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### "This Frightful World" by Alexander Blok translated by Jason Curlin

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*Ouachita Baptist University*

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# SENIOR THESIS APPROVAL

This Honors thesis entitled

**“This Frightful World”**

by Alexander Blok

translated by

**Jason Curlin**

and submitted in partial fulfillment of  
the requirements for completion of  
the Carl Goodson Honors Program  
meets the criteria for acceptance  
and has been approved by the undersigned readers.

Dr. Trofimova, thesis director

Dr. Curlin, second reader

Dr. Wink, third reader

Dr. Barbara Pemberton, Honors Program director

April 15, 2013

**Authors' Note**

I want to begin this by saying that Alexander Blok is a legitimately strange poet, and his poetry is equally strange. He has no objection to switching word order in places where the Russian words no doubt feels uncomfortably violated; Blok relies ridiculously on noun declension to determine meaning putting prepositions in front of direct objects and objects of the preposition wherever he desires. Unfortunately, English does not have such a convenient method for word rearrangement, and in fact moving a single word can make the sentence mean something entirely different. So I have not been true to Blok in this. My word order is contrary to perhaps the wishes of Blok, but this was a necessary sacrifice.

Mostly I do attempt to be true to the original rhyme scheme, but English once again is harder to rhyme than Russian is having limited noun declensions which seem to be Blok favorite rhyming crutch. So I do rhyme, but I rhyme by changing the arrangement of entire stanzas at time so that words of similar sounds can be on opposing lines.

Be warned. Blok readily drifts into the archaic at times, and several times uses words that are no longer used and have other words that have now taken their place. I ignore this in most places, not wishing to use archaic English words in an attempt to replicate the unreplicable.

I also want to say that I had a lot of fun writing this. And want to thank Dr. Trofimova for teaching me everything I know about Russian and introducing me to this great poet.

I would also like to thank Dr. Wink for teaching me how to use the English language in a poetic form and my father, Dr. Curlin, for showing me, through his life and his works, how to use English properly.

## Introduction

Alexander Blok was one of the poets of a movement that would come to be known as the "Silver Age of Russian Poetry" and thus an avid Symbolist, in fact the leading Symbolist poet at this time. The poets in this movement, while maintaining in many places the strict rhyme of the earlier so called "Golden Age," began to deviate from the strict meter of that time. These poets are products of their time, the earlier 20th Century, and were heavily influenced by those they found around them.

"This Frightful World" was begun in 1909, a mere four years after many Russians lost hope not only in the Emperor and the current State but also in the Church. In the years preceding 1905, Russia had participated in the Russo-Japanese War, a war which not only cost many human lives but also shook the Russian people's confidence in the Tsarist regime. Tens of thousands had died in a seemingly useless war over pieces of land that most people in the motherland would never see or care about their entire lives. And then in 1904, Tsarist Russia underwent an undeniable defeat in the war, with the United States itself coming in to dictate that the Japanese would receive the disputed area of land. So by early 1905, the Russian people were tired of seemingly pointless wars and disillusioned with the Tsar.

So when in early 1905, a group of workers in St. Petersburg were violently dispersed by Tsarist forces because of the betrayal of the once-friendly priest Georgiy Gapon in an event named "Bloody Sunday", things had finally reached a breaking point. This created nationwide, unprecedented social and political upheavals which were also in many cases incredibly violent. Altogether, these changes led to Nicholas's grudgingly adoption of the October Manifesto in late 1905 which directly allowed the first Duma (The Russian Parliament) which would meet for the first time in May of 1906.

Nicholas put up with the people's voice against him till he could bear with it no longer. So in June, during the second Duma, the Coup of 1907 occurred, where Nicholas changed the balance of powers within the Duma to give the nobility more voice. Because of this the third and fourth Dumas were dominated by the Octobrists making the Duma far more conservative and far more supportive of Tsarist policies than the first two Dumas had been.

Even with the new conservative Duma in power, the Duma still had no method to enforce or to implement policies, and thus Nicholas II was perfectly willing to ignore any policy changes the Duma called for and often to practice such willingness. The Duma and its supporters grew angrier and angrier over perceived slight.

The straw that broke the camel's back, however, was Russia's entry into World War I. This action not only led to an unpopular war which sent the sons and fathers of the motherland against people that the majority of the Russian populace would never see but also depleted the military power of the tsarist forces which would have a resounding effect in the coming revolution.

This was the world in which Blok, an avid revolutionist in the beginning, lived and wrote. However, Blok himself was the son of a well-off family, his grandfather the head of the University of Mosow. Up to the late half of the first decade of the 20th century, Blok had literally only been writing about his almost religious devotion towards his wife. The tone of Blok's poetry begins to change after 1905; his love is still his main focus, but it is only superficial and is there to stress the more major dialogue of the war and political changes. The poetry collection ends in 1916, the year when Blok is drafted into the military.

Also while reading this, it is important to realize that Blok so idolized his lovely wife that he extremely limited his own sexual relations with her and instead had extramarital relations. He

did this because he wanted to maintain her purity so that she wouldn't fall in his eyes. So in a poem such as "A Song of Hell," his guilt over sleeping with his own wife is actually real. He considered it a sin.

And now, without further ado...

**This Frightful World****To My Muse**

These are your secret tunes,  
The fatal news of death.  
And the curse of sacred covenants,  
The Rape of happiness.

And the force of your beauty compels  
Me to share that the rumor is ready  
That you have brought down angels,  
All seduced by your beauty.

And when you laugh at faith,  
Above you, appearing suddenly,  
In a dim purplish grey,  
I see this circle visibly.

