



The Sunlit Night

Rebecca Dinerstein

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From an exhilarating new voice, a stunning debut novel-which Jonathan Safran Foer calls as “lyrical as a poem, psychologically rich as a thriller.”

In the beautiful, barren landscape of the Far North, under the ever-present midnight sun, Frances and Yasha are surprised to find refuge in each other. Their lives have been upended--Frances has fled heartbreak and claustrophobic Manhattan for an isolated artist colony; Yasha arrives from Brooklyn to fulfill his beloved father's last wish: to be buried “at the top of the world.” They have come to learn how to be alone.

But in Lofoten, an archipelago of six tiny islands in the Norwegian Sea, ninety-five miles north of the Arctic Circle, they form a bond that fortifies them against the turmoil of their distant homes, offering solace amidst great uncertainty. With nimble and sure-footed prose, Dinerstein reveals that no matter how far we travel to claim our own territory, it is ultimately love that gives us our place in the world.

The Sunlit Night Details

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Author : Rebecca Dinerstein

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From Reader Review The Sunlit Night for online ebook

Shelleyrae at Book'd Out says

The Sunlit Night is the story of Frances and Yasha whose paths cross far from home 'at the top of the world'. Frances is completing an art internship while Yasha is in Lofoten to fulfill his father's dying wish. It is a story of family, grief, growing up and belonging.

I found Yasha to be a more likeable character than Frances, perhaps because his woes were less superficial than hers. His story was more interesting and developed than hers, and I didn't feel I learnt much about Frances at all. Unfortunately I wasn't convinced by Yasha and Frances's romantic connection either, though they had reason to form a friendship, I didn't think there was any chemistry between them.

What I did really like was the novel's unique setting. The Sunlit Night is set in Lofoten, an archipelago of six tiny islands in the Norwegian Sea, ninety-five miles north of the Arctic Circle. During the later spring and summer months, in which most of this tale takes place, the sun never dips below the horizon.

"These hours were characterized by a wildness of colors, the combined power of a sunset and sunrise. It was easy to watch the horizon for hours straight, the sun in perpetual motion, the sky turning orange and cranberry until at three it returned to blue, and I felt ready for bed."

I enjoyed Dinerstein's descriptions of the archipelago, though mere words barely do the beauty of this place justice (*google for photos*).

"The world was perpetually visible, so I looked at it. Conditioned by hours in the Yellow Room, I saw the landscape in colorblock. The midnight sun came in shades of pink. The fjords rushed up onto white-sanded beaches, and the sand made the water Bermuda-green. The houses were always red. They appeared in clusters, villages, wherever the land lay flat. Mountains rose steeply behind each village-menaces and guardians. Each red house was a lighthouse, marking the boundary between one terrain and another, preventing crashes, somehow providing solace."

The Sunlit Night is not without its charms, there is humour, genuine emotion, and some lovely prose, but the plot is weak and the pace uneven. My attention wavered during the last third or so of the book, much of which didn't seem to quite make sense and felt rushed.

In the end, I would rate it as an okay read however others may be more appreciative.

Diane S ? says

Review to follow.

Lou says

I was carefully thinking how could I say that **I really hated this book** without being rude or offensive... And I've come to the conclusion that is better not to say a word since I can't find anything positive to say.

I won this book through GoodReads and I thank to the publisher for providing me this copy but this fact didn't influence the review.

Dov Zeller says

I was very excited going in because I'd read some compelling reviews. I tried twice but couldn't find anything in it to invest in. Wish I had it in me to try a third time, but I don't. (I didn't even get to the place where the sun doesn't set.)

Ah well. Not going to rate this one starswise. Just looking forward to reading another book to wash away the discomfort of exhausted, disorganized prose.

Loretta says

Lovely and evocative writing. Many parts are definitely worth more than one reading. Also may have inadvertently led to my decision to take a trip to Norway this summer.

4 stars.

Faith says

My Rating:

This was the sort of book what made me go:

Then:

And then:

So yes, I do admit it was a very different and strange book but it was, in a good way. Every once in a while, you'll encounter this weird, cool book which kind of blows your mind and twists it at the same

time. It was definitely this one.

