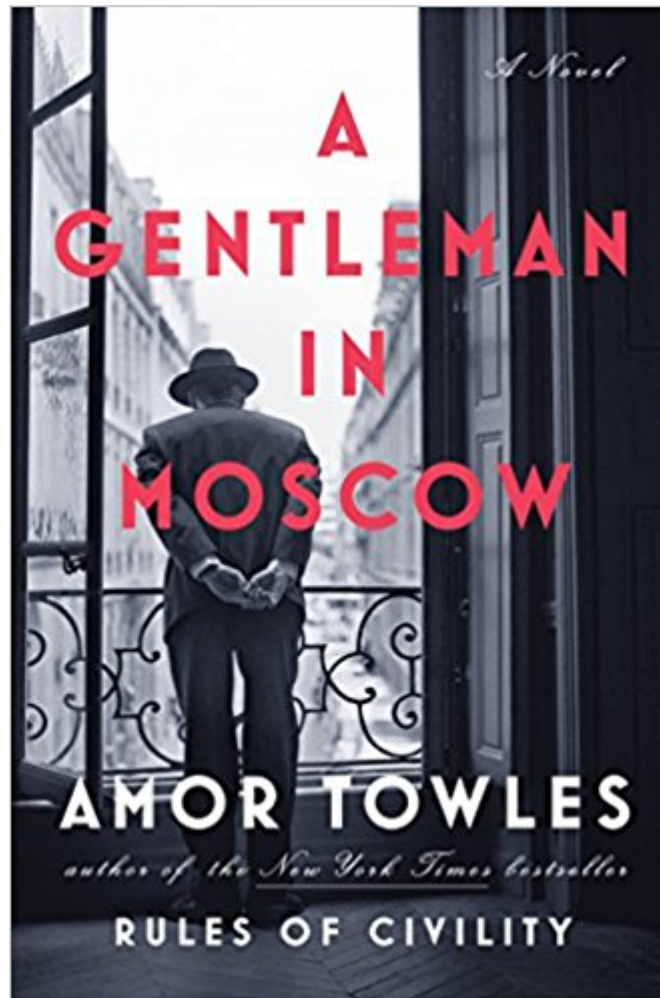




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A Gentleman In Moscow: A Novel



Synopsis

More than half a million readers have fallen in love with the New York Times bestseller *A Gentleman in Moscow*—“How delightful that in an era as crude as ours this finely composed novel stretches out with old-World elegance.”—*The Washington Post*—“The Grand Budapest Hotel” and *Eloise* meets all the Bond villains. “Irresistible . . . [an] elegant period piece . . . as lavishly filigreed as a Fabergé egg.”—*O, The Oprah Magazine* He can’t leave his hotel. You won’t want to. From the New York Times bestselling author of *Rules of Civility*—a transporting novel about a man who is ordered to spend the rest of his life inside a luxury hotel. In 1922, Count Alexander Rostov is deemed an unrepentant aristocrat by a Bolshevik tribunal, and is sentenced to house arrest in the Metropol, a grand hotel across the street from the Kremlin. Rostov, an indomitable man of erudition and wit, has never worked a day in his life, and must now live in an attic room while some of the most tumultuous decades in Russian history are unfolding outside the hotel’s doors. Unexpectedly, his reduced circumstances provide him entry into a much larger world of emotional discovery. Brimming with humor, a glittering cast of characters, and one beautifully rendered scene after another, this singular novel casts a spell as it relates the count’s endeavor to gain a deeper understanding of what it means to be a man of purpose. “And the intrigue! . . . [A Gentleman in Moscow] is laced with sparkling threads (they will tie up) and tokens (they will matter): special keys, secret compartments, gold coins, vials of coveted liquid, old-fashioned pistols, duels and scars, hidden assignments (discreet and smoky), stolen passports, a ruby necklace, mysterious letters on elegant hotel stationery . . . a luscious stage set, backdrop for a downright Casablanca-like drama.”—*The San Francisco Chronicle*

