

**Classic Poetry Series**

# **Aleksandr Aleksandrovich Blok**

**- poems -**

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## **A Girl Sang a Song**

A girl sang a song in the temple's chorus,  
About men, tired in alien lands,  
About the ships that left native shores,  
And all who forgot their joy to the end.

Thus sang her clean voice, and flew up to the highness,  
And sunbeams shined on her shoulder's white --  
And everyone saw and heard from the darkness  
The white and airy gown, singing in the light.

And all of them were sure, that joy would burst out:  
The ships have arrived at their beach,  
The people, in the land of the aliens tired,  
Regaining their bearing, are happy and reach.

And sweet was her voice and the sun's beams around....  
And only, by Caesar's Gates -- high on the vault,  
The baby, versed into mysteries, mourned,  
Because none of them will be ever returned.

Aleksandr Aleksandrovich Blok

## **Don't fear death**

Don't fear death in earthly travels.  
Don't fear enemies or friends.  
Just listen to the words of prayers,  
To pass the facets of the dreads.

Your death will come to you, and never  
You shall be, else, a slave of life,  
Just waiting for a dawn's favor,  
From nights of poverty and strife.

She'll build with you a common law,  
One will of the Eternal Reign.  
And you are not condemned to slow  
And everlasting deadly pain.

Aleksandr Aleksandrovich Blok

## **Gamajun, the Prophetic Bird**

On waters, spread without end,  
Dressed with the sunset so purple,  
It sings and prophesies for land,  
Unable to lift the smashed wings' couple...  
The charge of Tartars' hordes it claims,  
And bloody set of executions,  
Earthquake, and hunger and the flames,  
The death of justice, crime's intrusion...  
And caught with fear, cold and smooth,  
The fair face flames as one of lovers',  
But sound with prophetic truth  
The lips that the bloody foam covers!...

Aleksandr Aleksandrovich Blok

## Halls grew darker

Halls grew darker and somehow faded.  
Grates of windows drowned in black.  
Every knight, every beautiful lady  
Knew the tiding: "The Queen's deadly sick."

And the king, very silent and frowned,  
Passed the doors, lost of pages and slaves ...  
Every word, that by chance cast around,  
Proved the truth of the closing grave.

By the doors of the silent abode  
I was crying, while pressing the brace ...  
At the end of the passage remote  
Someone echoed me, hiding his face.

By the doors of the Beautiful Lady  
I was sobbing, attired in blue ...  
And the stranger of ashen face sadly  
Echoed me all my sufferings through.

Aleksandr Aleksandrovich Blok

## **He, who was born**

He, who was born in stagnant year  
Does not remember own way.  
We, kids of Russia's years of fear,  
Remember every night and day.

Years that burned everything to ashes!  
Do you bring madness or grace?  
The war's and freedom's fire flashes  
Left bloody light on every face.

We are struck dumb: the toxin's pressure  
Has made us tightly close lips.  
In living hearts, once full of pleasure,  
The fateful desert now sleeps.

And let the crying ravens soar  
Right over our death-bed,  
May those who were striving more,  
O God, behold Thy Kingdom's Great!

Aleksandr Aleksandrovich Blok

## **I Prefer the Gorgeous Freedom**

I prefer the gorgeous freedom,  
And I fly to lands of grace,  
Where in wide and clear meadows  
All is good, as dreams, and blest.  
Here they rise: the clover clear,  
And corn-flower's gentle lace,  
And the rustle is always here:  
"Ears are leaning... Take your ways!"  
In this immense sea of fair,  
Only one of blades reclines.  
You don't see in misty air,  
I'd seen it! It will be mine!

Aleksandr Aleksandrovich Blok

## **I Wait For You...**

I wait for you. The years in silence pass  
And as the image, one, I wait for you again.

The distance is in flame -- and clear one as glass,  
I, silent, wait -- with sadness, love and pain.

The distance is in flame, and you are coming fast,  
But I'm afraid that you will change your image yet,

And will initiate the challenging mistrust  
By changing features, used, at long awaited end.

Oh, how I will fell -- so low and so pine,  
Unable to overcome my dreams' continued set!

The distance is such bright! And azure is so fine!  
But I'm afraid that you will change your image yet.

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## **On the Field of Kulicovo**

The river stretched. It flows, idly grieves,  
And washes both banks.  
In steppe, above light clay of cliffs  
Rinks mourn in ranks.

