

About the author:

MIKHAIL TURBIN was born in 1986 in Velikiy Novgorod, a small town not far from both Moscow and St. Petersburg. Turbin graduated from the Moscow Forest Engineering Institute. He studied creative writing at CWS, curated by Maya Kucherskaya, Marina Stepnova, and Elena Kholmogorova. In 2023, Turbin was awarded a scriptwriting contract from Russia's leading film production company after successfully completing their creative writing course. A TV show resulting from this script premieres on a large Russian platform in autumn 2025.

Mikhail Turbin is a published writer of a dozen short stories. *Higher Up* is his first novel, which won him the second prize in Alexander Pushkin's Litsei Prize and was shortlisted for the Big Book Award in 2022.

Currently, Mikhail Turbin resides with his family in Velikiy Novgorod and works on the script for a new TV series, as well as his second, much-anticipated novel.



Selected Bibliography

2022 — **Higher Up**, *novel*

Awards

Shortlisted for the **Big Book Award** 2022

Alexander Pushkin's Litsei Prize (second prize) 2022

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*Film rights optioned**Theater rights*

Novgorod Drama Theater

TV series in
development

Higher Up

True Detective in a dreary setting of Russia's province.

With its bleak, haunting atmosphere and unflinching social insight, *Higher Up*, Turbin's riveting debut, delves into the darkness of human nature, echoes grief and loss, and traces the razor-thin divide between guilt and redemption.

Dr. Ilya Rudnev is a gifted physician working in the children's intensive care unit of a provincial hospital. Every day he fights for the lives of children, and for Rudnev this is more than a duty — it is a calling, if not an obsession. A year ago, in a single tragic day, he lost his wife and young son. Their deaths were not the result of an accident: his wife suffered from a mental condition that deteriorated during her pregnancy, but Rudnev loved her blindly, disregarding the alarming signals of her condition, which culminated in an unthinkable tragedy. Ever since, he has grappled with the burden of grief and an unbearable sense of guilt.

One night, an unconscious four-year-old boy, a victim of a hit-and-run, is brought into the ER — a boy who uncannily resembles Rudnev's dead son. Though the child's condition is critical, Rudnev manages to save him. But the boy has no name, and no parents are reported missing. The only information the hospital has is that he darted out of the forest into the path of a car. Examination reveals that many of his bruises predated the accident — clear signs of domestic abuse. The painful memory of his dead son compels Rudnev to uncover the truth and confront his own past.

Rudnev's search leads him to a nearby village, now in decay with only a handful of residents still dragging on. There, he discovers a home burned to

the ground. Locals claim the entire family perished — a father with three children — the fire so intense that the children's bones were reduced to ashes. The father drank heavily, and the family was considered troubled even by local standards. The police swiftly closed the case, ruling it a tragic accident. Haunted by the ghost of his son, Rudnev continues his search for connections between the hospital boy and the "perished" family.

When the boy eventually awakens, he appears terrified and insists that a wood goblin took him and his two sisters, locking them in a hideout. From his tangled tale, it becomes clear that he was hit by a car while fleeing a monster. He pleads with Rudnev to help find his sisters, still trapped somewhere in the woods.

Rudnev turns to the police, but they dismiss the child's story as fantasy, unwilling to reopen the case. With nothing left to lose, he embarks on a dangerous, solitary mission to find the missing children. For him, this is more than a rescue — it is a final chance at redemption.

Higher Up is a slow-burning noir thriller that grips readers with tense mystery while casting a piercing gaze at a society numbed by depression and indifference. Rudnev is no modern Don Quixote — he does not tilt at the injustices of the world. His actions are driven instead by the anguish of a man whose life lost all meaning with the death of his family. Yet, within this bleak descent, a glimmer of hope persists — hope for him, and for the children he saves. It is this fragile light that transforms the novel into not only a compelling thriller but also a truly healing read.

Selected quotes

This novel is a perceptive and precise diagnosis of contemporary Russia, written in an engaging, vivid style, with great love for its characters — and for us, its readers.

Maya Kucherskaya

Mikhail Turbin's novel is deeply human, tragic, and filled with love for the small, private life.

Grigory Sluzhittel

writer