



April in Moscow

STEPHEN RABLEY

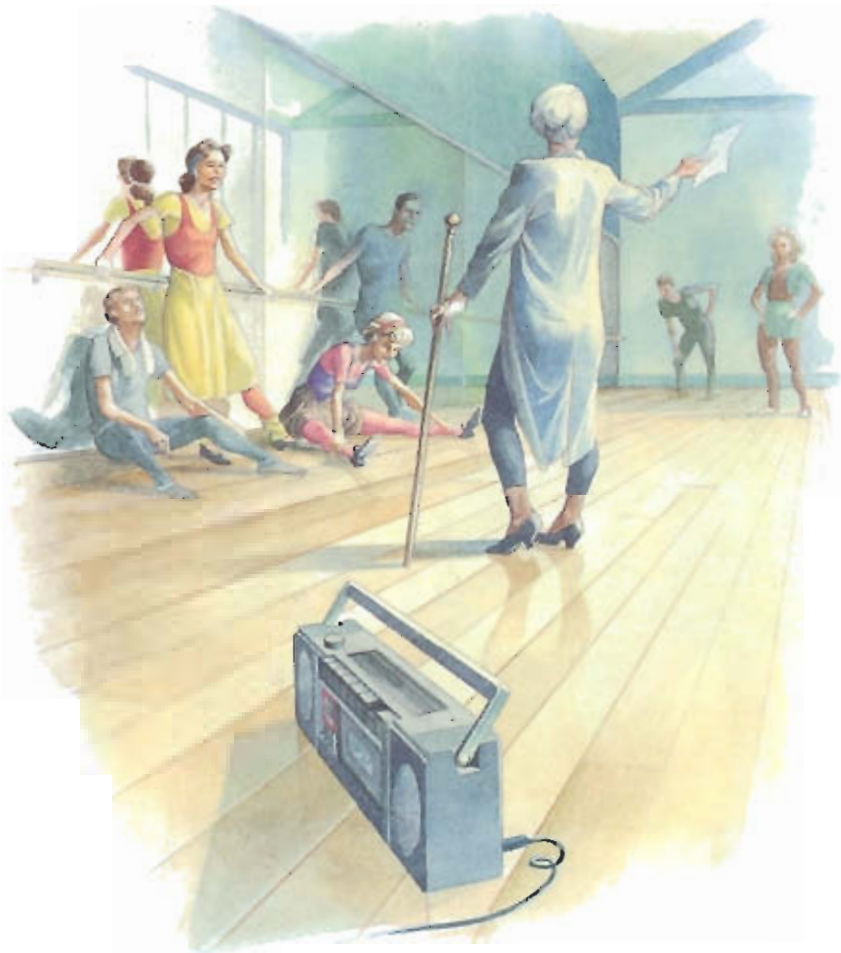


PENGUIN READERS



April Fox is a dancer. She works for the British Dance Company in Leeds. Her boss there is Maria Grant. One Monday morning, April arrives early. She sees Maria at the coffee machine. "I've got some good news," says Maria.

There is an envelope in her hand. "Really? What is it?" April asks. Maria smiles. "Wait and see," she says.



At ten o'clock the dancers are finishing their first class. Suddenly, Maria walks into the room. "Can I have a word with you all, please?" she says.

"What's this about?" asks April's friend, Laura.

"I don't know," April answers. The music stops.

"I have a letter here from Moscow," says Maria.

"The Russians want us to dance there next month."



Six weeks later, April is at Heathrow airport in London.

"You're going to have a very good time," says her father. "Of course she is, George," says Mrs Fox. "Now, April, have you got everything? Ticket, passport, money ... ?" April smiles. "Yes, Mum."

She says goodbye to her parents. Then she sees Laura and Maria. "Come on," says Laura. "It's time to go."