Kind or not, you are not from here  
Full of awe, they speak of you,  
To them, you're a Muse, a miracle  
But to me, you're my torture, my hell.

I do not know why, but at dawn,  
In the hour where we are powerless,  
I did not die but saw your face  
and asked for your solace.

I wanted for us to be enemies  
But then I look at what you have given me:  
A meadow of flowers, a sky filled with stars.  
Aren't they all cursed by your beauty?

And the treacherous northern night,  
And the ashamed golden ax,  
And the short love of the Romani  
These are your terrible caresses ...

And these are fatal joys  
 Opposing cherished shrines,  
 And her mad heart's desire  
 Is as bitter as Wormwood.

*December 29th, 1912*

**Beneath the noise monotonous**

Beneath the noise monotonous  
 Beneath the city fuss  
 I leave the motionless soul  
 In the storm, in the void, in the darkness.

I cut the thread of consciousness  
 And forget that all around  
 Are snow, trams, and buildings,  
 While ahead lies light and darkness.

What if I while bewitched  
 By this dangling thread,  
 I return home dishonored, -  
 Will you forgive me?

Will you, knowing my distant goal,  
 Be my leading light  
 And forgive my stormy soul  
 My poetry, gloom, and delirium.

Or better yet, are you able,  
 while I'm still unforgiven,  
 lead from my native land  
 in the darkness of the night.

*February 2nd, 1909*

**In these days, between homes**

In these days, between homes,  
 We meet only for a moment.  
 You sear me with your eyes



And hide in dark dead ends.

My eyes are filled with silent fire.  
 No wonder you douse my flame  
 And before you, silent lie,  
 I tend to them in vain.

Maybe winter nights will place us  
 In a mindless and devilish ball  
 Where your dagger, your eyes, must  
 Destroy my all.

*October 6th, 1909*

### **From the Crystal Gloom**

From the crystal gloom  
 From sleep unbelievable  
 Someone's image moves strangely  
 (From a restaurant's room  
 For a wine bottle).

The songs that gypsies sung  
 Flown from a distant hall  
 Where distant violins play vaguely  
 The winds and virgins  
 Into mirrors fall

Look in the gaze, that burning blue  
 Delineated space,  
 Oh Magdalene! Magdalene!  
 The wind from the desert blew  
 A swelling blaze.

The blizzard and your narrow glass  
 The blizzard is the scorched globe,  
 The southern sun.  
 But life is only half  
 Under these deaf windows

So strange this is becoming  
That here and now I met him

Suddenly, impertinently smiling,  
He disappeared again...  
This is saddening  
For somewhere else, I've seen him...  
Perhaps, we've had a meeting  
Through a mirror's smooth surface

*October 1909*

### **A Song of Hell**

On the day in the field of the land that was burnt  
I had looked for the ways of the shortening of days  
and the place where all twilight was violet.

I wasn't there. So In the path underground,  
At night, I will go, down slippery slopes,  
All hell looks the same through sad, empty eyes.

I was thrown to the ground in a bright, horrid ball,  
In a wild dance of masks and disguises  
And forgot all the love and the friendship I'd lost

Where are you, Beatrice? Where's my companion?  
I'm walking alone, having lost the right path  
In underground circles as regularly done.

Mid the horror and gloom I am drowning  
Here a stream carrying past friends and women  
Back and forth their empty eyes are pleading.

A tender cry for mercy didn't sound like what I said  
For it shrank to something pointless and stupid  
For all the words that I have, have turned dead

And I who'd once quiet songs sang  
Now had an iron ring of pain around my head  
And lost all my rights, an outcast became.

So strange this is becoming  
That here and now I met him

Suddenly, impertinently smiling,  
He disappeared again...  
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All the hopeless aspire to the pit  
And I followed suit. But while breaking rocks  
Over the Peno's flow the color of snow.

Before me came the endless hall.  
Of fragrant roses, cacti chains  
Scapes of darkness in mirror was all;

Where the flicker of distant morns  
Of fallen, slightly gilded idols  
Where I found it hard to breathe.

This hall reminded me of a terrible world  
Where I wandered blind as in a tale  
And caught my final meal.

There, a thrown and gaping mask  
There, an aging man's wife seduced  
A brazen light caught them in a vile caress.

But the covered windows redden  
With the Morning's cold kiss  
And the strange silence is made a violent pink.

And in this blissful moment, peaceful we abide  
I sit silent watching with a worrying premonition  
In this time that wipes away all our earthly lies.

In the mirror and through the morning mist  
I, the youth, approach  
Out of the web of darkness

The gleam of red upon his coat shows dark  
Pale lips stare from a dead man's face  
And on his finger is a mysterious marriage mark,

A shining, amethyst ring;  
And I look with excitement  
On the features of his aged face

And I ask in an almost inaudible voice:  
 "Could you tell me why you languish  
 And wander in circles unending? "

While over his features comes confusion,  
 His burnt mouth greedily swallowed the air  
 And his voice then came from the void:

"Know: my punishment is just deserts  
 For while I was in this grievous land  
 I lay under passion's heavy yoke

For our city is hardly ever hidden  
 For tormented waves play a mad tune,  
 And on my brow is imprinted my crime

As a tortured, fallen maiden  
 Seeks oblivion within the wine...  
 The Hour has come for wrath's revenge:

Here from depths of dream  
 My wonderful wife is clasping,  
 Blinding, shining in front of me.

But the evening bells of brittle glass,  
 The fog of drunken moments met,  
 These moments which she despised me,

But while i was the apple of her eye,  
 I understood the joy of being first  
 and I let out passion's first cry.