This book was very brief in developing the love story between Frances and Yasha but very detailed in their backgrounds and previous lives. There was a good whole half of the book where they still lived separate lives and it wasn't till about 3/4 through when their relationship actually begun to happen. This only added to the uniqueness of this book along with other aspects. Number one, because of it's setting - far north where the whole day was full of sunlight and two - introducing two very different characters and somehow combined them into one world.

Frances was a very normal character. I really don't know how else to explain it but she didn't really have anything extraordinary about her except the fact that she travelled to a perpetually sunny place. But that only made me want to read about her more.

On the other hand, Yasha was very emotional and very reactive. His father had died and his mother had surprisingly returned from ditching them. And, he was basically your typical, angry, emotional teenager.

That was also something that struck me. This was a love story between a 21 year old woman and a 17 year old boy. You can imagine my face when I realised this and I surprisingly loved how Dinerstein dared to break relationship conventions.

The writing was as well, unusual. It had that post-modern feel and I could tell that Dinerstein was trying to break most of the conventions that YA books normally have. It was successful in that it definitely drew me in and left an impression in my mind. It used an odd combination of long and short sentences which kind of left me stumped and needing more at the same time.

In conclusion, a very interesting and unusual YA novel. It's something I would recommend if you're a little bit tired of reading paranormal/dystopian and need something a little big refreshing.

Donald says

When I got to page 175 and there was still no sign of romance, I didn't think that was a good sign for a book billing itself as "about love". I am a bit bewildered by the multi-starred professional reviews that led me to this novel. I certainly did not hate it, but I found myself a bit bored and had to resort to speed reading in several places.

Larry H says

I'd rate this 3.5 stars.

Rebecca Dinerstein's *The Sunlit Night* is a quirky, charming, and moving book about the power love—both

familial and romantic—has on our lives, even at times of great uncertainty.

Upon graduating from college, Frances' life is completely turned upside down. Her relationship with her boyfriend has ended while her sister has just gotten engaged to a guy of whom their parents don't approve, and to top it off, much to her utter surprise, her parents are getting divorced. With no one or nowhere to turn, she flees to a tiny Norwegian archipelago nearly at the top of the world, to pursue an apprenticeship with an artist.

Almost 18 years old, Yasha Gregoriov emigrated to the U.S. from Russia with his father when he was very young. Working in his father's bakery every day, the two spend years waiting for his mother to join them as she promised. But she never did. And when Yasha's father becomes ill at the same time his mother mysteriously reappears, Yasha is unsure what to do—reveal the truth to his father and risk his dying, or let his father continue living under the charade that one day his wife might return? When his father dies, Yasha is determined to fulfill a promise he made: to bury his father at "the top of the world."

"Love and geography had become synonyms, both meaning: move across a great space."

Yasha and Frances find each other in the midst of great emotional turmoil. The archipelago of Lofoten, where they both have come, seems isolated but is a bit of a tourist mecca, and it is populated by some tremendously colorful characters. Will their growing feelings for one another provide them the security they need at tumultuous times in their lives, or will other obligations win out?

I thought this was an enjoyable book that was a little bit eccentric at times, but it had a great deal of heart. The narrative structure was a little confusing toward the end, as the book had originally shifted between Yasha and Frances per section, but then suddenly shifted per paragraph. And at times I felt that Dinerstein spent more time on those around them than on Yasha and Frances. But these are tremendously interesting characters that grab hold of you, and you find yourself rooting for them to soldier on.

See all of my reviews at <http://itseithersadnessoreuphoria.blo...>

Sue says

I cannot resist a book set in the land of the midnight sun. This story takes place in Borg, Norway, where two lost souls - a 22 year old graduate art student from Manhattan, and the 17 year old son of a Russian baker living in Brighton Beach - come to find the light and figure out their next moves. They find themselves in an old asylum and a Viking museum, respectively, for what proves to be a long, eventful summer at the almost top of the world. There is the magic of the arctic, wonderfully quirky characters, lovely writing and just enough humor to make this a delightfully satisfying read.

