

I Wish I Didn't Have to Tell You This

By Eugene Yelchin

Dear Booksellers,

I want to thank you for placing my new book on your shelves and assure you that if you need assistance in encouraging your customers' interest, I would be honored to give a helping hand in any way.

I Wish I Didn't Have to Tell You This is my graphic memoir about falling in love with Libby, an American exchange student studying in the USSR where I lived. Falling in love with an American was a tremendous risk for a Soviet citizen. The secret police (the KGB) suspected anyone in contact with an American to be a traitor to the state. I leapt headlong into this perilous romance, uplifted by love yet terrified of its consequences.

The USSR of my early adulthood was a true police state, and I can tell you with absolute confidence that a police state is only good at one thing—scaring its citizens. They scared me good and proper, and some of how they did it is in the book. But not until I met Libby had I become fully aware of my fear of the state, of my submission to it, of my passive contribution to its existence.

It was Libby who taught me how not to be scared. It was from her that I learned that some things had been stolen from me, three simple things I did not know were mine—life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

I am hopeful that by reading *I Wish I Didn't Have to Tell You This*, my young American readers will take a better look at those three simple things in their own lives that they have taken for granted. I am hoping they might become more attentive to what they have been fortunate to inherit by virtue of being American citizens. That preserving those three simple things requires personal courage. That, in fact, as I hope my book shows, happiness is often achieved at great risk to both life and liberty.

This book is the most important book that I have ever made. My Russian youth described in these pages is simultaneously a tribute to love as well as a political warning. It was love that was the agent for inspiring courage in an otherwise cowardly budding artist (me). Libby's faith in life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness gave me faith to risk it all to fight to come to America. I hope the book will inspire readers to defend America's promise with equal faith.

**With much gratitude,
Eugene Yelchin**



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