



## Love Novel

**Ivana Sajko**

**Mima Simi , Translator**

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Ivana Sajko's *Love Novel* plunges into the difficulties that occur after a couple without means gives in to desire.

The story is told from the points-of-view of an unnamed man and woman living in an unnamed city and country. The man, a well-educated aspiring journalist, first sees the woman, an actress, performing on stage. Afterward, he approaches her in the theater lobby and attempts to woo her with his knowledge of Dante. The woman is flattered and succumbs to his charms. They spend the night together and conceive a child.

The couple's history is conveyed in flashbacks, opening with an intense argument centering on their dire financial situation while their baby sleeps in the next room. However, the man and woman do not listen to one another, and their dialogue is not provided. Instead, the couple's streams of consciousness unspool in lengthy sentences, filling the short book with dense paragraphs. The effect is immersive—even at times oppressive, much like poverty itself.

Flashes of absurd humor and flights of fantasy leaven the hardships, as when the man loses a shoe while indulging in a political protest. He returns home with a plastic bag on his foot. The woman earns extra money for her family by dressing up in costumes, including those of a panda and a vampire, and handing out vouchers in front of the cinema.

There are no happy or even tidy endings here; still, a ray of hope peeps through. The lack of names and the generic title suggest that political oppression and penury could happen to anyone, anywhere. *Love Novel* is a universal story about passion and poverty that's told in rich language.

SUZANNE KAMATA (January / February 2024)

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