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Customer Reviews

An Best Book of September 2016: A Gentleman in Moscow is the utterly entertaining second novel from the author of Rules of Civility. Amor Towles skillfully transports us to The Metropol, the famed Moscow hotel where movie stars and Russian royalty hobnob, where Bolsheviks plot revolutions and intellectuals discuss the merits of contemporary Russian writers, where spies spy, thieves steal and the danger of twentieth century Russia lurks outside its marbled walls. It's also where wealthy Count Alexander Rostov lives under house arrest for a poem deemed incendiary by the Bolsheviks, and meets Nina. Nina is a precocious and wide-eyed young girl who holds the keys to the entire hotel, wonders what it means to be a princess, and will irrevocably change his life. Despite being confined to the hallway of the hotel, the Count lives an absorbing, adventure-filled existence, filled with capers, conspiracies and culture. Alexander Rostov is a character for the ages--like Kay Thompson's Eloise and Wes Anderson's M. Gustav, he is unflinchingly (and hilariously for readers) devoted to his station, even when forced to wait tables, play hide and seek with a young girl, or confront communism. Towles magnificently conjures the grandeur of the Russian hotel and the vibrancy of the characters that call it home. --Al Woodworth, The Book Review

Praise for A Gentleman in Moscow
"Marvelous."
•Chicago Tribune
"The novel buzzes with the energy of numerous adventures, love affairs, twists of fate and silly antics."
•The Wall Street Journal
"A winning, stylish novel."
•NPR.org
"Enjoyable, elegant."
•Seattle Times
"The perfect book to curl up with while the world goes by outside your window."
•Refinery29
"Who will save Rostov from the intrusions of state if not the seamstresses, chefs, bartenders and doormen? In the end, Towles's greatest narrative effect is not the moments of wonder and synchronicity but the generous transformation of these peripheral workers, over the course of decades, into confidants, equals and, finally, friends. With them around, a life sentence in these gilded halls might make Rostov the luckiest man in Russia."
•The New York Times Book Review
"Towles gets good mileage from the considerable charm of his protagonist and the

peculiar world he inhabits. • The New Yorker “Irresistible . . . In his second elegant period piece investment banker turned novelist Amor Towles continues to explore the question of how a person can lead an authentic life in a time when mere survival is a feat in itself . . . Towles’s tale, as lavishly filigreed as a Fabergé egg, gleams with nostalgia for the golden age of Tolstoy and Turgenev . . . reminding the reader that though Putin may be having a moment, it’s Pushkin who’s eternal. • O, The Oprah Magazine “The same gorgeous, layered richness that marked Towles’s debut, *Rules of Civility*, shapes [A Gentleman in Moscow]. • Entertainment Weekly “This is an old fashioned sort of romance, filled with delicious detail. Save this precious book for times you really, really want to escape reality. • Louise Erdrich “The book moves briskly from one crisp scene to the next, and ultimately casts a spell as encompassing as *Rules of Civility*, a book that inhales you into its seductively Gatsby-esque universe. • Town & Country “In all ways a great novel, a nonstop pleasure brimming with charm, personal wisdom, and philosophic insight . . . This is a book in which the cruelties of the age can’t begin to erase the glories of real human connection and the memories it leaves behind. A masterly encapsulation of modern Russian history, this book more than fulfills the promise of Towles’ stylish debut, *Rules of Civility*. • Kirkus Reviews (starred) “In his remarkable first novel, the bestselling *Rules of Civility*, Towles etched 1930s New York in crystalline relief . . . His latest polished literary foray into a bygone era is just as impressive . . . an imaginative and unforgettable historical portrait. • Booklist “House arrest has never been so charming as in Towles’s second novel, an engaging 30-year saga set almost entirely inside the Metropol, Moscow’s most luxurious hotel. . . empathetic, and entertaining. • Publishers Weekly Praise for *Rules of Civility* “An irresistible and astonishingly assured debut about working class-women and world-weary WASPs in 1930s New York—in the crisp, noirish prose of the era, Towles portrays complex relationships in a city that is at once melting pot and elitist enclave and a thoroughly modern heroine who fearlessly claims her place in it. • O, the Oprah Magazine “With this snappy period piece, Towles resurrects the cinematic black-and-white Manhattan of the golden age [his] characters are youthful Americans in tricky times, trying to create authentic lives. • The New York Times Book Review “This very good first novel about striving and surviving in Depression-era Manhattan deserves attention. The great strength of *Rules of Civility* is in the sharp, sure-handed evocation of Manhattan in the late

