



## **Under A Blood Red Sky: 'Escapism at its best' Glamour**

*Kate Furnivall*

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Davinsky Labour Camp, Siberia, 1933: Sofia Morozova knows she has to escape. Only two things have sustained her through the bitter cold, aching hunger and hard labour: the prospect of one day walking free; and the stories told by her friend Anna, beguiling tales of a charmed upbringing in Petrograd - and of Anna's fervent love for a passionate revolutionary, Vasily.

So when Anna falls gravely ill, Sofia makes a promise to escape the camp and find Vasily: to chase the memory that has for so long spun hope in both their hearts. But Sofia knows that times have changed. Russia, gripped by the iron fist of Communism, is no longer the country of her friend's childhood. Her perilous search takes her from industrial factories to remote villages, where she discovers a web of secrecy and lies, but also bonds of courage and loyalty - and an overwhelming love that threatens her promise to Anna.

## **Under A Blood Red Sky: 'Escapism at its best' Glamour Details**

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Author : Kate Furnivall

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## **From Reader Review Under A Blood Red Sky: 'Escapism at its best' Glamour for online ebook**

### **Kara says**

I found this book to be the best I read all Summer. I bought the book in an airport bookstore while I was away for a work conference. I began reading it on my plane ride home and found that I could not resist finishing it. I love historical fiction and have been interested in the Russian gulag camps since I read "One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich" in the tenth grade. Like Solzhenitsyn's piece, Furnivall created a detailed setting that allowed the reader to understand the brutal working conditions that those in the gulag camps experienced. Small details like Sofia catching mice for dinner created a vivid image of how the prisoners lived. As the story progressed, I was very much interested in the journey Sofia took, but I was skeptical as to whether she would truly be able to free Anna. I much enjoyed the twist with finding Vasily. I do wonder though if the day Sofia was in town and fleeing soldiers if it was indeed Vasily that she met. That added an interesting twist, though that was not explored deeply. I also liked the inclusion of gypsy lore, and I found myself being interested in gypsies and their way of life. Overall, I really enjoyed this book and would recommend it to anyone who likes historical fiction.

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### **Bernice says**

Interesting piece of history. We have never know the suffering of war and prison camps - let's hope we never do.

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### **Jack Coleman says**

I enjoyed the read it was an ok story, but Russian Atheists don't have horns sticking out there heads any more than modern Catholics are architects of the Inquisition . Spare me the occult crap.I gives me a real Siberian chill reflecting on how many people gave this book 5 stars!

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### **Blair says**

I have nursed a slight obsession with Russia for years, so I was naturally intrigued by this, despite my concern that it might turn out to be a syrupy romance. I needn't have worried - it's a fantastically enjoyable, fast-paced adventure packed with unexpected twists and complex characters. And although this is primarily a novel about love and friendship, the attention to historical detail is extraordinary, making the book's depiction of life in Stalin's Russia incredibly vivid and believable. The action rarely lets up and the story always feels fresh; I raced through the book and stayed up all night to finish it. There are some plot holes, and the writing is slightly clumsy in places, but this was so much fun to read that I can easily forgive its flaws.

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## Beatrix says

DNF at 40%

I really wanted to like this book, I really did.

I have a soft spot for all things Russian and books set in the Russian past are some of my favorites.

Sadly, this one was just not good.

*The Red Scarf* is all over the place. At first I didn't mind multiple POVs, I thought it added to the diversity of the novel, but as it's written in third person, after a while it became really confusing. Especially since the author switched between characters repeatedly.

Also constantly reading '*Spasibo. Thank you.*' in the same sentence became annoying.

The blurb sounded really promising, and I expected an epic tale about Sofia, Anna and Vasily, but the main reason I'm giving up on this is because I could not connect with the characters at all. This book didn't inspire any emotions within me, and currently I have no time nor patience to continue with this.

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## Chris says

Awesome! Absolutely loved this in depth story about a split Russia in 1933 under Stalin's reign. In a Siberian women's labor camp we get to know two women, Sofia and Anna. Anna came from a well-to-do family and tells Sofia stories of Vasily, a family friend and revolutionary who she has been in love with since childhood. Sofia escapes the labor camp to find Vasily, their only hope in saving a dying Anna. Sofia finds the village where Vasily is now living under a different name. These are difficult times. Stalin's rule is hard on the small villages who seem to sacrifice everything and get little in return. Sofia by luck is taken in by a Gypsy family, which takes this story into a whole new direction full of layers of Gypsy lore. To say anymore will give too much away. Suffice it to say this is an epic story of love and loss, strength and courage, with a great twist of mysticism, revolution, the plight of downtrodden peoples and strong women. Definitely my kind of story and just what I needed!