Bettie? says

Description: *In the beautiful, barren landscape of the Far North, under the ever-present midnight sun, Frances and Yasha are surprised to find refuge in each other. Their lives have been upended--Frances has fled heartbreak and claustrophobic Manhattan for an isolated artist colony; Yasha arrives from Brooklyn to fulfill his beloved father's last wish: to be buried "at the top of the world." They have come to learn how to*

be alone.

But in Lofoten, an archipelago of six tiny islands in the Norwegian Sea, ninety-five miles north of the Arctic Circle, they form a bond that fortifies them against the turmoil of their distant homes, offering solace amidst great uncertainty. With nimble and sure-footed prose, Dinerstein reveals that no matter how far we travel to claim our own territory, it is ultimately love that gives us our place in the world.

Lofoten islands

Opening: **In the moment after Robert Mason's condom broke he rolled off me, propped himself on his elbow, and said, "What you do doesn't help anybody."**

ahhhh! well then. this book may not be what I am looking for. I'll leave it for Ron - Later On

<http://www.theguardian.com/books/2015...>

Hot damn, I didn't want do it but I was awaiting some replies and this book was on my desk. Being as I will read anything you all know what happened next...

... really was as bad as I thought it would be from that first sentence.

Has some plus points for those who wish to search that hard.

Anmiryam says

TAKING A PAGE FROM KAREN: NOW AVAILABLE!!

This book is destined to be a favorite of mine, it hits all my literary love buttons -- quirky characters and situations, a setting that is real yet somehow out of time, visual and precise writing, emotional warmth and faith in the healing power of love. I can't wait until more people get to read the tale of Frances and Yasha, their families and their companions for one summer in perpetual arctic light. If you love Bill Forsyth's great movie Local Hero or Nicole Krauss's The History of Love, you should read this as soon as it comes out in June.

Paula Sealey says

Somewhere in this book, there was a sweet love story waiting to burst out. Unfortunately, it was lost among so much superfluous text, I became quite bored at having to sift through it to find anything vaguely relevant to the main plot. It's a shame really, as I liked the two troubled main characters, Frances and Yasha, and some of the descriptions of the Norwegian island. Dinerstein's writing style just didn't flow for me or manage to keep my interest and having to skip over large chunks of text definitely reduced the books appeal.

*Thank you to the publishers for providing a copy through NetGalley.

Rebecca Foster says

A first novel as charming as it is quirky. Two young adults from Brooklyn meet in the far north of Norway, where one is an artist's apprentice and the other is burying a beloved father. I loved the contrast between the emptiness of Arctic Scandinavia and cramped New York City. Still, I think the setting I warmed to most was Vassily's bakery. Dinerstein, who herself travelled to Norway and got a bilingual poetry collection and this novel out of the experience, has great things ahead of her. I highly recommend her debut to fans of Jonathan Safran Foer.

See my full review at The Bookbag.

Bookish Indulgences with b00k r3vi3ws says

The Sunlit Night tells the story of two youngsters, Yasha and Frances, who come from different backgrounds and fate have their paths cross at Norway. Frances is there to intern with an artist after a recent break up with her family and also another break up within her family. Yasha on the other hand is there to fulfill his father's last wishes. Both have certain baggage that they carry and when they meet, they feel a certain connection. As friendship blossoms, they find comfort in each other.

When we break down the characters of Yasha and Frances, it is easy to like them and empathize with them for the most part. They are both very different personalities that bring in a variety of flavors to the story. To read the story from their individual point of view made it interesting. However, even with their given background, I really cannot digest the way they sometimes think of their parents. I realize that not every relationship is perfect and neither of our protagonists had a set of ideal parents. The thoughts they entertained about their parents still felt unnatural and almost disgusting at times. As a result I could not really warm up to the characters completely. Except for that one particular factor, the book is mostly well written sprinkled with engaging dialogues and a dash of humor. She has also successfully described the two very different places (Norway & US) in details. Also, while I initially thought that this would be a love story, and to some extent it is, but it is so much more than that. It sends us a message about accepting reality, handling grief, rediscovering yourself and that one can find a kindred soul at the most unexpected turns.

Overall, this makes for an above average read that I did end up enjoying it.

