

# **A Year in Russia Without Women**

Written by Alan Nafzger & Olga Niskovskaya

## **Moscow**

As the title credits begin, we can see the film is set initially in Moscow.

## **Ensemble Cast**

The film will delve into different aspects of love as shown through ten separate stories involving a wide variety of Moscow citizens, many of whom are shown to be interlinked.

## **Time**

This is a contemporary story. The story begins in the spring and is played out in a countdown until the next spring, followed by an epilogue that takes place in the summer.

## **Domestic Violence**

The film begins with a case of domestic violence. The couple almost comes to blows. The scene outlines and brings attention to the terrible effect domestic violence has on the women and men of Russia, as well as its harmful effect on the children.

## **Lika and Lev**

Lev and Lika are married and have a simple problem; Lev is an alcoholic. They attend a corporate party and Lev becomes drunk and makes a fool of himself in front of his boss. To combat this Lika, not only kisses the valet parking attendant but becomes a shopaholic and is seen constantly spending money.

## **Girl With a Song**

Early in the film, we see a young female, a struggling artist, playing music on the streets of Moscow. She's being rewarded with token coins and her music seems uninspired.

## **Yevgenia and Yevgeny**

Yevgenia and Yevgeny's marriage is on the rocks, chiefly because of his infidelity. She finds him in a café having coffee with a redhead. To compensate for the pain he's caused her, she drinks and parties in bars.

## **Olga**

Olga, Yevgenia's friend has an unknown boyfriend. Olga represents the feminist as a paratrooper. She demonstrates that she can drink and fight as well as any man.

## **Maria and Mikhail**

Maria and Mikhail are married but have grown apart. Maria teaches art and art history at Moscow State University. She's also an accomplished painter. Mikhail is an obese couch potato. He watches old Soviet Era films and eats potato chips. She lectures on the idea of beauty and comes home to a man who is certainly not beautiful. She frequently locks herself in the bathroom, sometimes for days at a time.

## **Svetlana and Slava**

Svetlana and Slava are a married couple but are facing difficulties. He steals guns from his work and sells them on the black market. She is a religious woman from a wealthy family and has been accustomed to having nice things and a spacious home. She begs him to stop and can't bear the thought of him going to prison. She spends a great deal of time in prayer and religious thought.

### **Toma and Timur**

Toma and Timur are married and have two healthy children, only Timur is never around. Timur is a workaholic. Toma raises the children single-handedly because Timur spends all his time away from the family. We overhear a conversation between Timur and his colleague from work that demonstrates that he's not regretful about being away from his family. Toma sees a psychiatrist looking for a solution.

### **Alla and Vasily**

Alla and Vasily are not married, primarily, because he has commitment issues. He lifts weights and drugs himself with steroids. The overuse of steroids causes sexual dysfunctions. Alla becomes frustrated by Vasily's refusal to commit to her. She spends more and more time at her work as a stockbroker.

### **Natasha and Ruslan**

Natasha and Ruslan have gone on their first and last date. It didn't go well, and we get the impression many of Natasha's dates have been failures. Ruslan pays more attention, and spends more money, on the lion he cares for at the zoo. Ruslan is oblivious to the needs of women. Natasha compensates for men's inattentions with having meaningless sex with Russian professional athletes.

### **Nadia Sobolev**

Nadia Sobolev is the Russian Prime Minister. Her husband has had numerous affairs and it's finally begun to affect her chances of being elected President of Russia. She takes off her wedding ring and instructs her aide to have a jeweler melt it down.

### **Vera**

Vera is unattached and not dating. We get the idea that the men she's interested in aren't interested in her. And the men that are interested in her she doesn't find interesting. She's a beautiful woman with a kind soul but she's hasn't found her match yet.

### **Magical Realism**

Magical realism, is a literary tool writers use to expose the truth. If situations are normal, people expect them and have realities and paradigms thought out beforehand. They can easily posture themselves and even lie about things. This disguises their true nature. However, with a little magic, things can be turned upside down and the disguises come off. For example, take the above scenarios. In a normal (unmagical) script, these men and women can deny their problems or deflect them.

Suddenly and without warning, every woman in Russia is transported to Texas. There isn't any reason for this or an explanation. It simply happens and this allows the true nature of the characters to emerge.

### **Irony**

The funny thing about irony is that not everyone gets it, and it takes the characters a while to understand. The women have been moved from Russia (where the men treat the women poorly) to Texas (a place that is famous for the chivalrous treatment of women).

Some Russian women want to return immediately. Others need time away from their men. Still, others want to change their lives totally and have little interest in returning to Russia.

### **Toward Resolution**

Slowly, the characters begin working their way back to Russia. However, it is a logistical nightmare. Imagine 72 million Russian women in Texas. Now there isn't so much a problem in Texas. Texas' is famous for its hospitality; the women are provided with everything they need. The problem is repatriation this many women. The airlines can't begin to make a dent in the numbers there simply aren't that many

planes. Even with the use of the Russian navy and other vessels, the task of returning the over 70 million women to their homes takes an entire year.

### **The Character Arch**

The year apart causes all the relationships to change.

Lev enters alcoholics anonymous and Lika learns that she has no reason to spend all his money shopping.

Yevgeny is the only Russian in the story who comes to Texas. He rescue's Yevgenia from a life of destructive drinking.

Olga remains in Texas and becomes a police officer.

Mikhail loses weights and gets off the sofa. Maria uses her year in Texas to develop her artistic skills. The light in Texas is different as well as the subject matter.

Slava dumps the last of his stolen guns in the Moskva River and prays in a church. Svetlana wins her husband back.

Timur stays home and develops a close connection with the children. Toma is happy she doesn't have to do all the parenting when she returns to Moscow.

The year apart causes Vasily to realize the error in his ways. He and Alla become engaged and then married when she returns to

Natasha becomes seriously involved with a professional athlete in Texas. And it's serious because he wants to settle down and get married.

Nadia, as prime minister of Russia, remains in the USA to oversee the safety and well-being of the Russian women. She has a brief romance with the American president.

Vera falls in love with a real Cowboy in a ranch. They are married in a small Texas church. Lika, Yevgenia, Olga, Maria, Toma Natasha are in attendance. Also, Svetlana and Slave are there.

Ruslan is interviewed on television about Russia's year without women and comments that he thought only the female zoo employees ran off to Texas to get married. He effectively tells all of Russia that he has lived unaware for an entire year of the fact that the Russian women were gone.

The man and the aggressor in the opening scene of domestic violence, of all the characters, he shows the most remorse when he meets his wife at the airport.

### **Final Scene**

One month later, all of the characters are seen in Sololniki Park. The entire cast is walking on a beautiful day. Most conspicuous are Alla and Vasily in their wedding clothes.

The female singer returns to Russia a superstar. She performs her new music in Sololniki Park; the crowd loves it. The singer has a West Texas swing band behind her and an entirely new sound. Many of the women are nostalgic for Texas; they have spent a year there and feel improved by it.