



From Under
the Russian Snow

by Michelle A. Carter



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ISBN 9781945805448

Michelle Carter at age fifty, married and the mother of two children in their early twenties, left her job as managing editor of a suburban daily newspaper in the San Francisco Bay area in 1995 to move to Russia for a year as a United States Information Agency Journalist-in-Residence.

There she traveled across the eleven time zones of this enormous country, working with newspaper editors who struggled to adapt to the new concepts of press freedom and a market economy. She became an on-the-scene witness to the second great Russian revolution. She viewed Russia from her flat on the embankment of the Moscow River and from her sometimes humorous shoulder-to-shoulder participation in the life of the largest country in the world.

At the same time, she embarked on a personal journey that wrenched her life in a way she could never have anticipated when she accepted her husband's challenge to take this assignment and culminate her eight years of work and travel in the former Soviet Union.

From the author

From Under the Russian Snow would be just a female coming-of-(middle)-age story, sprawled across the eleven time zones of pre-Putin Russia, if life hadn't intervened. Who could pass up a story told by a woman of fifty who embraced a great adventure, without her family, in an exotic setting, only to absorb one of life's harshest blows?

Discussion Questions

1. How is a memoir different from journalism in which the author made her career? Both genres are true, but a memoir falls into a category called literary non-fiction. Can you recall some examples where the narrative transcends journalism?
2. The author writes in great detail about events that happened more than twenty years ago. Does that add depth and detail or does it cause you to suspend belief?
3. The author was a fifty-year-old American woman living and traveling alone in Moscow. What kind of issues does that raise in you as a reader? Was she brave, foolhardy or perhaps just lucky?
4. The author writes that the Russian press was flowering in that post-Soviet, pre-Putin bubble of freedom. How does that contrast with your understanding of the current situation Russia?
5. The author shares her indecision about going back to Russia after her husband died? Can you understand why she did?
6. At one point, the author characterizes her decision to accept the position in Russia as greedy and self-centered. Could you have made a similar choice? If not, why not?
7. The author draws her title from the podsnezhnik, the first flower to poke through the snow in the early Russian spring. Is it an apt metaphor for this memoir?



8. The author is fairly critical of the treatment of women in Russia. How does this differ from the way women are treated in the rest of the world?
9. A number of different themes are woven through this memoir. How did they speak to you? Were they effective in advancing the narrative?
10. How have your perceptions about Russia changed after reading the book?

About the author

Michelle Carter is a professional journalist with a thirty-year career in daily newspapering (*The Kansas City Star* and *The San Mateo Times*) and a twelve-year stint as a journalism instructor at Notre Dame de Namur University in Belmont, California. A graduate of the University of Missouri School of Journalism, she has been writing professionally for most of her adult life. *From Under the Snow* is the second book to grow out of her experiences in the former Soviet Union. The first, *Children of Chernobyl: Raising Hope From the Ashes*, was co-written with Michael J. Christensen and published by Augsburg Publishing of Minneapolis. Carter has two children, a daughter (a published short story writer), a son (a teacher and school administrator), and a grandson (an avid blogger). A magazine editor, she lives in the San Francisco Bay Area with her husband, a retired airline captain and flying instructor, and their cat. Life is good.