Bonnie says

This is a very unhappy, very long review, full of my eye-twitching adventures through the pages of *Sunlit Night*. Oh, and just a warning for those of you that frown upon gif-filled reviews? Run. Run while you still can.

I don't derive any sort of pleasure from reading a book I hate. I don't like hating books in general, but alas, it does happen. My 11-year-old asked me just last night, "Do you ever read a book and really don't like it?" I laughed and told him, "Of course, you can't expect to like every single book you read. Sometimes it can be

poorly written, sometimes it can have characters that you just can't understand, but yes, there are books I've read that I have not liked and some I've even hated." The book that flashed through my head when he mentioned hating a book? This book. What's funny is for the longest time, The Yonahlossee Riding Camp for Girls took the cake for book I hated the most. That book, which I renamed in seething tones 'Horsey Camp', became my reference point for one star ratings. "I didn't like this at all, BUT... is it Horsey Camp bad?" Well, now I have a new reference point. I haven't come up with a nickname yet. I'm taking suggestions.

So what is this strange little ridiculous book even about? We have two main characters, Frances and Yasha, and the story switches between both of their points-of-view. Frances is in her early twenties and she's just been dumped by her college boyfriend. She returns to her childhood home where the house is in turmoil because her sister just got engaged and her parents basically hate the guy. There is talk of disowning her. Of not attending her wedding. Soap opera stuff. Frances decides to accept an apprenticeship at a Viking Museum in Lofoten, Norway. Her parents tell her good, because they're also breaking up so she won't have a home to live in. It's all very dramatic. Frances also has thoughts of whether her parents are good kissers, but I'm getting ahead of myself. So Frances leaves to go find herself and to paint with some Vikings.

Nope. The Vikings weren't badass like Ragnar or anything unfortunately.

Yasha is a seventeen-year-old kid that has a lot of angst. Him and his father immigrated from Russia, leaving his mother behind, and have been running a bakery in Brooklyn for the last decade. His mother shows up randomly one day telling Yasha that he needs to tell his father that she wants a divorce. You know, like an adult. Yasha's father isn't well and doesn't think he'll be able to handle the news so he refuses to be the one to tell him. His father announces a glorious adventure he has planned that involves them going back to Russia because he's determined to get his wife back. Yeah, awkward. Yasha still doesn't tell him and the two travel all the way to Russia with his father in denial about the fact that she isn't even there anymore. His father finds out about the divorce anyways. As was expected, he doesn't take it well... at all. Yasha becomes intent to honor his last wishes, to be buried "at the top of the world." So Yasha travels to the land of the Vikings where our two main characters meet.

Yasha also has many, many inappropriate comments about his parents. Yes, I sense a theme as well. "What do you even consider 'inappropriate'? You're probably overreacting." Well, since you asked.

'I wanted to know if my father had been a good kisser. I wanted to know how many men had kissed my mother, and how well. I wanted to know if she planned on kissing new men now. I wanted to know if my mother was a good kisser.'

That lovely line was the first inappropriate comment (from Frances) of MANY you can expect. This was after her parents announced they're splitting up. Because yes, my parents are divorcing, I shall sit here and contemplate whether it was their kissing skills that ultimately destroyed their love. Frances was the least inappropriate, thankfully, although there was a lot of thought given to her Viking roommate and his pooping habits (no, not kidding) but that wasn't terribly inappropriate. Just weird. Very, very weird.

Brace yourself. Here comes the super awkward stuff.

'Yasha imagined his mother's panties. He imagined his mother wearing different panties for every day of the week. It's Friday. It's Saturday.'

“His mother, reclining on her rock, with her body unfurled, looked unquestionably like a woman. Yasha had in some sense never understood her this way – he didn’t know if she shaved her armpits or legs, what creams she kept by the mirror, whether she slept naked or in shorts [...]”

‘He entertained the gross, exhilarating idea of his mother being a talented lover. Physically. He wanted to inherit some of her talent.’

I know. I’m terribly sorry to have to do that to you but I needed you to understand! Sunlit Night is the authors debut novel, however, she wrote poetry before and it is evident in a few small sections that I really enjoyed. The area in Norway that the novel is based in is where the sun never sets. Frances and her Viking roommate will often get in the car late at night and just drive and the descriptions of their car trips when the light was dimmest were lush and inviting.