30s. •Wall Street Journal “Put on some Billie Holiday, pour a dry martini and immerse yourself in the eventful life of Katey Kontent [Towles] clearly knows the privileged world he’s writing about, as well as the vivid, sometimes reckless characters who inhabit it. •People “[A] wonderful debut novel [Towles [plays] with some of the great themes of love and class, luck and fated encounters that animated Wharton’s novels. •The Chicago Tribune “Glittering [filled with snappy dialogue, sharp observations and an array of terrifically drawn characters] Towles writes with grace and verve about the mores and manners of a society on the cusp of radical change. •NPR.org “Glamorous Gotham in one to relish [a book that enchants on first reading and only improves on the second. •The Philadelphia Inquirer

I’ve read many books and loved many books, but *A Gentleman In Moscow* by Amor Towles may have just become my favorite. *A Gentleman in Moscow* is the 30-year saga of the Count Alexander Ilyich Rostov, who is placed under house arrest inside the Metropol Hotel in Moscow in 1922 when the Bolsheviks spare him from death or Siberia because of his 1913 revolutionary poem written in university. The relationships he forms with staff and guests, his handling of twists of fate, his moral rectitude and his perseverance to go on in the face of his lifelong imprisonment for being a Former Person make for a compelling tale, told beautifully by Towles. It is not overwritten, and provides just enough historical contexts without being burdensome. And Towles doesn’t overdo the use of the Russian diminutive, which I’ve found in Russian classics to be crazy making and require a scorecard. Towles gives the reader just enough background of his characters. We know them but still wonder; he’s left room for the reader. The story unfolds so wonderfully that I don’t want to give away more of the plot. I literally sat and stared into space for an hour after I finished *A Gentleman In Moscow*, contemplating it and wishing it hadn’t ended. I may just have to re-read it.

RATING: 5 / 5
Incredibly Satisfying stars! REVIEW: Book hangover. Book hangover for days. I had such an emotionally fulfilled feeling at the end of this novel that when I finished the last page, I closed the book, sat back, sighed deeply, and thought, "well, what now? where do I go from here? how do I move on?"...book hangover. It seems convoluted to start a review with the ending of a book, but this

novel is actually a rather long tale, spanning 30+ years, so before I get into the journey, allow me this one break with decorum. The ending. Oh, this ending. Whenever anyone asks me which book ending I love the most, I will usually answer *Water for Elephants*, because it has one of the most satisfying endings I have ever read. And until now no other novel has come close to changing my answer. But *A Gentleman in Moscow*, if not completely upsetting Sara Gruen's work, at least pulls level with it, because it is such a satisfying end to this novel, and I'll say no more than that for fear of ruining the experience for anyone else. Who hasn't had the thought, at some point, that it would be nice to live in a hotel? Perhaps we don't imagine that it will be under house arrest and 1922 in Moscow, but it's a luxurious idea to entertain. It feels like such a universal fantasy that, despite the fact that we are not (probably) an aristocrat, a connoisseur of multiple tastes, exceedingly cultured, and currently exiled within our own country, we somehow connect with Count Rostov immediately. Here is a man from a by-gone era and yet he wins us over completely with his wit and charm from the very first page. This is all due completely to the beautiful writing of the author, of course. Amor Towles caught my attention with his first book *Rules of Civility* (which I also highly recommend), a book that is completely opposite to this one in nearly every way, except the writing. Towles writes with such sophistication and beauty in every carefully chosen word that it manages to feel effortless. It's captivating. *A Gentleman in Moscow* is rich with detail. The first half of the book creates a thorough and gorgeous visual of the hotel and its occupants. While it may seem a bit exhaustive, it's entirely necessary. The reader is being immersed so fully into this setting that we feel just as the Count feels in his many years in the Metropol. And nothing is without purpose. Each moment and person is leading somewhere and the second half of the book is a revelation of a life well lived. I would be remiss if I didn't mention the humor and philosophical wisdom running throughout this novel. At times it's witty and funny in that perfectly refined way, and in the next moment it's incredibly astute and insightful. I could quote this book for days. As I was reading I would reach for my phone to snap a picture of passage that I didn't want to forget. This happened often. As intelligent as it is entertaining, this book has it all. I could ramble on about the the delightful and stunning setting of this book as well as the cast of characters that weave in and out and in again, but it might actually be overkill. By this point I'm sure you know that I recommend this book for multiple reasons. So it seems only right that you should discover the hotel and the people in it for yourself without me spoiling a thing. *A Gentleman in Moscow* is wonderful from beginning to end. It's the type of book that I know I will reread because I'm not ready to let it go. I don't want to say goodbye to the world and people that Towles has created, so I won't. I'll revisit often and always with a perfectly paired glass of wine in my hand, as Count Rostov would approve.

