



The Age of Ice: A Novel

J. M. Sidorova

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The Empress Anna Ioannovna has issued her latest eccentric order: construct a palace out of ice blocks. Inside its walls her slaves build a wedding chamber, a canopy bed on a dais, heavy drapes cascading to the floor—all made of ice. Sealed inside are a disgraced nobleman and a deformed female jester. On the empress's command—for her entertainment—these two are to be married, the relationship consummated inside this frozen prison. In the morning, guards enter to find them half-dead. Nine months later, two boys are born.

Surrounded by servants and animals, Prince Alexander Velitzyn and his twin brother, Andrei, have an idyllic childhood on the family's large country estate. But as they approach manhood, stark differences coalesce. Andrei is daring and ambitious; Alexander is tentative and adrift. One frigid winter night on the road between St. Petersburg and Moscow, as he flees his army post, Alexander comes to a horrifying revelation: his body is immune to cold.

J. M. Sidorova's boldly original and genrebending novel takes readers from the grisly fields of the Napoleonic Wars to the blazing heat of Afghanistan, from the outer reaches of Siberia to the cacophonous streets of nineteenth-century Paris. The adventures of its protagonist, Prince Alexander Velitzyn—on a lifelong quest for the truth behind his strange physiology—will span three continents and two centuries and bring him into contact with an incredible range of real historical figures, from Mary Shelley, the author of *Frankenstein*, to the licentious Russian empress Elizaveta and Arctic explorer Joseph Billings.

The Age of Ice is one of the most enchanting and inventive debut novels of the year.

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