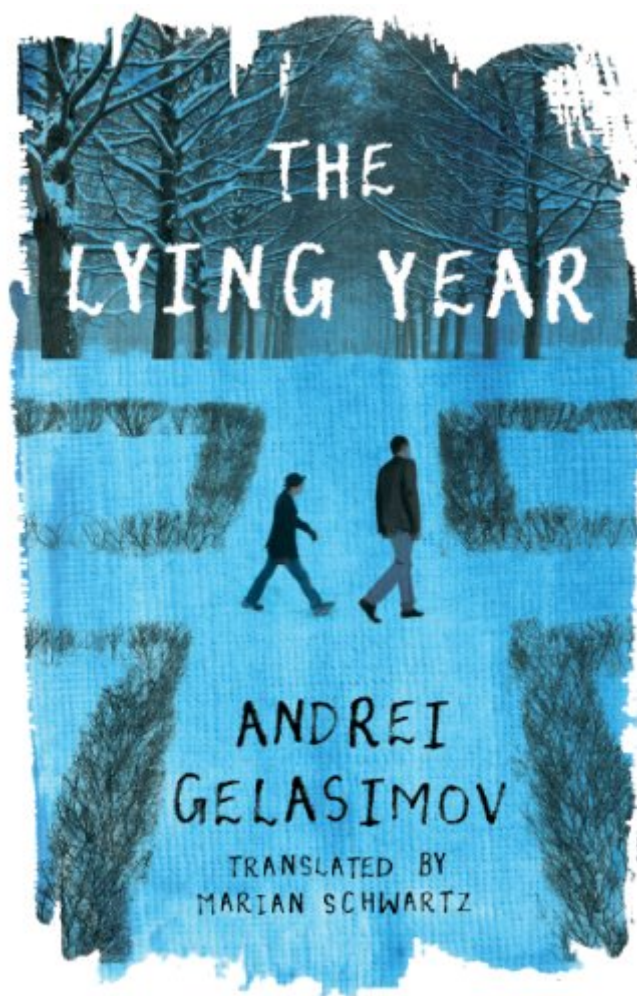


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# The Lying Year



## Synopsis

Could have been the blown business deal with the Italians. Could have been the unauthorized office party, which ended with the cops and then an arrest. No matter what finally got him fired, Mikhail never expected to find himself at Red Star Industries' office again. So down-and-out Mikhail is surprised to be called in by old boss Pavel Petrovich, who offers Mikhail easy money and the Land Rover of his dreams to teach his son, Sergei, how to "be a man" and to spy on him. Of course, Sergei's not the Internet-obsessed recluse his father believes. He's hiding a relationship with the beautiful Marina, who Mikhail himself can't help but fall for as well. To keep it all together, Mikhail finds himself lying to Petrovich about his son's activities, lying to Marina about Sergei's intentions, and lying to Sergei about his love for Marina. So when Sergei's father invites them all to Italy, the web of lies holding their world together begins to fall apart, and about the time Mikhail finds himself held hostage at gunpoint, he realizes he's gotten in way over his head |

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## Customer Reviews

I have long appreciated Russian novelists, especially the "usual suspect" classic writers like

Dostoevsky, Turgenev, Gogol, Tolstoy, Bulgakov. I am less familiar with those who are writing in contemporary Russia. I also find it difficult to judge the quality of the original Russian language writing when reading a work in English translation. Thus, I ordered "The Lying Year," by Andrei Gelasimov, not knowing quite what to expect, but having been intrigued by the description of the book's plot and theme. While awaiting the book's arrival, I wrote to a close friend in Moscow to ask if he had read any of Gelasimov, and his curt reply was: "We consider this writer to be 'airport reading'!" So, my expectations were lowered to anticipate something along the lines of a novel by James Patterson or David Baldacci. The actual experience of reading "The Lying Year," exceeded my expectations. Since I have visited post-Soviet Moscow on almost a dozen occasions, I have strong opinions and vivid memories of the place and of the ethos that has grown up in that city in the past 20 years. I found that Gelasimov's writing - and Marian Schwartz's very lucid translation - painted a very accurate picture of the life in Moscow that I had either seen with my own eyes or had heard about from trusted Russian friends. The action centers on some petty thieves, a few struggling business men, a wealthy oligarch who is concerned that his teenage son grow up to be a "proper" Russian man - scheming, drinking and womanizing. Mikhail is hired by Pavel Petrovich to instruct his son, Sergei while also spying on him. Things become complicated when Mikhail falls in love with the girl, Marina, that Sergei is dating behind his father's back.

The Lying Year is an interesting novel. It made me want to continue reading, and it interested me in these characters. There were some quirks, but it's difficult to know whether these were due to fundamental flaws or things that the author intended. At times, there did seem to be a problem with flow. It was difficult to say where it came from. The translation might have been a part of it, but if it was translated exactly as intended it's difficult to point to that. And there is no real way to know without comparing the original text with the translation. Having said that, I mostly found this to be a very good read. There were some things that irked me. Among them was an excessive emphasis on the "good looks" of the characters. When Mikhail meets Marina, he goes on about her looks when one sentence would suffice. When women meet him, on more than one occasion they ask to sleep with him before even knowing his name. This kind of superficial sexuality may just be a part of the author's ego-driven imagination. Or, it could be an accurate reflection of Russian culture of the period. I don't know which is which, but it didn't seem to really aid the story. It appeared gratuitous more than anything else. As we go deeper into the story, the plot has some moments that strain believability. But I was satisfied with how the author executed those. Still, there are some story elements that might irk people. But what interested me most about the story was the interaction

between Mikhail and Sergei. Each of them is created as a unique character, and in many ways they are polar opposites.

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