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## Yuana says

Awesome book ??????

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## Helen says

Unfortunately I was unable to finish this book – which is not something that happens to me very often. I hadn't heard of *Under a Blood Red Sky* until I saw it in the library and I thought I'd give it a try as I love

historical fiction set in Russia.

However, right from the beginning of the book I felt we were being asked to accept things that weren't plausible. The whole plot was just too far-fetched for me. The other (bigger) problem I had with this book was that I couldn't connect with any of the characters. Although they were constantly putting their lives at risk and facing unimaginable horrors under Stalin's communist regime, I found I didn't really care what happened to them. Sofia was one of those model heroines – beautiful, brave, intelligent and perfect. Everybody seemed to be captivated by her and I couldn't really understand why. She just didn't feel like a real person to me. Of course, there were some situations that even Sofia couldn't deal with – that's where the gypsy Rafik came in, using mesmerism and mind-control to overcome obstacles. I thought the whole magical aspect of the book seemed a bit out of place.

I tried to keep reading, thinking the book might get better but when I found I was almost halfway through and still wasn't enjoying it, I decided not to waste any more time on it and put it down with a sigh of relief. I'm glad I had borrowed this book from the library instead of spending money on it – at least I didn't lose anything apart from a couple of days when I could have been reading something else.

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### **Toni says**

Whoa. Great book. I actually described the plot to my family at dinner yesterday and my husband sarcastically said, "It sounds really boring." My six-year-old son replied, "No it sound really exciting!"

I didn't know much about Russia in the 1930s or even anything about the Russian Revolution except for what happened to the Tsar's family. This book has given me a picture of what it might have been like to live in Russia in that time period. Sofia escapes from a Siberian Gulag in order to save a friend, Anna, who is too sick to survive another winter. She goes to try to get from a childhood friend of Anna's. Not only is there plenty of action, but great characters as well as some mystery and some mysticism as well. The author crafts the story well. At one point I was completely wrapped up in what Sofia was doing, and in my mind asked, "I wonder how Anna is coping back in the camp?" I turned the page, and there was an update on Anna. Did the author make me ask that question, or did she read my mind?

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### **Emma Deplores Goodreads Censorship says**

I started reading this book and was hooked. The storyline, involving a young woman trying to escape (and rescue her friend from) a labor camp in Siberia, was immediately appealing. Well-developed characters, fast-moving plot, detailed historical setting, skillful interweaving of past and present, it had it all.

Unfortunately, the book only went downhill from there.

At face value, it looks good, and *The Red Scarf* has a lot of potential--so much that I was sorry to see how quickly it devolved. Furnivall has a good grasp of how to write romance if that's what you're looking for, but here, it seems to be at the expense of the plot. Characters' actions have no consequences, so that we have a story set in a brutal world where people are killed or sent to labor camps for little or no reason, yet the main characters can get away with anything, up to and including murder. When misfortune does catch up with them, it usually comes out of the blue, not as a consequence of any of their numerous missteps, only to be

too-easily solved. This is exacerbated as the book goes on--I won't spoil it, but at the end we have a couple of bizarre and completely unrealistic events, which Furnivall doesn't even attempt to explain, apparently hoping we won't notice.

Then the magic. Don't get me started. This book is set in a real, historical setting, in Russia during a brutal time. So, how to keep the characters from being arrested and killed or starving to death after the Soviet government confiscates all their food "for the good of the people"? Instead of showing us how real people in this time period dealt with these problems, Furnivall's solution is: bring in a gypsy with mind-twisting powers to save the day! It's a cop-out, and I for one felt cheated.

If you don't mind major plot holes, a series of increasingly unrealistic events, and a love story that quickly becomes nauseating for all but the most hardcore romance-novel fans, then this is the book for you. As for the rest of us, though, I don't recommend it.

