

KINOFILES

THE FILM COMPANION



# LITTLE VERA

FRANK BEARDOW

I.B. TAURIS

**Little Vera**

## KINOfiles Film Companions

General Editor: Richard Taylor

Written for cineastes and students alike, KINOfiles are readable, authoritative, illustrated companion handbooks to the most important and interesting films to emerge from Russian cinema from its beginnings to the present. Each KINOfile investigates the production, context and reception of the film and the people who made it, and analyses the film itself and its place in Russian and world cinema. KINOfiles also include films of the other countries that once formed part of the Soviet Union, as well as works by émigré filmmakers working in the Russian tradition.

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# LITTLE VERA

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FRANK BEARDOW

KINOfiles Film Companion 8

I.B. TAURIS

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# Acknowledgements

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This book is dedicated to the memory of my parents.



# Note on Transliteration and Translation

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Transliteration from the Cyrillic to the Latin alphabet is a perennial problem for writers on Russian subjects. I have opted for a dual system: in the text I have used the Library of Congress system (without diacritics), but I have broken from this system (a) when a Russian name has a clear English version (e.g. Maria instead of Mariia, Alexander instead of Aleksandr); (b) when a Russian name has an accepted English spelling, or when Russian names are of Germanic origin (e.g. Yeltsin instead of Eltsin); (c) when a Russian surname ends in ii or yi this is replaced by a single y (e.g. Dostoevsky instead of Dostoevskii), and all Christian names end in a single i. In the scholarly apparatus I have adhered to the Library of Congress system (with diacritics) for the specialist.

All translations are my own, unless otherwise stated.

# Production Credits

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## **Production**

**Director:** Vasili Pichul

**Screenplay:** Maria Khmelik

**Director of photography:** Efim Reznikov

**Editor:** Elena Zabolotskaia

**Art director:** Vladimir Pasternak

**Costume designer:** Natalia Poliakh

**Make-up:** Valentina Zakharchenko

**Music:** Vladimir Matetsky

**Sound:** Pavel Drozdov

**Assistant director:** Valentina Pereverzeva

**Lyrics:** Igor Shaferan ('Your Voice'; 'It's So Good')

**Camera operator:** B. Filimonikhin

**Story editor:** Vera Biriukova

**Production unit manager:** Iuri Prober

**First assistant cameraman:** E. Liubinsky

**Assistant editors:** Elena Semenovych and Sofia Iaroslavskaja

**Stunt co-ordinator:** N. Sysoev

**Colour:** L. Redulesku

**Release year:** 1988

**Production company:** Gorky Film Studio

**Country:** USSR

**Running time:** 129 minutes (Russian version); 119 minutes (USA)

**Cast**

Vera:	Natalia Negoda
Sergei:	Andrei Sokolov
Father (Nikolai/Kolia):	Iuri Nazarov
Mother (Rita):	Liudmila Zaitseva
Viktor:	Alexander Alexeev-Negreba
Chistiakova (Lena):	Alexandra Tabakova
Andrei (Andriusha):	Andrei Fomin
Tolik:	Alexander Mironov
Mikhail Petrovich:	Alexander Lenkov

*Supporting cast*

A. Vasilev, G. Goriachev, V. Zakharchenko, E. Mariutina,  
G. Mitrushina, E. Fishkina, M. Khmelik, Natasha Smeian,  
Maxim Nairabe

# Plot Synopsis

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Vera lives in a run-down, provincial, industrial town with Kolia, her long-distance lorry-driver father whose sole relaxation seems to be the bottle, and Rita, her care-worn mother, who works shifts as a production quality controller at a local factory. The family lives in an unprepossessing block of flats. Vera has an unhappily married brother called Viktor, a self-seeking doctor in Moscow. Vera, who has just left school, has reluctantly applied for a place on a telephone operators' course at a local trade school. Vera and her friends, the wayward Lena Chistiakova, the part-time currency speculator Tolik, and the aspiring naval cadet Andriusha, idle away the summer with the help of alcohol. Rita, worried about Vera's behaviour and believing that Vera always had a special relationship with Viktor, asks the latter to come home to help Vera mend her ways. In the meantime Vera, much to Andriusha's chagrin, falls for the handsome, aloof, engineering student Sergei, whom she meets at a local open-air disco. Sergei has the reputation of being a sexual athlete. Although Lena is interested in him, he spends the night with Vera in the student hostel where he lives. Andriusha leaves for Naval College. Vera's behaviour continues to annoy Kolia, who persists in seeking release through alcohol and nostalgic songs. Lena begins an affair with Mikhail Petrovich, a middle-aged divorcee. Viktor arrives from Moscow and mouths platitudes. Vera is not impressed. Viktor, it transpires, knows Sergei. Viktor, while womanising and drinking at the hostel, discovers Vera in Sergei's room. He is enraged. Sergei claims that he wants to

## 2 Little Vera

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marry Vera. Vera agrees, though Viktor warns her of his reputation. The news of the marriage is not welcome at home. Vera tells her mother that she is pregnant, which is untrue. She asks her to tell Kolia. Nevertheless the family arrange a special meal to celebrate the engagement. Sergei arrives, shocking Vera's parents with his outlandish and inappropriate Bermuda shorts and T-shirt. Although Sergei is polite, Viktor warns his parents that it is all a sham. Sergei then upsets the family by walking out and taking Vera with him. Subsequently, Vera, while making love, chides Sergei for his bad behaviour. She also tells him of her lie about being pregnant. Viktor's return to Moscow means that there is a spare room at home. Without further ado, she and Sergei move in with her parents. The relationship between father and prospective son-in-law continues to deteriorate. Matters come to a head at Kolia's birthday party, which Sergei reluctantly attends. Sergei, provoked by Kolia, locks him in the bathroom. When Vera eventually lets him out, Kolia stabs him with a kitchen knife. Sergei is rushed to hospital. Viktor is once again summoned from Moscow. His solution is to prescribe tranquillisers. Vera is persuaded by her mother to change her earlier statement to the police and to suggest that it was Sergei who had provoked the father. Vera, dismissed by Sergei, bumps into Andriusha who is home on leave. He tries to force Vera to have sex with him. She fights him off. This is the last straw for her. She tries to commit suicide. Sergei discharges himself from hospital, meets up with Viktor and they both arrive back at the flat to be confronted by Vera's suicide attempt. Viktor saves her. He then tells his parents to look after her and satisfactorily to resolve the investigation into the stabbing as he has to return to Moscow. While Sergei and Vera sit together on the bed and wonder what the future holds for them, Kolia has a heart attack in the kitchen and dies.