On the plane April and Laura talk about Moscow. They are both very happy. "I want to see everything," says Laura. "The Kremlin – Red Square – the Bolshoi ... " "Me, too," says April, "and I want to meet *lots* of people." "Don't forget we're going there to work," says Maria with a smile.

In Moscow a bus takes the dancers to their hotel.



April and Laura's hotel room is on the second floor. Laura walks in and puts her bags down. "Great! – there's a TV," she says and turns it on. A man is reading the news. She pushes another button. Now there's a pop video. "Look, April," she says. "Russian rock and roll." But April is not listening. She is looking out of the window. "Moscow," she thinks. "I'm in Moscow."



Next day the dancers work very hard. Their dance for the festival, *Green Oceans*, is new and very difficult. They start at eight o'clock and finish at six. Then, after dinner, they go to the Bolshoi Theatre. "This is beautiful," says April. Laura sits down next to her. "It really is," she says. Then they watch the Russian dancers. They are all tall, strong, and very, very good.



The day after, April and Laura finish at three o'clock. They go to a café and drink Russian tea. Then Laura looks at her map of Moscow. "Where do you want to go? The Pushkin Museum's near here," she says. "OK – let's go there," says April. Then she looks at the people in the café. "I want to talk to them," she thinks. "But how? I can't speak Russian."



In a street near the museum there is a small market. “Oh Laura, look,” says April. She can see some red and yellow boxes on a table. “Those are pretty.”

“They’re music boxes,” says a young man with glasses. “You speak English!” says April. The boy smiles. “I’m studying it at university. My friend Nikolai and I only work here at weekends.”



April and Laura talk to the boys for a long time. Sasha – the one with glasses – speaks English very well. Nikolai only speaks a little.

After twenty minutes, Sasha has an idea. “Listen,” he says. “We’re going to the country tomorrow for a week’s holiday. Some friends are going with us. Do you want to come for the day? It’s not very far.”



Next morning, Sasha and Nikolai arrive at the girls' hotel in their fathers' cars. There are three other people with them – Lara, Igor and Sonya.

They all drive to a lake near Moscow. Everyone is laughing and talking. At the lake they have lunch. After that Nikolai plays his guitar and sings Russian songs.

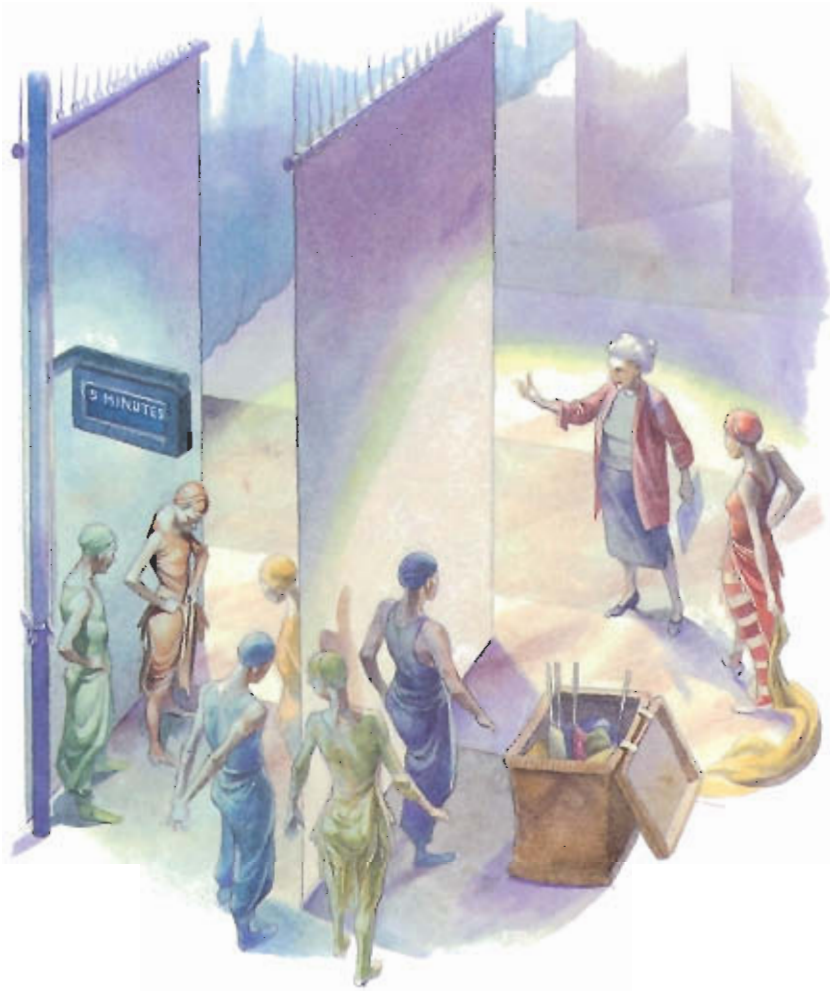
April listens to him.



