



# Waiting For America: A Story of Emigration (Library of Modern Jewish Literature)

*Maxim D. Shrayer*

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In 1987 a young Jewish man, the central figure in this captivating book, and his parents leave Moscow for good. They celebrate their freedom in opulent Vienna and spend two months in Rome and the coastal resort of Ladispoli. While waiting in Europe for a U.S. refugee visa, the book's twenty-year-old poet quenches his thirst for sexual and cultural discovery. Through his colorful Austrian and Italian misadventures, he experiences the shock, thrill, and anonymity of being in a Western democracy, running into European roadblocks while shedding Soviet social taboos. As he anticipates entering a new life in America, he movingly describes the baggage that exiles bring with them, from the inescapable family traps and ties to the sweet cargo of memory. An emigration story, *Waiting for America* explores the rapid expansion of identity at the cusp of a new, American life. Told in a self-denuding first-person narrative, *Waiting for America* is also a vibrant love story, in which the romantic protagonist is emotionally torn between Russian and Western women. Filled with poignant humor and reinforced by hope and idealism, the author's confessional voice wins the reader over and carries you, the way it carries the reader in literary memoirs such as Tolstoy's *Childhood, Boyhood, Youth*, Hemingway's *Moveable Feast* or Nabokov's *Speak, Memory*. Babel, Sebald, and Singer—all transcultural masters of identity writing—are the coordinates that help to locate *Waiting for America* on the greater map of literature.

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