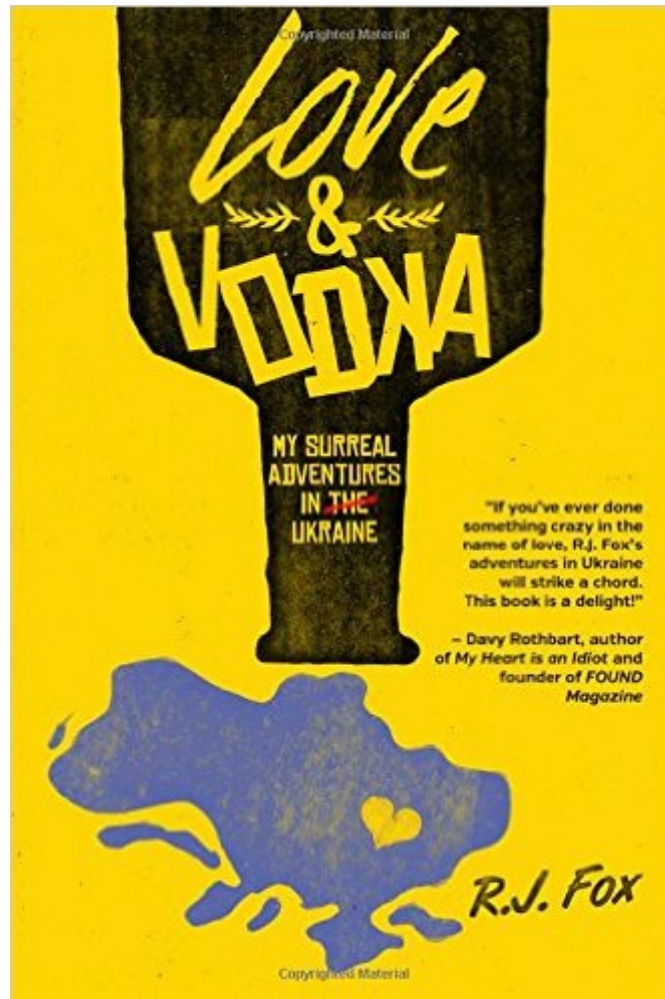


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# Love & Vodka: My Surreal Adventures In Ukraine



## Synopsis

Bobby is over the moon after sharing a bike on the E.T. ride at Universal Studios with Katya. Join our intrepid crusader as he takes a leap of faith traveling from comfortable have-a-nice-day | and have-a-warm-shower suburban Detroit to Dnipropetrovsk, Ukraine, the former center of Cold War Soviet missile production. And unbeknownst to anyone but himself, he's bringing an engagement ring! Experience life in a city that, until the mid-1980s, was closed to foreign visitors. R.J. Fox's humorous, poignant, and memorable expedition is punctuated by a colorful cast of characters, adventures, and cultural mishaps and misunderstandings from irate babushka women to hard-drinking uncles. Lesser mortals might have phoned home to be rescued. Armchair travelers and romantics you will find yourself both schooled in hard knocks and heartened to have shared in the unforgettable experience of Love & Vodka! "Za vashe zdorovie!" Love & Vodka is a unique hybrid of travel memoir and love story that seamlessly blends outlandish humor, cultural insight and a steady stream of romance. Anyone who has traveled abroad or is considering traveling will certainly connect to this book. The same can be said for anyone who is experiencing new love or pining for a love of their own. Love & Vodka is a faithful reminder that there is someone out there for everyone. The world is large and rife with potential; one just needs to be willing to take a gamble and explore the possibilities that exist.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

R.J. Fox has brought the phrase "stranger in a strange land" to life in Love and Vodka! Fox's tales of

social/language barriers and culture shock are relatable to anyone who has ever felt like an outsider in some way. Additionally, Fox pours out his heart in stirring ways as he describes his adventures in the pursuit of love. Readers can expect to keep the pages turning, because Fox has managed to make his experiences so relatable to any individual who has ever been head over heels in love. After reading this book, I felt like I had a whole new understanding of the idea that the truth is stranger than fiction.

