

## Cycles

**Rita Kinsky**

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*Cycles, a mature romance with substance, is tragedy with a silver lining at its finest.*

In keeping with the grand tradition of bittersweet affairs and tragic liaisons so prevalent in Russian literature, Rita Kinsky spins a tale of love, loss, and redemption in *Cycles*, one woman's journey navigating relationships, accepting happiness, and getting second chances.

Although no longer living in the Soviet Union, Victoria Lansky, or Vika to her friends, at forty-six is still a proper Russian daughter—caring for her aging parents, working hard, and spending frugally—when “a sequence of improbable events” leads to a brief but intense romance with Zachary Miron, a carefree wine connoisseur and writer from Santa Barbara. With Zach, Vika learns to embrace the spontaneous and appreciate the finer things in life, but just when the relationship starts to get serious, Vika's ex-husband, Alex, returns with heartbreaking news that shakes the foundation of Vika's newfound love.

An atypical romantic leading lady, Vika is refreshing in her pragmatism, often unsure of herself and her own allure, and constantly struggling to reconcile her Russian Jewish sense of family and duty to her independent American life. A product of her early years in Russia and the traditions of her generation, Vika is no simpering party girl. She worries about money, turns her phone off during dinner, and has to remind herself that girls are allowed to call boys on the telephone. A mixture of shy and assertive, uncertain and confident, Vika's story begins on her forty-sixth birthday and continues over the next decade and beyond, proving that it's never too late to find love.

Although both Zach and Alex feature prominently and passionately in Vika's life, *Cycles* avoids the clichéd love triangle and focuses instead on the pursuit of happiness and its ever-changing definition in the face of life's ups and downs. For Vika, “real happiness is equal parts joy and pain,” and later, “happiness is stability.” Neither Zach nor Alex are perfect, and Vika is aware of their shortcomings as well as her own, upping the believability factor and sense of realism found throughout the book.

Detailed descriptions, from Vika's wardrobe, hairstyles, and makeup to the food eaten and drinks served, combined with dialogue ranging from flirty and humorous to painfully honest and revealing carry the plot onward. Time passes slowly during Vika and Zach's initial courtship then speeds over years, flowing through one chapter of life, or cycle, after another.

*Cycles*, a mature romance with substance, is reminiscent of Nancy Thayer or Maeve Binchy with a dash of Leo Tolstoy; romance and joy hand in hand with hardship and grief, it is tragedy with a silver lining at its finest.

PALLAS GATES MCCORQUODALE (June 18, 2015)

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