‘These hours were characterized by a wildness of colors, the combined power of a sunset and sunrise. It was easy to watch the horizon for hours straight, the sun in perpetual motion, the sky turning orange and cranberry until at three it returned to blue, and I felt ready for bed.’

‘In every meadow grew white and yellow grasses. Waterfall veins streaked the mountains, and a little rain in the air prepared the sky for rainbows. We drove through a passing wink of colors, a natural hologram.’

Honestly, those lines did nothing but make me angry because those were literally the only lines that I enjoyed reading. Those lines show a potential this novel might have had but never came close to achieving. But who knows, I could be completely wrong. Publisher’s Weekly calls this novel captivating. They also called this novel a rich reading experience with lyrical and silky prose. Did I also mention they gave this a starred review? Kirkus called this a “deliciously melancholy debut”.

Not only was this an extraordinarily painful read, it was incredibly boring. Dinerstein might have her descriptive detail of landscapes down pat, but her characters are flat and one-dimensional. Their actions lack any sort of clarity and their emotions (if they even have any) are kept completely in the dark. Even when the requisite romance is introduced between our two characters, it comes completely out of nowhere.

‘I will not lose Yasha. Maybe his mother had lost him, maybe his father had lost him, Brooklyn had lost him – not me. It wasn’t a matter of somebody keeping him. It was a matter of my wanting him, wanting his face near my face.’

This is clearly a moment that was meant to be profound, however, because of the complete lack of chemistry between Frances and Yasha it lacks any sort of passion. When the two part ways they contemplate what could be between the two, yet there’s no evidence of where these thoughts even came from. The whole idea of both of them being lost and finding each other would work a whole lot better as to explaining their affections for one another if we actually witnessed said affection. It wasn’t even insta-love, because while the love was instant, the author could describe it all she wanted but I never saw it. Less telling, more showing.

Reputable magazines can shout loudly from the rooftops about how amazing this one is, but I just didn’t see

it. At all. I'll leave you all with my favorite line of the bunch.

'To Yasha, the word business meant bread or sex.'

Whatever the fuck that's supposed to mean.

I received this book free from Netgalley in exchange for an honest review. This does not affect my opinion of the book or the content of my review. All quotes taken are from an uncorrected proof.

Lolly K Dandeneau says

I have mixed feelings about this novel. While the characters were interesting, I had a hard time warming to them, and yet I was still pulled in by the story. It certainly is an interesting setting. The constant daylight in the Arctic, the isolation, the drastic change for Frances going from Manhattan to Lofoten is the heart of the novel. It is a story about family and love, about grief and finding one's place. Yasha, there to bury his father, will enter into a relationship with Frances, but are they both too damaged by their families? This is different and the characters are certainly peculiar. Yes, I enjoyed it.

Lori O says

A debut novel about a young russian/jewish immigrant and a young girl who is an art student from New York. The two meet and form an unlikely romance. So...will the two lost souls drift into the sunset and live happily ever after? Well, when you travel far enough north and reach a latitude where the sun no longer sets during the summer months then well...there isn't a sunset. The two love birds are on an island in the Norwegian Sea where it is daylight for weeks! Easy, light summer reading.

Jill says

How far would a person go to get in touch with himself or herself again? This is the core theme of *The Sunlit Night*, in which two broken and unmoored individuals – 21-year-old Frances and 17-year-old Yasha – find comfort in each other at the “top of the world” above the Arctic Circle in Norway.

Rebecca Dinerstein spent significant time in Norway and it shows. The barren and isolated Arctic landscape mirrors the starkness of Frances and Yasha's internal selves and provides a backdrop for them to infuse authentic meaning into their lives. Frances has arrived there from NYC to serve as an apprentice to an up-and-coming Norwegian artist who is becoming known for his yellow murals after leaving her boyfriend and finding out about her parents' impending divorce. Yasha goes there to bury his beloved father Vassily, the owner of a NY bakery, who expressed a wish to be buried “on top of the world”; he has long been estranged from his mother.