Love, science reveals, is really just another form of madness. The brain undergoes similar changes, from the rational into the irrational, and the resulting pheromone chemical soup tastes like insanity. Dearborn-native (Michigan) and author R.J. Fox would probably not debate any of that. It took all of twenty minutes for him to fall in love with a foreign exchange student he spotted in a line for an amusement park ride. When she returned to her native Ukraine, he followed her, engagement ring in his pocket. And more madness ensued. In his memoir, *Love and Vodka: My Surreal Adventures in Ukraine* (Fish Out of Water Books, October 2015), Fox recounts that initial meeting with Katya and the trip he took to Ukraine a year later to bring her back to the States again as his wife. His adventures on foreign soil as he works up the nerve toward a marriage proposal and earn the blessing of Katya's family are both outrageous and hilarious. Babushka-wearing old women curse him, snarl and chase him, threaten to splatter him with bleach. Well-meaning hosts force vodka on him in toast after toast that he finds he cannot deny, resulting in drunken stupors, cold outdoor showers, and barefoot walks across sharp-edged rocks in his underwear. And so the story unfolds as Fox learns about a culture and a world far different than his own. Within its traditions and people, he finds himself in comical situations, but he also learns lessons about himself, love, and home. What has remained with him from that mad and maddening journey these many years later, Fox says, "is the immersive experience of being in a whole other world than the one I know. Out in general public, people had a distrust toward me because I was not from Ukraine. This was in 2001, so not too far removed from the Soviet years when Ukraine was the center of missile-building during the Cold War. The distrust it was the closest to feeling discriminated against that I'd ever known in my lifetime. In inner circles of what would increasingly become family, however, Fox found warmth, love, and family connection, not unlike what one would find in any family anywhere, and all liberally christened with yet more vodka. Although the resulting marriage would last only eight years Fox is now remarried and has two children he holds his memories of his Ukraine adventure close to his heart. The memoir is the first publication of a new Ann Arbor-based publisher, Fish Out of Water, run by Jon and Laurie

Wilson.

If you like reading, especially non-fiction, go out and pick up a copy of "Love and Vodka." It's a crazy whirlwind of a memoir written by R.J. "Foxy" Fox about how he met not just his wife, but the woman of his dreams. Before reading this, I thought I was a "hopeless romantic" (emphasis on hopeless?) But the love this man has after the "chance" (fateful) meeting he has one day at an amusement park is nothing short of extraordinary, only to be out done by what he does AFTER meeting her. If you've ever wanted to become more cultured in the world, but don't really want to leave the states (...kinda like me) this is GREAT book that explores and teaches a small, but crucial part of another culture! Not to mention getting to laugh as "Bobby" embarrasses himself countless times trying to learn a new things. Foxy was my high school teacher for a few classes and after reading this, I see him in a new, incredible light about what he's willing to do for love and passion (and yes, for the record, he talks just like he writes). Not too long, but more importantly, a great read from a great teacher and a better person.

As a semi-pro ex-pat, having lived almost 8 years between three countries, I'm always eager to read about other American's experiences in distinctly non-American settings. And you can't get much farther away from the apple pie, hot dog, purple mountains majesty (or more precisely, suburban Detroit) than a former Soviet Block country like Ukraine. And of course, as the first word of the title states without flinching, the reason for Bobby's trip to Ukraine is "love." I was hooked from the moment this was presented to me! I truly adore the author's style. This memoir could easily be read as a novel, or perhaps more appropriately, a screenplay. An utterly charming romp, rich with humor and culture shock--and at its heart, a solid gold love story. Don't miss it!

This book is full of laughter and love and of course vodka. The writer is the every man who finds himself in a extraordinary adventure all in the name of love. From beginning to end you are rooting for the writer to just make it though the next hurdle (be it asking a girl who catches his eye out, or finding the courage to ask a particular question...or survive a "sobering" experience). The description of the writers adventures in Ukraine, his interactions with all he meets and the countless "Babushka" ladies kept me laughing out loud. If you have every done something crazy, if you have ever laid it all out on the line for love, this is the book for you. 5 out of 5 stars.

This book was an incredibly enjoyable read. Love and Vodka authentically represents Ukrainian

culture. My grandmother was born in Dnipropetrovsk and when I told her about R.J. Fox's adventures her face practically lit up in delight. This book provides an amazing perspective and allows one to reflect on just how lucky we are to have something as simple as a warm shower. Bobby's willingness to travel thousands of miles into the complete unknown, for the sake of love, demonstrates courage and a thirst for adventure that not many would be able to match. A great story for ambitious travelers and for those looking to be inspired to chase the ones they love.

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