



**I Named My Dog Pushkin
(And Other Immigrant Tales):
Notes from a Soviet Girl on
Becoming an American Woman**

Margarita Gokun Silver, Thread Books, 2021, \$9.99/paperback, e-book available, 268 pages.

Jewish immigrants from the former Soviet Union have contributed immeasurably to American literature—and to our humor. But nearly all the Russian comedians and writers who have made it big here during the past few decades have been male.

It is therefore truly refreshing to get the distaff perspective on the culture shock these migrants have experienced, courtesy of Margarita Gokun Silver. Although she deploys humor effectively in this debut essay collection, Silver pulls no punches in describing the anti-Semitism she and her family encountered in the Soviet Union. But she insists that her main motivation

for leaving Mother Russia while in college was something more basic. Yes, “Amerika” was forbidden and evil—but, along with milk and honey, it had Levi’s jeans.

Though the narrative is intense and lively, lurching and rollicking to present the dilemmas, decisions and, later, reflections on the immigrant experience in America, the author wrote this work at a very grim moment in October 2020. The end of the COVID-19 lockdowns was not in sight and her husband had just received a diagnosis of cancer. “I was desperate to see this collection out in the world,” she says, “and so I thought—what if accessing my funny could actually help me stay sane?”

Margarita Gokun Silver is a freelance journalist, essayist and novelist. Her articles and essays have been published in *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post* and *The Atlantic*, and she has appeared on the BBC and National Public Radio. She and her husband, Foreign Commercial Service Officer Keith Silver, are currently in the U.S. for language training.