The moment was finished after just a thought  
 And after the evening hazy and the deep deaf darkness  
 Like strange meteors they rose up high.

And now there's blood in this amethyst ring  
 And I've drunk within those fragrant arms,  
 And it tasted all thick like tar.

But don't believe these odd stories  
 That seem to be strange dreams...  
 From the depths of the misty nights and cliffs

And then to me the death knell came  
 Burning unneeded times  
 Whistling over us approached these flames!

And the close together chains  
 Swept us deep beneath the world!  
 Bound forever in our deaf dreams.

They give me back her scent and that painful feast  
 When on that night like monster old  
 I leaned upon her satin shoulder

But I can not call my life terrible  
 I'm barely cold and sick at dawn  
 Radiance does poorly in hell.

From hall to hall, I go to finish my covenant  
 The Driving Yearning passion without beginning  
 I'm doomed in the distant bedroom's darkness,  
 Where she is sleeping and breathing.  
 I bend over her lovingly, sadly,

Sinking my ring into her pale, white shoulder"

*October 31st, 1909*

**In the harbor, in late autumn**

In the harbor, in late autumn  
 where on the ground the snow is swept  
 The heavy ships depart  
 for their places far away

In the sky above the water  
 A meaningful crane is seen  
 And a lonely lantern swings  
 On the snowy shore

Where a shipless sailor staggers.  
 "I've lost it all and all  
 "I have consumed and  
 can no more continue" he utters

In a deserted beach haven  
 First light reveals what snow has brought...  
 In the purest, most delicate shroud  
 Do you sleep sweetly, sailor?

*November 14th, 1909*

### **On the Islands**

Again came the columns of snow  
 Over the Elagin bridge with two lamp stands  
 And the sound of a woman in love,  
 of a horse's snort, of the crunch of sand.

Two shadows are merged in a kiss  
 Flying in a Russian sled.  
 While not caring what others see,  
 I am new with her, a captive.

Yes, there is a sad delight  
 That love will be just like snow.  
 I need you to really swear  
 That you will be forever faithful.

No, I'm not the first caress  
 And in my rigorous definition  
 In my humility, I do not play  
 Which is required by the kingdom.

No, with the persistence of a geometer  
 I include every time without words  
 Bridges, a chapel, the sharpness of wind  
 All the deserted lowly islands.

I honor the rite. It is easy to fill.  
 A bearskin is flying too  
 Hugging that slender waist  
 Racing in the darkness and snow

And remember these narrow shoes  
 Falling in love in frosted fur ...  
 After all, my chest will not  
 Be pierced with love a second time

After, with a candle as a careful alarm  
 The mother won't wait at the door...  
 After this the poor husband shudders,  
 He will not become jealous for her...

On whom does the passing night shine  
 And who is truly shown?  
 All of this only draws out the ball  
 In the light, in the darkness of change.

*November 22nd, 1909*

### **And then comes the end of peace**

And then comes the end of peace,  
 With all the plaintive notes  
 Your presence, gone now, teases me  
 And guards me in this desert.

Life is empty, pointless, and bottomless.  
 Since the time when I sang while in love  
 I have only thought like this  
 As anyone who has flown knows.

*February 11th, 1910*



**Grey twilight lay**

Grey twilight lay  
 On this pale city in Spring.  
 A car sang away  
 With a whining horn.

Peering through a pale window,  
 Clinging tightly to the glass...  
 Peering. You have changed over time,  
 Irrevocably.

*February 11th, 1910*

**The spicy spirit of March was in the lunar Disk**

The spicy spirit of March was in the lunar disk,  
 Under the melting snow crunched the shifting sand.  
 And my city melted away in the falling storm of snow  
 Somebody sobbed in love, at someone else's feet.

You have clung to things superstitious,  
 And I thought - through the sounds of horses,  
 Of Hungarian dances in celestial mobs,  
 Of bells, of cries that are teasing me.

A mad wind rushes upon the river  
 That wishes to burn my soul.  
 It throws the veil of the woman  
 And plays the verses of old...

And then you, distant alien,  
 Said with lightning in your eyes:  
 The soul, the last path joining,  
 On past dreams madly cries.

*March 6th, 1910, Chapel Krestovsky*

**In the Restaurant**

I shall never forget (it matters not,

Whether it was or wasn't this evening)  
 The Fire of Dawn spreads across  
 The pale sky, yellow dawn beginning.

By the window, I sat in this crowded place.  
 Somewhere a song of love was sung  
 So I sent a black rose in a tall glass  
 Like the sky which is golden.

You pass me a glance which I meet  
 With shame, but with haughty eyes, I bow.  
 And You say to the suitor abruptly  
 "So is this love now?"

And then in response, strings sang  
 Ecstatically chanting the bonds...  
 But you with youthful disdain  
 Gave my hand an imperceptible shake...

Your movement's like a frightened bird  
 You are my dreaming light...  
 Your perfumed breath, your lashes slumbered  
 An anxious whisper of silk.

Through the mirror, at me you glance  
 And, throwing, you scream, "Catch! .."  
 And the jewelry rattled, gypsies danced,  
 And she screamed the dawn of love.

*April 19th, 1910*

### **Demon**

Please draw me closer and closer  
 For I haven't lived, just wandered with strangers...  
 I see something new in my dream  
 In your kiss of delirium!

In the torture of your frenzied  
 Tosca's Spring  
 Its burns me with distant rays

And pulls the oboe's song.

I bring the light and sound  
To the smoky, purple mountains,  
I go with tired eyes and weary lips  
And broken arms like whips.

