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The Doomed City

Arkady Strugatsky, Boris Strugatsky

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Arkady and Boris Strugatsky are widely considered the greatest of Russian science fiction masters, and their most famous work, *Roadside Picnic*, has enjoyed great popularity worldwide. Yet the novel they worked hardest on, the novel that was their own favorite, the novel that readers worldwide have acclaimed as their magnum opus, has never before been published in English.

The Doomed City was so politically risky that the Strugatsky brothers kept its existence a complete secret even from their best friends for sixteen years after its completion in 1972. It was only published in Russia during perestroika in the late 1980s, the last of their works to see publication. It was translated into a host of major European languages, and now appears in English in a major new translation by acclaimed translator Andrew Bromfield.

The Doomed City is set in an experimental city whose sun gets switched on in the morning and switched off at night, bordered by an abyss on one side and an impossibly high wall on the other. Its sole inhabitants are people who were plucked from twentieth-century history at various times and places and left to govern themselves under conditions established by Mentors whose purpose seems inscrutable. Andrei Voronin, a young astronomer plucked from Leningrad in the 1950s, is a diehard believer in the Experiment, even though his first job in the city is as a garbage collector. And as increasingly nightmarish scenarios begin to affect the city, he rises through the political hierarchy, with devastating effect.

Boris Strugatsky wrote that the task of writing *The Doomed City* “was genuinely delightful and fascinating work.” Readers will doubtless say the same of the experience of reading it.

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