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### **Nikki says**

If I had to use one word to describe this book it would be awkward. The way in which Furnivall wrote the book was awkward, the addition of Russian words was awkward and the way the plot was treated was awkward! The premise of the book is wonderful, I just don't feel as though Furnivall was able to get it to its full potential--Paullina Simons would have done a better job with the storyline.

It took more than half of the book for me to feel ANY connection to the characters whatsoever. The addition of the gypsy family and the subsequent ending involving them was an odd and distracting aspect to the storyline. I felt as though Furnivall couldn't tell the story on her own, she had to add in gypsy mystical powers to make things make "sense".

In addition, Furnivall tended to write things as happening and then either not explain why or the subsequent result AT ALL or she would suddenly bring it up pages later like "oh yeah, I forgot to tell you...".

Furnivall seemed to add in Russian words in order to remind us that we were reading a story about Russians. Shouldn't her story have been clear enough without doing this? I grew exceedingly tired of reading "Nyet. No." and other such situations. It is like watching a movie which is in English but all the characters have a (poor) Russian accent--but they are speaking to other Russians. I've never understood it and it can distract from the storyline in a movie and a book. If she had wanted to use Russian words she should have been more consistent with it AND included a glossary so people could look up the meanings!

I must say I did like the plot twist which occurred with about 100 pages left (which is about the time that things actually started happening!). The ending left much to be desired as unsurprisingly Furnivall left things up in the air and left us with only pieces of information.

The relationship between Pashin and Sophia seems to appear out of nowhere, suddenly they are both in love. Hmm, perhaps Furnivall should have tried to actually write more scenes that would have led to such a result. Too much in the book wasn't seemingly plausible. Furnivall had many scenes which I felt did not add to the story and just mucked up the storyline even further.

While I was disappointed with the handling of the story, I do have a soft spot for books set in Russia and I did eventually come to care for one or two of the characters in the end. However, it definitely needs some

work to be a compelling story.

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### **Mishelle LaBrash says**

Okay, I confess, I picked up this book, and devoured it because of its obvious semblance to 'The Bronze Horseman' by Paullina Simons..

Yes it's background is set in Russia, during Stalin's reign. Yes, there is relentless suffering, starvation, and those whom grasp onto almost anything, in an attempt of survival during a horrific time. Yes, It is a love story... But that is where the similarities end.

Sofia and Anna, are best friends, torn from their families, and all they've known and loved, thrown into a torturous labour camp in Siberia, Russia for 'Crimes' (ridiculous as they may be) towards the Soviet Government.

Trying to survive their horrific existence, they love and protect one another, against all peril.

Anna, a remarkable story teller, hangs on to her memories, of her childhood sweetheart, Vasily, with fierce determination. Sharing her stories of great adventure, and unconditional love with Sofia, is the pairs only means of getting through the horrible life they are trapped in.

But when Anna falls ill, and it becomes apparent her survival depends solely on her escape from the abhorrent conditions in which they survive, Sofia decides to escape, determined to find Vasily, and convince him to help her save Anna...

However Sofia hadn't anticipated falling in love with her Best Friends long lost love....

It's complicated, and laden with mystery, love, and a tad bit of gypsy lore within the mysteries of the Ural Mountains, but above all it's about the power of unbreakable friendship...

Great Story...

Happy Reading

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### **Jennie says**

Really, this book deserves 3.5 stars, but since that isn't an option I was generous. As someone who doesn't generally like historical fiction I was happy to enjoy this book.

Admittedly, there was not a lot of "action" initially in the book, but the development of the relationships between the characters was wonderful. The description of not only their conditions in the camp but Russian society as a whole were very detailed and complex. Nothing in the depiction of the society was one dimensional and I think that was clear when reading about Pyotr. His confusion about what was going on

around him and the hypocrisy of his role models really brought home for me the level of chaos in their society.

The two things about the book that I didn't enjoy were its formulaic style and the mysticism. Although there was a "twist" near the end of the book, it wasn't particularly surprising nor was it a particularly creative way to resolve the issue of who Vasily "belonged" to. And the attempts to make Fomenko suddenly sympathetic were too weak to undo all of the weariness and suspicion she had built into the reader previously.

I could have overlooked all of that though, if only there hadn't been coincidental mysticism saving the characters. It was never really foreshadowed that Sofia had any mystic powers and as a plot device, it just kind of sucked. She could have achieved the same plot outcomes using logic and creativity if she had chosen to, it just would have required Rafik to be brilliant and creative rather than some gypsy. Hell, he even could have been a gypsy with just a really good knowledge of herbs and potions and she probably could have gotten the story where it needed to go. The mysticism just distracted from the fact that the rest of the story seemed so realistic and well researched.

