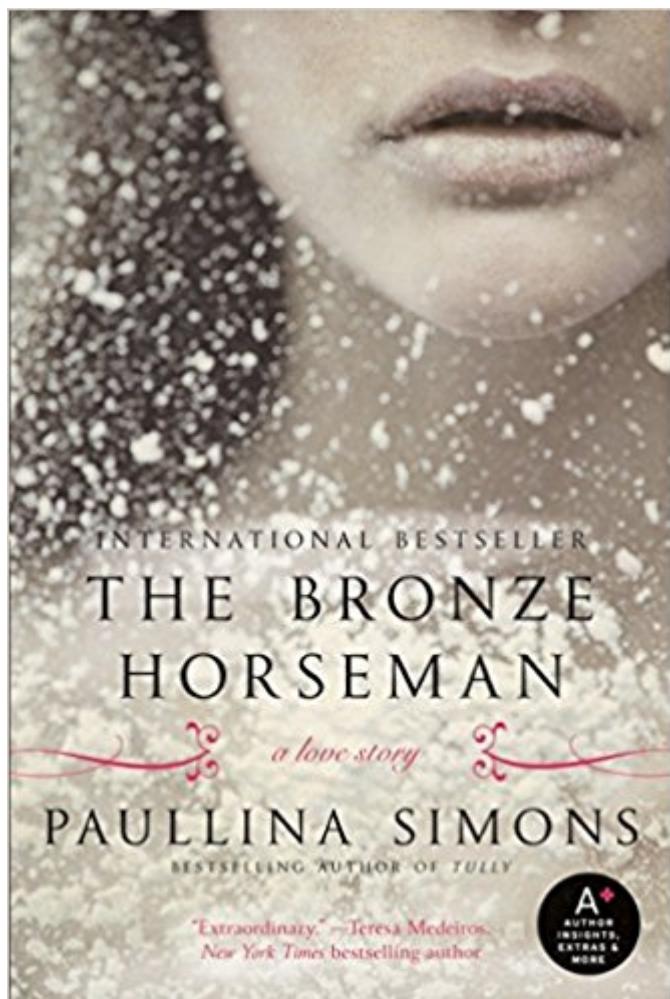


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The Bronze Horseman



Synopsis

Called "a Russian *Thorn Birds*," *The Bronze Horseman* by Paullina Simons is a sweeping saga of love and war that has been a monumental bestseller all over the world. The acclaimed author of *Tully*, Simons has written a stirring tale of devotion, passion, secrets, betray, and sacrifice. A love story both tender and fierce • (Publishers Weekly) that "Recalls Dr. Zhivago" • (People Magazine), *The Bronze Horseman* is rich and vivid historical fiction at its finest.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

"The Bronze Horseman" is more than a beautiful love story set against the backdrop of WWII Leningrad, where author Paullina Simons was born and raised. Ms. Simons portrays here, with great sensitivity and realism, the terrible suffering that the citizens of Leningrad experienced during the Nazi siege and their struggle to survive. She also probes the intricacies of family relationships, the ties that bind, especially in times of terrible hardship. Simons alludes frequently to Alexander Pushkin's tragic epic poem, "The Bronze Horseman," from which this novel takes its title. Seventeen year old Tatiana Metanova was wearing her "splendid white dress with red roses" and enjoying an ice cream cone when she looked up and saw a soldier staring at her with "an expression she had never seen before." Thus begins the intense and complex relationship between Tatiana and her Alexander (Shura) Belov, a First Lieutenant in the Soviet Army. Vyacheslav Molotov, Stalin's Foreign Minister, had announced the Nazi invasion of the Soviet Union only a few hours before the two young people meet for the first time. Tatiana lives in a tiny two room flat with her sister and best

friend Dasha, her twin brother, parents and grandparents. Her sense of family is very strong, especially since she has never had a truly close relationship with anyone other than her kin. When Tatiana brings Alexander home for the first time she discovers that her sister Dasha had already met him in a club and had bragged about him as her new boyfriend. Dasha takes what had been a casual romance very seriously and believes she is in love. Alexander does not reciprocate her feelings, however. Tatiana has been very sheltered by her family and is quite naive and very innocent.

I like it when people recommend books for me to read. Quite a lot of people have recommended "The Bronze Horseman" for me, and because I like big, epic stories a while ago I put it in my stack and a few days ago I tried to read it. Notice the word tried. This is a book that could have been great. The premise is great-love triangle between two sisters and a soldier during the siege of St. Petersburg (then known as Leningrad) with secrets on the soldier, is nearly classic. Tatiana and her older sister Dasha live together with their parents and grandparents, and Tatiana's twin brother in two bedrooms and Tatiana had just turned 17 when she and Alexander meet in a romance filled haze. War against Germany was announced only a few hours before and Tatiana is supposed to be buying food for her family-but it's nearly impossible to find. Alexander helps her buy food at the army supply store and he and his creepy friend Dimitri carry them home for her. But it turns out that Dasha already knew Alexander and thinks she's in love with him. Tatiana, not wanting to hurt her sister, refuses to stand up for her relationship with Alexander, which continues to advance in secret through the siege. The rest of the novel is hardship and terrible times-people surviving on no food with no heat and bombs bursting overhead all the time. The author manages to capture the desperation and the terrible, tired acceptance of the war conditions in the city very well. But her writing style is so annoying! I have never, ever, read a book that had as much day to day detail as this one did. You could almost pull out a calendar and write down what the family ate for each meal, each day, for months. I never knew so much about Russian food before-and I'm half Russian!

Seeing how highly rated "The Bronze Horseman" is, I guess I'll be one of those very few who don't care for this book and brace myself for negative backlash. Oh, well, I just can't stop myself from writing this review. First of all, I am not sure why people love this story so much when there are so much better books/movies out there about: lovers separated by war ("Atonement"), surviving through a war ("Gone with the Wind"), Russia during its communist era ("Doctor Zhivago"), escape from Soviet Russia ("East/West"). I truly can't find a grain of the excellence everybody is talking

about in reviews posted on this website. The book starts well enough: a very young girl eating ice cream meets a soldier at a bus stop. They constantly fall for each other. They start meeting every day, walking and talking for hours. I must admit, this part is quite entrancing - all these emotions, and Tatiana obsessing over Alexander's every word, every glance, every touch - I suppose I am a sucker for extended foreplay... However the interest starts vanishing once you read for the 50th time which bus they take, how many kilometers they walk, what streets they decide to walk along this time, etc. I guess Paullina Simmons must have done a lot of research about Leningrad and wrote her book with a map of the city nearby, but this is not the kind of detail that adds to the story! The next blow comes in when we learn that Alexander (Oh my!) is the man Tatiana's sister Dasha is madly in love (and sleeps on regular basis) with. Tatiana, the tender-hearted martyr she is, decides to give up her love for Alexander for the sake of her beloved sister.

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