



# My Life at First Try: A Novel

Mark Budman

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This semi-autobiographical debut novel chronicles the life of Alex, born in Siberia in 1950, and his dreams of becoming a writer and of meeting Annie, his distant American cousin. As a child, Alex observes a group of foreign tourists do something that non-drunk Soviet adults seldom do: they laugh. Alex yearns to become one of them—a free and happy foreigner. Those aspirations quickly fade as Alex begins to encounter the absurdities and constraints of living in a society where conformity is institutionalized. Hilarious and sometimes sobering, the book's short chapters chronicle making it through the army, mastering the English language, sex, and meeting the girl of his dreams. In 1980, Alex and his young family finally get the chance to move to America. There he realizes that he is finally a foreigner—not the happy foreigner of his dream, but an alien. Ultimately, Alex finds his own place in the world, despite the fact that having the right "to vote for an elephant or an ass" does not necessarily guarantee self-fulfillment.



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