

The Greatest Work Of Anatolii Borisovich

My dear poet Ashwin Aireevich Ashkolnikov,

I trust you have had a good Moscovian autumn my friend. I send my apologies in writing to you after such a period of length, for I have been rather occupied with a conquest in Petersburg this autumn, which I must detail to you.

The wife of a German colonel. But she is quite unlike any of my previous conquests Ash, I must emphasise, she bears the fatal trait of being a woman in Russia who dreams. Yes, my friend, rumour reached me that our dear Olga, the wife of a Colonel Gotsberg, wears no flowers or ornaments inside the ballroom; that our dear Olga entertains no pleasantries from noblemen far from Crimea during or after the quadrille. I saw this Dame for the first time in the Petersburg spring, when she came to see a play by yours truly, Anatolii Borisovich T. I saw a woman of sadness, whose dreams were not in the Colonel her arm was attached to, but perhaps on stage I suspected, a suspicion I confirmed upon meeting the gaze of her wide, naive eyes for a brief moment across the theatre, eyes devoid of that same sadness for just that brief moment. I knew instantly that that would not be the last time I caught that woman's gaze.

It was at Madame Neduomova's place this Autumn past that my conquest with dear Olga turned into a connection. I discovered a woman disinterested in the ways of high society, disinterested in affairs with noblemen, and absolutely disinterested in affairs with her husband 20 years her senior. But what I did discover was that this woman carried the curse that tortures the

Russian woman. Trauma births a poet, and dear Olga was destined to suffer. To be diagnosed with the disease of being a Dame who dreams, is a death sentence denouncing her to her destined demise.

Her infatuation with me, and my illusions of romance, allowed me into this Dame's life. I saw behind the curtain of her marriage devoid of love, into that naked part of her soul which wore clothes of independence and education. Yes, my dear friend, our Olga was a poet herself. I say *was*, for by the end of autumn, I ensured poetry was as distant to her as her very own Colonel. Why, you ask? A valid query to which I reveal an answer that can not escape the parchment of this letter.

Olga was not just a poet, she was a mighty fine one, a finer one than I ever suspected myself to be. In my years as Anatolii Borisovich T. The tales of love and the fantasies of happiness I have put on paper have been motivated for but one purpose: fame in high society. But Olga, the words that her ink painted on paper, these were words from the heart, truer than any words I had ever spoken. Like the symphonies of Vivaldi were they to be inspired by love, her poetry flowed into my heart and into every emotional pore of my skin that I found overwhelming and unbearable. How could a young woman be the poet I could never be? It was then my friend, that my connection with Olga morphed into callousness.

Olga's illness of innocence ensured that she saw God in me over our time spent at Madame Neduomova's place. We sat through the garbage that Zhorzhinka and Vasinka called poetry, and praised it with the sharpest of lies, but Olga's own poetry never left the pages of her

books. A real shame. Consider my destruction of her desire for poetry an act of protecting her from a society celebrating frauds such as Zhorzhinka and Vasinka, rather than ever allowing a woman like her to be the poet she is. Her loneliness thought it found a cure in me, and like a snake with a sleeping lamb, I tightened my grip around her until I strangled all the dreams out of her for good.

Just as one does with every gullible soul desperate for answers to their own intelligence, once our dear Olga saw god in me, that god had to vanish, and vanish I did, into the arms of Countess Ombroso. Madness is better than hope, and from the words I heard, I did indeed cure Olga's sickness of hope and condemned her to a less painful madness instead. I feigned illness, I spread rumours about my own demise, I could just imagine how it must have affected her, how her quill trembled till it could not put ink to paper. Oh Ash, this was my greatest work as a poet. I lured her into the fatal trap where, with great subtlety and design, I let her know in no uncertain terms that every moment, from spring to autumn, was nothing but selfish pretense. She was, even for a man she saw God in, nothing more than a conquest who eventually got bored of her. Alas, I will never be a woman in Russia, so I can't imagine the torture her gullible little heart and mind must've experienced, but I sincerely wish I could. The country will continue to admire the poetry of Anatolii, and someday, if she has not given up reading about love and dreams for good, dear dear Olga might see the words she wrote published in one of my plays, and might feel some satisfaction that her work will be admired and celebrated, even if the laurels will be held by yours truly. Yes, my dear friend Ash, this is *indeed* my greatest work.

I recently heard Olga stopped searching for God in me, and instead found God in the churches of the country. Sad as I am that she has stopped worshiping me as the God she once saw, relieved I remain that at least she will never find God in a quill and a pot of ink for the rest of her days, because my dear friend, if she did, then perhaps a God might truly exist in our country, and Anatolii might not.

Yours Sincerely,

Anatolii.

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