And over these the sunset spilling  
The mountain shadows like bluish wings,  
With you, with the dream of Tamara  
I'm forever here without power...

And I dream of being back in the village,  
On the immortal mountain slopes,  
But sadly the veil is falling  
On this speckled, unneeded sky...

It is spread in a dance and cries,  
The dust winds, the oboe moans...  
Let the bridegroom ride but not get off!  
Flying straight over the Chechen plane.

*April 19, 1910*

**It is hard to walk among people**

*There's a burned man*

*-Fet*

It is hard to walk among people  
And pretend not to be dead  
And all of the game's tragic passion  
Is told but not yet lived

And, looking at my nightmare  
In order to find in a whirlwind of feelings  
The pale glow of the art  
And to learn the fire of life!

*May 10th, 1910*

### **I carelessly while away life**

I carelessly while away life,  
 Today are my sober celebrations for  
 My insane and unhearing life  
 And tomorrow is the crying and singing.

But if eath is,  
 And is approaching me?  
 Won't His enormous hand  
 Cover my mirror completely?

But then from the mirror, a gleam of light  
 A horror from which I close my eyes  
 And I turn to the place of night,  
 From which no one shall ever return...

*September 17, 1910*

### **The Hours, the days, and years go past**

The hours, the days, and years go past  
 So I wish to shake off this dream  
 To see the face of the nature of people  
 And dispel the twilight of time...

With a wave, someone mocks the light  
 (Someone's shadow, a silhouette  
 Is all that can be seen on this winter night.  
 My face is quickly hid).

Here's a sword that is no longer needed  
 Whose hand has turned me awry? -  
 The small number of pearls is remembered  
 On a night drenched in moonlight.

The patient with a plaintive cold,  
 And the waving surface of the snow...  
 From under the lash, the horror comes,  
 A truly awful horror.

A word? There was none? Why is that?  
 I'm neither sleep nor waking. Far, far away  
 Came a ring that faded and left  
 And separated away from the earth...

And then died. A lip sings.  
 Hours go passed, and the year...  
 (Through the long dark wire  
 A telephone call passed)

And then a voice I know  
 Says, clearly, from afar,  
 Those two words: Ecce homo!  
 The Sword fell. The Hand shook...

It's gently tied with silk  
 (So blood did not leave these black veins)  
 I was happy and obedient  
 To serve.

But the time has come to remember  
 I thought "I'm not a servant.  
 A colored sash does fall  
 But stained with Blood and Snow!"

*October 4th, 1910*

### **Humiliation**

In the black boughs of naked trees  
 Through a window, a winter sunset streams  
 (Contented moments grow always less  
 when we permit any man's death).

Faded sofas of red damask,  
 Dusty curtains need a brush...  
 In this room, there are the clinkings of glass,  
 An officer, a pen, a student, and a merchant...

No human hand had touched  
 These naked journal pictures

But then it was corrupted  
By a vile villain's touches.

Listen! The soft carpet rings  
With spurs, laughter, and doors muffled...  
Is this house - the house  
Where the fates of people decided?

Will I be pleased with our meeting  
When your face has become so white?  
Why on your shoulders are you bearing  
The weight of the cold sunset?

Her painful lips are seen by me  
But still she is my idol  
(This is what love really means)  
One mad, refracted run...

In the winter, the great, yellow sunset raced  
To sink magnificently to its bed...  
Moving closely to breathe while embraced,  
But you whistle again and again ...

It's not gay - your sepulchral whistle...  
Here again! - the murmur of spurs...  
Like a snake, heavy, well-fed, and dusty  
The plume of your seat on the carpet...

You dare to be so fearless!  
I'm not your husband or friend!  
But yesterday you did it, you pierced  
The heart of my angel with your heels!

*December 6th, 1911*

### **Aviator**

A glider rises up in the sky.  
Shaking its two light blades,  
As if monster of the sea,  
Had slipped into the air stream.

Its screws are singing like strings...  
 Look, the unwavering pilot  
 Blinded by the rising sun  
 Seeks a twisting flight...

Far above at height unattainable  
 The gleaming copper...  
 There, faint and invisible,  
 The propeller continues to sing...

Then, in vain he looks for God's Eye:  
 Of heaven, you'll not find a trace:  
 With binoculars if you look up high,  
 Only air, clear as water...

And here, in the heat, wavering,  
 Smoke comes over the mist,  
 Hangars, people, all the earthly things  
 Are pinned to the ground...

But again a golden haze  
 Like an ethereal chord...  
 He was close, a time for applause,  
 To the wretched world record!

All is under its spiralling descent  
 And suddenly it happens, ridiculous, ugly  
 Steeper the twisted blade falls,  
 Breaking the monotony.

The beast with screws without cries  
 Plummets in a frightening angle...  
 Searching with dimmed eyes  
 For support in the air ... To rise!

Too late: a crumpled wing  
 Arcs on the grassy plain...  
 In the woven wire machine  
 Lies a hand with a dead arm ...

Why, brave man, were you there,  
 Was your goal to impress  
 With your first and last flight  
 The violet eyes of a lioness?

Or with selfish delight  
 Was your mouth filled with destruction,  
 When you hungered to madly alite  
 And so you stopped turning the wheel?

Or was your mind so filled with despair  
 By the form of future wars:  
 You rose in the night in the air  
 Carrying fire from a rainfilled earth?

*January 1912*

### **About My Mother**

Having had fun at the chaotic feast,  
 I returned home after  
 And wandered around the apartment,  
 Comfortable within my corner.

All of me is merged in one  
 In this single spot  
 Over the window, the wind sings  
 Chanting funerals...