There is a boat beside the lake. Late in the afternoon, April and Nikolai go out in it. Nikolai looks at April and smiles. April smiles, too. "It's very beautiful here," she says. Nikolai looks into her eyes.

"Yes," he says. "Beautiful. And you are ... beautiful ... too. I think I ..."

"April!" Laura shouts. "Come on. It's time to go!"



Back in Moscow there is a lot to do. All the dancers work very hard and have no free time.

April is tired. Sad, too. She wants to see Nikolai again. "But how?" she thinks. "Where? When? He's in the country and I'm here in Moscow."

Then, the British Dance Company's big night arrives. "Good luck, everyone," says Maria.



The evening goes very fast. April only thinks about one thing – *Green Oceans*.

But then, two hours later, the music stops. She stands under a white light. Laura and all the other dancers are beside her. Everyone in the theatre is throwing flowers. "I think they like us," says Laura. There is a sad smile on April's face. "Yes," she says. "I think they do."



Twenty-four hours later, all the British dancers are at Moscow airport. "Now I'm never going to see Nikolai again," thinks April. "And I can't write to him. I don't know his add ..."

Then someone says her name. She turns. It's Nikolai! "The plane's leaving," says Maria Grant. April looks at Nikolai. He gives her a parcel and walks away.



On the plane, April sits next to Laura. Her eyes are wet. She opens the parcel. "Oh, look," says Laura. "It's one of those music boxes – the ones in the market. And there's a letter, too! What does it say?"

But April is too happy to speak. She looks at the letter. "Can I come and see you in England?" "Oh, Nikolai, yes," she thinks. "Yes, you can!"

Questions

- 1 Which dance company does April work for? (page 1)
- 2 Who is her boss? (page 1)
- 3 Maria has some good news for the company. What is it? (page 2)
- 4 Which floor is April and Laura's hotel room on? (page 5)
- 5 What is *Green Oceans*? (page 6)
- 6 Where do April and Laura meet Sasha and Nikolai (page 8)
- 7 How long are Sasha and Nikolai going to the country for? (page 9)
- 8 Why can't April write to Nikolai? (page 14)
- 9 Nikolai gives April a parcel. What is inside it? (page 15)

Puzzle

Can you understand this message? Here's a clue. A=1, E=5 and P=16. Now, fill in the blanks.

13	15	19	3	15	23

9	19

20	8	5

3	1	16	9	20	1	12

15	6

20	8	5

21	19	19	18

Ideas

- 1 Draw and colour a picture of a) a Russian market, or b) Red Square, or c) April dancing in *Green Oceans*. Put lots of objects in your picture. Write the name of each one next to it in English.
- 2 Write a short letter from a) Nikolai to April or b) April to Nikolai.

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April Fox is very excited when the dance company she works for is invited to visit Moscow. April has a very busy time there – dancing and seeing as much of the city as possible. She also gets to know a young man called Nikolai . . .

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