Amor Towles's *A Gentleman in Moscow* describes a big life in a seemingly small world and paints a vibrant picture of Soviet history from 1922 through 1954. In this beautifully written and captivating story, Amor Towles tells a tale of the triumph of goodness over cruelty and hopefulness over despair. This second novel is as enjoyable and engaging as his first, *Rules of Civility*. In 1922, the Emergency Committee of the People's Commissariat For Internal Affairs sentences Count Alexander Ilyich Rostov to spend the rest of his life inside the Hotel Metropol for writing the poem "Where Is It Now?", which brashly asked the question, "where is our purpose now?" In imposing the sentence, the prosecutor pronounced that the Count "has succumbed irrevocably to the corruptions of his class and now poses a threat to the very ideals he once espoused. On that basis, our inclination would be to have you taken from this chamber and put against the wall." Instead, the Count is sentenced to a lifetime in the Hotel Metropol, where he has previously resided in luxurious accommodations. Of course, when he is returned to the Hotel, he is removed from his luxurious accommodations and moved to a single attic room. In trying to adjust to his new circumstances, the Count tells himself that "if a man does not master his circumstances then he is bound to be mastered by them" and that "imagining what might happen if one's circumstances were different was the only sure route to madness." And so the Count adjusts to the 30 or more years that he ultimately spends in the Hotel. Of course there are some challenges along the way. The Hotel Metropol is a grand hotel. It has a cocktail bar, the Shalyapin, one of the finest restaurants in Moscow, the Boyarsky (its chef is described as 5 foot five and 200 pounds), a more casual restaurant, the Piazza, a barbershop, a flower shop, a full time seamstress and a variety of meeting rooms and ballrooms. There is a lot of life in all of these places. The Count befriends a nine-year-old girl, Nina Kulikova, who is temporarily living in the hotel with her father and who introduces the Count to all of the secrets the Hotel has to offer. In return, the Count shares with Nina his wisdom and a lifetime friendship begins. This friendship enriches the Count's life in ways that I will leave for you to discover when you read this delightful novel. In the meantime, the Count's college friend Mischka shows up at the Hotel while he is visiting Moscow to help plan the inaugural Congress of the Russian Association of Proletarian Writers. The arrival of Mischka causes the Count to look back at his life in simpler days and gives us some history and context for the changes in the country described throughout the course of the novel.

Mischka shows up periodically throughout the story, always reflecting the changing political environment. While living at the Metropol, the Count meets people from all over the world, begins a love affair with a famous actress, spends many years tutoring a former red Army Colonel about the west, works as the head waiter at the Boyarsky and makes friends and enemies with the various people who lead their lives either in or through the Metropol. Throughout the book we learn a lot about the changes in Russian politics, sometimes through historical detail and sometimes through plot. My favorite example involves wine and the Boyarsky. The Count, a wine and food connoisseur, dines at the Boyarsky most evenings and is very selective about his wine. One evening in 1924, at the Boyarsky, the Count orders a bottle of Barolo and is told his choices are a red or a white. Asking for the restaurant manager, the Count is taken to the Hotel's wine cellar, housing more than 100,000 bottles. "And every one of them without a label." The explanation? "A complaint was filed with Comrade Teodorov, the Commissioner of Food, claiming that the existence of our wine list runs counter to the ideals of the Revolution. That it is a monument to the privilege of the nobility, the effete-ness of the intelligentsia, and the predatory pricing of speculators." In 1930, "[T]hanks to a member of the Central Committee, who had tried unsuccessfully to order a bottle of Bordeaux for the new French ambassador, wines with labels could once again be found in the Hotel's cellar." A lot of life and a lot of history takes place in this story, all told with humor, compassion and thoughtfulness. I leave it to you to discover. I finished the book wishing I knew more about Russian history and culture. If you like this post and would like to read more, visit FromBriefsToBooks.com.

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