Merged all of me in just one spot  
 And just one person singular;  
 And the wind sings in the night window  
 Chants carotid funeral...

Only my seducer is still awake  
 And he sweetly whispers,  
 "Forget about these vulgar times  
 And on the sacred songs ponder"

*January 6, 1912*



## The Dances of Death

### 1

How hard it is to be  
 For the dead to pretend with the living  
 How hard to creep in society  
 When all our bones are clinking

The Living all sleep. But the dead man wakes  
 And comes from his grave to the court...  
 Blacker than malice and whiter than night  
 His feathers triumphantly creek.

The dead man works all day on work  
 And then the day ends. And now -  
 Whispers to him, patting his back,  
 A sexual anecdote...

It is already evening. Rain splashes mud  
 On Passers-byers, houses, and other nonsense ...  
 To others, a dead man is ugliness  
 The drive in the taxi is grinding.

In a crowded room with columns  
 The dead hasten. On it is a sleek coat,  
 Oh foolish mistress and foolish wife  
 Give him a supportive smile

He was tired of bureaucratic boredom  
 But the clatter of bones was muted music.  
 He firmly shakes his friend's hands  
 Hoping to feel alive

Only the eyes of the columns see him  
 With his girlfriend, who, like him, is dead.  
 They say their godless speeches  
 And you hear every word

"Tired friend, to me this room is strange"  
 "Tired friend, this is a cold tomb."  
 "It's midnight." "Yes, but you didn't invite  
 Me to waltz for she is in love with you"

And there, really looking for a passionate eye,  
 It is with excited blood...  
 And then in one girlishly, beautiful face,  
 The Mindless ecstasy of love...

It whispers meaningless speech,  
 Fascinating her with living words  
 And It looks on her rosy shoulders  
 And then it leans its head over...

The poison of unworldly anger  
 Wasting it with unearthly rage makes her  
 Think he is smart and he is in love with me.

It hears since it isn't from around here,  
 A strange call: the clang of the bones of the bone.

*February 19th, 1912*

2

The night, the street, the lamp, the drugstore,  
 Senseless and dim  
 If you live another quarter of a century,  
 All will be well and end.

Die and you'll you start again  
 And repeat everything from the beginning  
 At Night, icy ripples in the channel  
 A Drugstore, A street, a lamp.

*October 10th, 1912*

## 3

An Empty street. A window light.  
A Jewish pharmacist moans in sleep.

In front of the cupboard labeled *Venena*,  
Creaky knees are bent,

A skeleton is wrapped by his cloak,  
Looking for something with a grinning black mouth...

It is found... But by accident, something is rung,  
He turns his skull... the Pharmacist grunts from sleep

He shifts and moves in sleep  
While the guest leaves with the coveted bottle,

It is thrust under the cloak of two outcast women  
On the street, under the semi-white light

*October 1912*

## 4

An old, old dream comes: out of the darkness  
The running light come, but then where do they go?  
There is just black water,  
And oblivion forever.

A shadow glides around the corner  
But by then another has crawled.  
His cloak thrown open, his chest is white,  
His buttonhole filled with scarlet.

The shadow of the second, ironclad and slender,  
Is that the crown of the bride?  
It has a helmet and feathers. But faceless.  
Motionless as the dead.

The knock rattles the gate  
 But the click of unlocking is muffled  
 And, passing the threshold comes  
 The libertine and the whore...

The icy wind howls,  
 Empty, quiet and dark.  
 Through the window.  
 Nothing has changed.

The black water leads  
 Out to oblivion forever.  
 So where is the third ghost?  
 Are you flitting from shadow to shadow?

*February 7th, 1914*

5

The newly rich are viciously happy  
 While the poor are humiliated again.  
 In their stone-roof communities  
 The month looks very pale,

Send the silence  
 And strength emphasize  
 Decorate the stone  
 And black the awnings ...

All of this would be nothing,  
 If there was no king,  
 To enforce the laws.

Just do not look for a palace,  
 Or a good-natured face,  
 Or a golden crown.

For in the distant deserts  
 In light of foreign suns  
 He appears.

A handkerchief is twisted around his neck  
 And under his leaking visor  
 He is Smiling.

*February 7th, 1914*

**Worlds fly. Empty years go by**

Worlds fly. Empty Years go by.  
 The Universe's guise has the darkest eyes  
 And you, my soul, are tired and dull  
 With happiness whole once more.

What is happiness? The evening chilliness  
 In the darkening woods, in the garden?  
 Or the vicious delight of wine?  
 Or passion, gold, and the death of the soul?

What is happiness? Brief moments  
 Of Nothing, a rest from caring  
 And then waking up again  
 To the life, that unknown and heart-rending flight

I sighed, danger is watching...  
 But in this greatest moment, run away!  
 Run anywhere and in any way:  
 Flying or buzzing or rushing up!

And, clinging to the sharp edge of the slide  
 And listening to the ringing buzzing,  
 We won't change our minds constantly  
 In front of reasons, space, and time...

When will it stop? This invading sound...  
 Don't all forces eventually end,  
 How terrible it is! How wild!,  
 Give me your hand my friend and forget.

July 2, 1912

### A Night Without Edgar Allan Poe

Or A Night spent without the one who cried that Bright Name: Lenora,  
Edgar Allan Poe

It was an autumn evening. With the sound of rain on glass  
I was resolving all the same, a nagging question,  
When in my office, a huge and misty man  
Entered with a shaggy dog.