Over all, though, it was a well written and (seemed to be) well researched story. I feel like I got some knowledge of post WWI Russia and I honestly cared about the two women.

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## **Emilie says**

Best lines:

Now she could see clearly the look of loneliness in his young face, the need for something that felt like love even if it wasn't.

But he wasn't hers. She was stealing him. An ache started up in her chest.

A tiny worm of jealousy squirmed into being,, and she stamped on it again and again until it was nothing but a green lifeless smear. Sofia would never betray her.

She plunged under the surface of the water, a cold black world where you couldn't tell which way was up and which way was down.

"We'll make this the first time, my love," he breathed into her mouth. "For both of us."

And suddenly the terrible ache and the fear left Sofia. The ache of loving. The fear of losing. There was just this, just him, just her. Together.

She peeled back each layer of pain, like stripping bark, and looked at what lay underneath. It was a mass of confusion and error that encased a ferocious belief in ideas at the cost of all else. Mixed up in it all was such passion and hatred, yet at the same time she could see the black shadow of a desperate remorse and repentance. She forced herself to look at them, to pick through them all one by one and face up to what she found.

She'd kissed him farewell, a light brush of the lips, and with it everything cracked inside her.



She breathed, but only because she had to, not because she wanted to.

She wanted to rid this man she loved of those dark tense shadows, to make him as content and relaxed as the dog in the dust.

"It tastes of hope. Sweeter than honey on my tongue."

Their eyes held, a long, sweet, complicated moment.

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## **Lyd's Archive (7/'15 to 6/'18) says**

3.5 stars

### What to expect

A somewhat confusing but quite well-done historical novel with a hint of fantasy. At times it doesn't seem entirely realistic, but it flows well most of the time. Many of the same problems I had with Furnivall's first book *The Russian Concubine* are still present to a lesser degree. The book is shorter, so I was less impatient, the character's mission came before the romance so I became a bit more sympathetic to Sofia before she fell in love with Mikhail. There is also racial stereotyping to a much lesser degree (there is a Roma man referred to as a g\*psy who has magic and shows up occasionally to give foggy visions about the main character's journey that seem a little unnecessary). No spoilers ahead, but either I was terribly confused or the eventual conclusion was rather anticlimactic. Of course, both could be possible.

### Trope check

***myseterious magical person and stuff.*** Like I said

*Her hand was starting to tremble, and Rafik could sense the layers of darkness descending on her mind. Quickly he reached out, removed the warm goblet from her fingers, and silently touched a finger to his daughter's wide forehead. Her eyes brightened.*

*"She must choose," he said. "A fork in the road. One path to life. One path to death."*

### ***Sappy purple prose***

*It wasn't hard to imagine him soaring through the blue sky, eyes bright with joy, mouth shouting insults to the silent clouds to his heart's content. But she didn't ask him the obvious question, made no attempt to search out the why and the how. Instead, she laid her cheek on his shoulder. They rode like that in silence and she could feel the thread between them spinning tighter, drawing them together til she wasn't sure where she ended and he began.*

***Heroine is more plot device than person*** Sofia doesn't really have a lot of defining traits. She just does what she does.

***Love interest is a "hot rebel" type .***

*"It looks to me," she said thoughtfully, "as though the machines are working the women rather than the other way around."*

*"That is Stalin's intention. No people, just machines that do what they're told."*

*"Mikhail!" Sofia hissed sharply, glancing towards the door. In a low whisper, she warned.*

*"Don't talk so." Her eyes met his. "Please."*

***Fire-and-brimstone-type priest***

***Main character is special***

***The 'I love you' speech***

*"Sofia," he said gently, "until you came into my life I was incapable of loving anyone. I didn't trust anyone I despised myself and believed that others would despise me too, so I was wary in relationships. I went through all the motions but nothing more. "*

***Love interest saves main character all the time***

Other thoughts

Even though this review is mostly objections, most reviewers know that it's much easier to put what you didn't like than what you did like into words. I personally found that most of the objections I had were balanced out by parts I liked. It was for the most part well-written and I guess I did manage to enjoy it.

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