big questions we ask ourselves when we are in the discovery stage of our lives.

Karen says

Some books are able to take you to a place, show you around, and make you feel like you are right there experiencing it with the characters. The authors descriptive details show you the scene and then you are right there with the characters going through the dialog. Inga's Zigzags took me all over New York, Moscow, St.Petersburg (the Russian variety), London, and Miami's South Beach. I am so happy I was able to get to read this book. I needed a vacation. This book is a gem.

Inga is a woman coming into her own. She is not a flawless heroine or a damsel in distress. Inga is learning the hard way how to get through this life. She is a foreigner in almost every place she goes. She is recently divorced and returns to her native Russia after 10 Years in New York. She is not the same, and her native land has certainly changed. She gets involved with a lesbian couple and then, well.... I don't want to spoil it for you. Inga makes some mistakes and makes some choices while guided by her heart. The journey that Inga takes is one of self discovery and sexual awakening. This is not erotica in its truest form, but you can bet there are some racy scenes.

Admittedly, this book may not appeal to everyone. It appealed to me. I loved this whole book until I got to the last chapter. I hated the last chapter. I can see that the book needed closure but the last chapter jumped ahead so far I feel like this last bit of adventure would have been worth reading, as well. Especially since it is when Inga finally found her contentment with what she had. This lack of details killed me. By the second page of the last chapter I wasn't hating it anymore, I just felt a bit robbed of the story.

The author does a great job of writing exactly the same way throughout the book. Descriptive when it needs to be, showing feeling, and then some dialog. The book skips ahead at times and I felt like the author zoomed in to the parts when it really mattered. The whole story is written in first person, almost like a memoir. It is nice to be inside someone's head for a while. I enjoyed the way Inga thought and the play on languages.

Mom2nine says

This book was an easy read, although more explicit than I care to read. The writing flows nicely, without a noticeable English as a second language. This is the first book that I have read about modern Russia and I enjoyed the sections which talked about the changes. Good insight into the ties which a person feels when she has moved to such different locations. The feeling of being torn between two homes was real, as was the hugeness of getting started in a new place. Overall a sound first novel. Book was won in goodreads contest, thank you.

Q says

I don't usually read those kind of books.

Asya says

If this book had been packaged as a mass market paperback, I might've had a chance to adjust my expectations accordingly and even enjoy the ride. But I discovered this book on the front table of one of my favorite bookstores in NYC, Word, and the front cover sported a blurb from Gary Shteyngart, so I thought I was in for at least a decent read. And in a way, this book is. There is something compelling about the plot for sure, and I did keep reading if only to get to the end. There were passages that almost reached a kind of poetry -- the scenes in St. Petersburg, the reflections on the condition of immigration, nostalgia, and being between but never of a place. I almost wept when Inga's first flat was located on Sivtsev Vrazhek in the Arbat, my dad's street. But the rest, pure chick lit. Which is fine, it's just not what I expected. I was prepared for some melodrama, some cliches, but not the relentless barrage. I was also not prepared for the lesbian idyll to end in such blatantly heterosexist redemption for all characters. Must we really conclude that relationships

with women are nothing but destructive and tumultuous while men provide emotional, sexual, and economic stability? At one point Inga goes on about how all she needs is the hairy chest, gold chain, and a gun to become one of those stereotypical new Russians living the stereotyped late 90s life in the wild wild east. Well yes -- that's exactly the book in a nutshell, one big cliche almost but not quite redeemed by moments of genuine insight, nuanced character development, and good prose.

Kristen says

4.5 Stars

I loved this book!

First, I would like to say that I was very happy to receive a free copy from the author from the First Reads program on Goodreads. Vica Miller has proved with her first novel that she is a fantastic writer. Inga's *Zigzags* was a beautifully written, exciting story of a young Russian woman finding herself through her lovers, friends, job and her homes in both New York and Russia. The novel had a ton of heart and was at times very seductive. I thoroughly enjoyed this book and would recommend it to anyone. I look forward to future releases from Vica Miller.

Wendy says

“Inga’s *Zigzags*” which I won through Goodreads Giveaways is a mesmerizing story that begins when a twenty-eight -year old Russian divorcee leaves New York City after nine years to explore a career in Moscow. Working for Obundy Moscow she too quickly finds herself at the mercy of her boss Laura Paulson who sends her new special projects consultant to the provinces to coordinate the company’s cola promotion knowing she has no connections to use to cement a deal.

Frustrated with the job, wanting to make a name for herself in her own business, Inga easily succumbs to the lure of two successful and well-connected Russian magazine publishers -Emma and Alexandra- falling into their bed, becoming addicted to their seamy, fast-pasted lifestyle and agreeing to join them in a business venture. When the threesome starts to fall apart Inga awakens from the heartbreak making difficult choices, taking back her life and her future.

Set in the glitz of a modern and affluent Moscow where a new generation of Russians have gobs of money from re-inventing American products for their market, Inga like other returning immigrants wants to claim a portion of the wealth for herself by opening her own business. Told in a first-person narrative, Inga quickly falls prey to her doubts and insecurities, finding herself consumed by her need for belonging, acceptance and love, and falling all too easily into a sexual relationship with Emma and Alexandria.

Well-written and intoxicating the plot grapples with questions of sexual and national identity as well as life’s purpose, and finding true love. It heats up when the ménage à trois begins to fall apart Emma and Alexandra unmasking their true natures, and Inga facing some hard decisions that take her to London as she grapples to fulfill her dream. Intertwined into this page-turner are the unstable relationships of her New York friends Kristina and Lisa as well as Vlad Lepkin’s pursuit of artistic success which adds the glue to bringing the story to an interesting closure.

Smart, beautiful Inga Belova haunted by the loss of her mother, eager to be successful with her MBA is feisty, moody, indecisive as well as naïve in business until she meets a mature, sensible and down-to-earth financier who mentors her. Alexandra Veil, the tough, razor-sharp publisher of Poise is controlling, ambitious and gusty, while her partner the insatiable Emma Krapivena is child-like, emotional, manipulative and impulsive. It is these and other characters that infuse the story with spice, complexity and passion.

Although the location and lifestyle were fascinating, the bisexual content was overpowering and wouldn't appeal to everyone, but all in all "Inga's Zigzags" is a riveting novel that's very hard to put down until the end.

Cheryl Benton says

Inga's Zigzags, Vica Miller's debut novel takes the reader on roller coaster ride of emotions and sensual experiences from NYC to Moscow. A few years after emigrating to NYC from her beloved St. Petersburg, Russia, the books heroine, Inga Belova, finds herself disillusioned with 1990s New York City. A divorce followed by a series of superficial relationships leaves her cynical about love, and she feels mired in her mid-level job in a NY ad agency. When her firm offers her a chance to head to Moscow to work in their newly opened office, she jumps at the opportunity. The author vividly conveys post-Perestroika Moscow, filled with the promise of unbridled business opportunities, and bustling with young vibrant entrepreneurs who are making their fortunes. She soon finds herself seduced by the promise of a new Russia and seduced into an unconventional love affair – with two women

Alexandra and Emma convince Inga to not only join them in bed, but in a new business venture as well. The story weaves its way back to New York, South Beach, Moscow, St. Petersburg and London, as Inga struggles to find herself. This is a book that will keep you reading late into the night. And by the way it's a perfect book club selection. The author is happy to appear at book club meetings or make herself available via Skype.

When you finish this debut novel, you will understand why famed journalist and author George Plimpton called her a writer. Lucky for us she believed him!