“It was as if they were all waking up, waking up their bodies, each still grappling with a question from a dream,” Ms. Dinerstein writes. In this land of isolation where the sun never sets, the two come together to

realize gain an understanding that even in times of darkness (death, loss, abandonment), there is always light that shines through. At the same time, they learn to redefine what the word “home” means when that concept is challenged.

The novel is peopled with eccentric and whimsical characters, most of whom fade into the backdrop (with the except of their respective parents). At times, the backstories seem a little derivative; as readers, these New York Jewish characters have been encountered in various iterations and their virtual yet metaphorical journey has also been witnessed in many books such as Richard Wagamese’s excellent *Medicine Walk*.

Still, there’s something that tugs at the heart in getting to know Frances and Yasha and the haunting landscape continues to mesmerize. This sunlit night illuminates the things that really matter.

Snotchocheez says

2.5 stars

I dove into my Overdrive e-book copy of *The Sunlit Night* totally blind, buoyed (despite its 3.28 cume and some particularly eviscerating reviews from some) by my three trusted GR friends who read and enjoyed it (and all using the word "quirky" in their reviews). I loves me some quirk, and love rallying behind an underdog, so why not give it a try?

Let's just say I never quite "got" the quirk descriptor for this. Maybe my quirk threshold is much too high (*The Last Bad Man*? That's some amazing quirk. *The Portable Veblen*? Melancholy, yet fun quirk.) The *idea* of a serendipitous encounter of two Brighton Beach Brooklynites meeting in the northern-most fjordlands of Norway perhaps sounds quirky, but when combined with awkward execution, quirk turns to slog real quick. Without knowing a thing about Rebecca Dinerstein, it became abundantly clear after about a third of the way through (corroborated by the author bio at the end) that a) this was her first book, and b) she constructed a novel around her interest in Norway (fueled probably by some visits or study abroad). Certainly not a bad idea (of setting a novel in Norway) to build a plot on, but the set-up for protags Frances (a lapsed-Jewish twenty year-old art major) and Yasha (a 17 year-old son of a Russian baker) meeting in Norway (and not just Norway, but way-north-of-the-Arctic-Circle Norway) is more than a little convoluted. Frances' journey there makes a little more sense (as a sort of intern for a famed Norwegian artist), but Yasha (again, a 17 year old high school senior) arranging to get his deceased father buried up there (in a country he knows nothing about) utterly defies credulity.

If you can buy the above set-up (and I could, barely), you're treated to some gorgeous imagery and interesting Norwegian lore surrounding a Viking Museum they both end up employed at. The characters (both the protags and locals) are interesting (in a humorless Fredrik Backman/Jonas Jonasson sorta way; take that however you want to), and end up more endearing than I initially thought they would be. The ending was easily the best part of the novel, though I'm not totally convinced that it made up for the awkwardness that preceded it.

Angela M says

I knew from reading the description that this was going to be a quirky story , yet I was drawn to it . It was definitely the quirky story I expected but what I wasn't expecting was that I'd like these characters as much as I did. There's something immediately endearing about Yasha and Frances , especially Yasha .

Yasha and Frances , two lost and vulnerable souls , both live in New York City , but it's at the top of the world where their paths cross . Yasha has traveled there to fulfill his father's wishes to be buried there. I was broken hearted at once for Yasha who was abandoned by his mother when she doesn't follow him and his father to New York from Russia , as they had planned. It gets worse because she keeps deceiving them into thinking that she would still come . Ten years later at 17 , he learns the truth and now he's lost his father who has loving raised him .

Frances also has her personal heart break - her egotistical boyfriend leaves her and her parents are getting a divorce . She takes on an art apprenticeship in of all places the far , far north of Norway. It's here that Yasha and Frances meet and in spite of their age difference - he's 17 and she's 21 , they are drawn to each other and it's lovely to see how much they give each other.

There's this cast of almost unbelievable characters you find in this place at the top of the world in this Norwegian archipelago and you can't help but like them . Comical at times and sad at others , there were moments when I wasn't sure if I should laugh or cry . What I am sure of is that this is a story that is worth reading. It's a debut novel; hope Rebecca Dinerstein continues to write .

Thank you to Bloomsbury USA and NetGalley.