On a chair by the fire, my guest sat wearily,  
With the dog at his feet. On the carpet  
The guest said politely: "Is this still not enough  
To prove your destiny must be accepted"

"But I'm without my youth, and now I'm old ..." -  
So I said ... but he interrupted  
"And so this is all: Lenore shall not return  
And now all I know has been told. "

What a strange life. It was a delight, a storm, a hell,  
And here, in the evening, alone with a stranger,  
Under this business-like look,  
Life seemed a lot better...

The gentleman left. But the dog with me stretched.  
And over the hour we stared at each other,  
Till he put his leg on my knee  
As if to say: It's time for bed.

*November 2nd, 1912*

### **There is a game: to enter carefully**

There is a game: To enter carefully,  
In order for the attention of people to lull;  
To find the eyes of your prey;  
And to watch her silently.

No matter how rude and insensitive  
 A man who watches for him  
 He will feel a closer look  
 The corners of his lips trembling.

And the other as if understanding,  
 His arms and his shoulders shuddering,  
 Turn and there is nothing;  
 Meanwhile, my anxiety is growing.

That terrible sight unseen,  
 That it is impossible to catch;  
 You hear all the words, but you can't understand  
 Whose eyes follow you around.

Neither greed, love, nor revenge;  
 This game is a game for children:  
 And all the people in the congregation  
 Are undercover detectives.

Sometimes you and he don't understand,  
 Why it sometimes happens  
 With him you will walk in society,  
 And return to us a different man

There is good and evil eye  
 Only good if no one does anything:  
 Too much of both is in each of us  
 Our playing strength unknown...

A thousand years of misery  
 Cannot measure the breadth of the heart:  
 We will hear the flight of the planets  
 Thundering through the silence ...

And yet, life is a great unknown,  
 We do not know all of our powers  
 And, like children playing with fire,  
 We scorch ourselves and others ...

*December 18th, 1913*

**My anxiety grows over night**

My anxiety grows overnight,  
 One that is quiet, cold, and dark.  
 Look at the moon of white  
 Through the frosted window

Something is happening in the world.  
 In the morning I am afraid to open  
 The news. Someone is wanting to be famous,  
 Someone is hopelessly wandering.  
 Or even someone is changing his mind?

Sleepless guests on a squeaky floor,  
 But I do not think I care.  
 I met a new friend in a Tavern  
 A monotonous, melodious violin!  
 I will drink wine again!

I still do not have the strength,  
 Dragged to the very end  
 With a false and sober smile  
 I'm followed by the fear of the grave  
 The Anxiety of death.

*December 30th, 1913*

**His weak, tired arms cross his chest**

His weak, tired arms cross his chest  
 And for eternity, she gazed in his eyes,  
 But the torments subsided. This process  
 Continues over night.

So look at the sun's position as it sets  
 Open my book where all comes true  
 Since I listened to my heart, I'm a prophet  
 You're not a queen, though I prayed to you.

I won't be king: I don't share your dream of power.  
 You do not want the land: I will not be a slave.



A raw embrace without dragging out the matter  
 And here's a new burden: a near open grave...

But I am a man. And I acknowledge the part  
 That hasn't made me humble, this anxiety.  
 The house of jealousy, my anxious, hungry heart,  
 Repeats incessantly: what you should do, do quickly.

*February 21st, 1914*

**Life is my friend**

1

The day is filled with small works  
 And cares minor and petty.  
 They march past my tired eyes  
 Unneeded words pass by.

I'm worried, but in my humility:  
 I won't burn out and let it be  
 At the bottom of your soul, black and bleak,  
 Is sadness and disbelief.

In the evening, the train pushes away  
 All your worries of the day.  
 When the frost darkness watches  
 And the midnight sings,

I am glad you do not sleep, but I had a terrible moment!  
 When amid all other thoughts  
 On the futility of life, and my comfortable despair  
 You appeared.

My quiet longing is suppressed:  
 To a simple gasp or sigh,  
 A curse as the long night stretched,  
 Where the devil sat on my chest!

You leap and depart to the streets of the deaf  
 But no one there will help

You jump up and run to the streets of the deaf,  
 But there is no one to help:  
 You turn around but all are empty like shells.  
 The night escorts you along  
 The wind blows slow and moans  
 So that you are pale by morning.  
 My guardian, won't you walk by the fire  
 So you don't fall asleep while driving

And finally fatigue washes over you,  
 And you begin to fall asleep...  
 Conscience and life are really so fragile  
 Don't you think it is funny?

*February 11th, 1914*

2

I am powerless,  
 For I don't know how to save a life,  
 Or free the spirit in the grave,  
 Confined in heavy sleep.

Of this frozen vault I'm sick  
 And of this flattened disk  
 I curse at everything in nature  
 And the intolerable yellow sun.

And so I'll leave with  
 You, poor friend, taking  
 You from unwanted anguish  
 And your involuntary suffering.

What has passed happened  
 Because you are all the same:  
 You gave your heart to the truth,  
 But then immediately told a lie.

*December 30th, 1913*

3

Everything happens according to the scriptures:  
 He cools the ardor of the young,  
 And the end of charm  
 Gradually comes.  
 I was in a fever, not sensing the children,  
 While delighting in the torture of hell  
 I began to enumerate  
 But the pounding of my head ...

There was a long, plaintive aching,  
 As the body grew quietly cold,  
 Awake in thirty years.  
 Vainglorious with no heart.

The heart is a painted corpse.  
 And when the end had come,  
 He found it very banal  
 The sad death of the soul.

*December 30th, 1913*

4

When by chance on Sunday  
 He lost his only soul; not detecting  
 The secession, for witnesses  
 He wasn't looking.

And anyway, there wasn't enough:  
 In the yard, the voice of a puppy,  
 At the gate, the old woman stood,  
 And the janitor asked for tea.

As he slowly walked out,  
 He turned up his collar, when,  
 Staring sympathetically from the roof,  
 Were the enormous eyes of the cat.

You think his is witness?  
 Then he will answer you  
 With the same idleness  
 As his virtue!

*December 30th, 1912*

5

I stuck close to the poor fool,  
 Comes on the heels of a familiar voice.  
 "Where is your money?" "Tear down the tavern."  
 "Where is your heart?" "Throw it in the maelstrom."

"Why do you want this?"  
 "So that you'll be, like me, frank,  
 Like me, in humiliation, show humility,  
 And nothing more, my friend. "

You climb into somebody else's heart  
 Coming and going from parties  
 Do you think that in vain  
 The two of us look... "

So now, for truth, are you seeking?  
 Okay, look, no one is near  
 And in my pocket is nothing  
 And in my heart, only tears.

*December 30th, 1913*

6

The day passed as usual,  
 Quietly mad.  
 Everyone was talking  
 About the disease.  
 A friend talked about service,  
 Another talked about Christ  
 And a fourth about current times.  
 Two poet (fans of Pushkin)  
 Sent books  
 With plenty of comments.

A girl student sent  
 A manuscript with flowery epigraphs  
 (From Nadson and the Symbolists).  
 After is the ringing of the phone,  
 A messenger filed an envelope  
 Scented with foreign spirits.  
 The rose was put on the table -  
 For it was written in the note,  
 That they had to place it on the table ...  
 After, a fellow writer,  
 With his eyes sunk in his beard,  
 Talked about the laments of the southern Croats  
 And spoke to me a long time.  
 He was a critic, trashing Futurism  
 Blaming Symbolism,  
 Concluding with Realism.  
 The cinema in the evening  
 Has nobles kissing under a tree  
 With ladies of lower rank,  
 Who were trying to raise themselves ...  
 Everything was in excellent order.

He was fast asleep in the evening  
 And woke up in another country.  
 With neither cold mornings  
 Nor the words of a friend  
 Neither the rose,  
 Nor the Futurist Manifesto,  
 Neither Pushkin's poetry  
 Nor barking dog,  
 Nor the rumble of a cart -  
 Nothing, nothing  
 From the world I knew ...

And what can you make right  
 If you destroy the order  
 Of this dear and earthly world  
 In dreams, we will plunge,  
 And the dreams of other dreams...  
 Will not always have such

Excellent order ...

I wake up sometimes  
 Excited, anxious  
 With vague recollections,  
 Of a foreboding secret ...  
 Violently clogging my brain  
 with blinding thoughts...  
 And I tame their rage,  
 Because I'm frightened of something even worse,  
 Do you think that a new  
 Day will pass like this:  
 Quietly mad?

*May 24th, 1914*

7

The Devil speaks:

You sin, yet you care  
 About your innocence,  
 And beauty still conjures  
 Your sinful poems.

For comfort, for fun  
 Drink sparkling wine  
 While your wine is still to your liking,  
 While it is still not too painful.

Shine a steadfast eye.  
 Don't cast us from its sparkle  
 After sin, guilt, and a passionate night  
 We whisper the word "amen."

All of you are the same, you seduce  
 To pass the crazy hour  
 And later in a frenzy of repentance,  
 Conspired to curse us.

So you will fall - but the crowd  
 Are all like angels, clean,  
 You catch it, so there  
 On that stone do not stumble...

*December 10th, 1915*

8

Death speaks:

When one is mastered by anxiety  
 And becomes mad with anguish,  
 He forgets how to praise God  
 And only sings songs of the sinners.

Obsessed and flustered  
 He sees vague swarms of  
 Past visions and strange images  
 Which persecute him.

So he was exhausted  
 From the cold glow of early youth  
 In which the vanity of holy memories  
 Before him rises slowly.

He does not believe in anything,  
 And wants to cheat himself,  
 And he to my blissful door  
 Finds his sluggish way.

Quietly, with his Praise to God  
 Which he didn't voice, only groaned.  
 I opened. And now he doesn't  
 Torment himself much anymore.

*December 10th, 1915*

**Black Blood****1**

With a turn you came to me,  
Your chest and hand are seen by me.

My mother forbids you to approach  
Me who is tempted to offend you

No, I should not have dropped my eyes,  
Your breathing, pursues me like a storm ...

My eye lit on your cheek,  
A thrill runs through my trembling hand ...

Your circle of desire has expanded  
You, without looking, look at me!

Old ashes are covered by this rapid fire  
Of you not looking while rolling your eyes!

No! Don't be afflicted by the black blood  
Not even for a date, not even for love!

*January 2nd, 1914*

**2**

I look at you. Every demon in me  
Crouching, looking.  
Every demon following  
Moreover, a silence is thundering ...  
And a greedy chest is heaving ...  
Do these demons fill you with fear?  
No! turn away, and do not dare, do not dare to  
Look in this terrible abyss!

*March 22nd, 1914*



3

Even your name is contemptible,  
 But when you're screwing up your eyes,  
 I hear the howls of the flowing stream,  
 Coming from the desert storm.

The silent eye, golden and brown,  
 Thin fingers searching for your throat ...  
 Come on. Crawl. I'll strike -  
 Then, like a cat, you bare your teeth ...

*January 30th, 1914*

4

I did not want you, but I fell  
 In your strange arms. So to lengthen the meal  
 I neither untwisted my hands,  
 Nor opened my mouth - not in the dark of night!

I do not want to go blind from this lightning storm,  
 Nor hear the violins wail (frantic sounds!)  
 Nor experience the unspeakable boredom of the tide  
 Just to be buried in the ashes of your burning head!

As the first man with this divine fire,  
 I only want to return to the blue paradise  
 With you by destroying the poison and killing lies...

But you call me with your venomous glance  
 Predicting a different paradise! - I concede, though knowing  
 What is in your paradise, a bottomless, stagnant hell.

*February 1912*

5

Again at myself... I am ashamed, angry, and happy.  
 Is there a night, or a day in the window?  
 Through a month as a clown, over most of the roofs  
 My face contorts horribly ...

Away with you sun, Away with remorse!  
 Who dares to help me?  
 In my ravaged brain bursts only night  
 Only the night!

In one, empty breast, one penetrating view  
 Sees only drunk and greedy eyes ...  
 It will be like this forever, there will never  
 Be a time when you shout: Yes!

*January 29th, 1914*

6

Fright seized me, drawing me  
 Into the maelstrom ...  
 And who will know  
 Who was here?

And, the terrified murmur incoherently ...  
 And, hiding their face,  
 Their timid hands tighten and twist  
 With a melodious ring ...

And ... the first ray of the morning  
 Through yellow curtains is ringing ...  
 God and the devil lie on the body of the sleeping  
 In various light patternings..

*January 2nd, 1914*

7

A night for a century gives a languid thrill  
 In passionate delirium,  
 The mouth of the blissfully bizarre babble.  
 And In the window is the weak, old light

Your unrealistic confidence,  
 No, not a word  
 For it has lost all value,

The pale day will soon begin to dawn ...

Then - in the view of tired eyes

You are a lie!

Then my mouth squirms scarlet

With your mysterious lookalike!

*December 27th, 1913*

8

I won at last!

I lured her to my palace!

Three candles in the infinite distance.

We lie in heavy carpets and dust.

And in the dark, three candles are lit

The dark velvet opens its arms,

Our storm tangles your braid, Your dull eyes,

Have changed to faded diamonds

And scorch my mouth with blood

Another pain of love ...

And the failure of the deaf windows

Vaguely rustles many banners

The ringing of the pipe and the horses trot,

Is like the swinging of a heavy coffin.

Oh my favorite, we are not one!

This shames me so extinguish the lights! ..

Chasing away the strange fear

My blood rustles in my ears.

Close howls the funeral pipes,

The troubled sigh of cold lips:

My beauty, my shame, my scourge..  
I throw my cry to the night

We extinguish the candle, our eyes, our words ...  
You're dead, finally, dead!

I know, I drank your blood ...  
I put you in a coffin and sung -

But on every hazy night in gentle spring  
Will sing your blood in me!

*October 1909*

9

Over the best of the creation of God,  
I tasted the power of contempt.  
So it struck it with a stick.

Hurriedly she dressed and is going  
Now she has Left. I glance anxiously  
Through my gray-blue window.

But there is nothing. In the blue-gray window  
But the pouring rainy night,  
And then, in the darkness,  
Burns a glowing light.

In distant, wet valleys  
Is a close, approaching happiness!  
Once I stand and heed  
What the violin sings to me.

It sings the songs of wild  
The fact that I am free!  
The fact that I have a better life  
When, for vulgar lust, I traded love!

*March 13th, 1910*

**Demon**

Come, follow me, my submissive  
 And faithful slave.  
 I'm on a lightened mountain ridge  
 Flying, confident with you.

I will bring you across the abyss,  
 Mocking you with her bottomlessness.  
 Your terror is actually useless  
 Only further inspiration for me.

I protect you from the rain  
 Of ethereal dust and from the whirling winds  
 Using the strength of my muscles and the shadow of my wings  
 And by letting you not drop.

And in the mountains, within the glitter of white,  
 Is an immaculate meadow  
 With a divinely beautiful form  
 Where I tear myself from you

Do you know how little  
 That Human lie,  
 That sad earthly pity  
 Which you call wild passion?

When the evening becomes quite,  
 And, bewitching me,  
 You desire to fly higher  
 To the desert's sky fire  
 Fine, I'll take you there  
 I'm going to take you there  
 To the land which seems a star,  
 From where Earth seems a star.

And, dumb with surprise,  
 You see new worlds  
 With Incredible vision,  
 But all's just a start for my game ...

Trembling with fear and powerlessness,  
 Then you did not eat, Let  
 Us spread our wings quietly  
 I smile at you and fly.

And with a divine smile  
 I am destroyed in flight,  
 You will fly like a fragile stone,  
 In a shining void ...

*June 9th, 1910*

### **The Voice from the Chorus**

How often do we cry - you and I -  
 Over our miserable lives!  
 Oh, if you only knew any friends,  
 Through the cold and darkness in the coming days!

Now you're with a cute helper harvesting,  
 Play with her, joking,  
 And you're crying, seeing lies  
 Or in your hand your favorite knife  
 What a baby, a baby!

Do not measure my lies and deceit  
 When death is far away.  
 All will be blacker in that terrible light  
 And crazier in the whirlwind of the planets  
 Another century, this century!

And the last century, the most terrible of all,  
 We'll see you and me.  
 And all heaven will hide our heinous sin  
 On all lips will cease laughing  
 From the anguish of nothingness ...

For Spring, baby, you're going to wait -  
 But Spring deceives.  
 You wait for the sun in the sky to call -  
 But the sun will not rise.

And cry when you start to cry,  
Like a sinking stone ...  
We'll be happy with their lives,  
Meek grass!  
Oh, if you knew  
The cold and dark days to come.