O Russia! Dear wife! With clearness and pain  
We see the lengthy way!  
It sent an arrow of ancient Tartar reign -  
In breast it lay.

The way through steppes and an incessant plight,  
Through your, o Russia, lot!  
And alien dark and dark of night  
I fear not.

Let be the night. We'll ride and light in gloom  
Camp-fires late.  
The holy flag will flash in fume,  
And Khan's steel blade ...

And endless battle! We only dream of peace  
Through blood and dust ...  
The mare of steppes flies on and flees,  
And tramples the grass ...

There's no end! The miles and cliffs flash past  
Stop crazy flood!  
The frightened clouds go fast,  
Sun sets in blood!

Sun sets in blood! Blood streams from heart away!  
O cry, my heart ...  
There's no peace! Through steppe the bay  
Prolongs the flight!

Aleksandr Aleksandrovich Blok

## **Servus -- Reginae**

Don't call. Without any summons  
I'll reach the shrine.  
And droop my head in even silence  
To your feet fine.

I will your orders shyly listen  
And will remain  
To catch our meetings, short and instant,  
And wish again.

I fell before your passions' power,  
Before its wave,  
Sometimes -- a serf; sometimes -- a lover;  
Always -- a slave.

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## **The Death of Grandfather**

We waited commonly for sleep or even death.  
The instances were wearisome as ages.  
But suddenly the wind's refreshing breath  
Touched through the window the Holy Bible's pages:

An old man goes there - who's now all white-haired -  
With rapid steps and merry eyes, alone,  
He smiles to us, and often calls with hand,  
And leaves us with a gait, that is well-known.

And suddenly we all, who watched the old man's track,  
Well recognized just him who now lay before us,  
And turning in a sudden rapture back,  
Beheld a corpse with eyes forever closed ...

And it was good for us the soul's way to trace,  
And, in the leaving one, to find the glee it's forming.  
The time had come. Recall and love in grace,  
And celebrate another house-warming!

Aleksandr Aleksandrovich Blok

## **The Faithless Shadows.**

The faithless shadows of day are running  
And high and clear is the call of bells,  
Steps of the church are blazed as with the lightning,  
Their stones are alive and wait for your light steps.

You'll here pass and touch the chilly stone,  
That's dressed in awful sanity of span,  
And let the flower of spring be thrown  
Here, in this dark, before the eyes of saint.

The rose shadows in misty darkness grow,  
And high and clear is the call of bells,  
The darkness lays on steps, such old and low --  
I'm set in light -- I wait for dear steps.

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## The Stranger

The restaurants on hot spring evenings  
Lie under a dense and savage air.  
Foul drafts and hoots from drunken revelers  
Contaminate the thoroughfare.  
Above the dusty lanes of suburbia  
Above the tedium of bungalows  
A pretzel sign begilds a bakery  
And children screech fortissimo.

And every evening beyond the barriers  
Gentlemen of practiced wit and charm  
Go strolling beside the drainage ditches --  
A tilted derby and a lady at the arm.

The squeak of oarlocks comes over the lake water  
A woman's shriek assaults the ear  
While above, in the sky, inured to everything,  
The moon looks on with a mindless leer.

And every evening my one companion  
Sits here, reflected in my glass.  
Like me, he has drunk of bitter mysteries.  
Like me, he is broken, dulled, downcast.

The sleepy lackeys stand beside tables  
Waiting for the night to pass  
And tipplers with the eyes of rabbits  
Cry out: "In vino veritas!"

And every evening (or am I imagining?)  
Exactly at the appointed time  
A girl's slim figure, silk raimented,  
Glides past the window's mist and grime.

And slowly passing through the revelers,  
Unaccompanied, always alone,  
Exuding mists and secret fragrances,  
She sits at the table that is her own.

Something ancient, something legendary  
Surrounds her presence in the room,  
Her narrow hand, her silk, her bracelets,  
Her hat, the rings, the ostrich plume.

Entranced by her presence, near and enigmatic,  
I gaze through the dark of her lowered veil  
And I behold an enchanted shoreline  
And enchanted distances, far and pale.

I am made a guardian of the higher mysteries,  
Someone's sun is entrusted to my control.

Tart wine has pierced the last convolution  
of my labyrinthine soul.

And now the drooping plumes of ostriches  
Asway in my brain droop slowly lower  
And two eyes, limpid, blue, and fathomless  
Are blooming on a distant shore.

Inside my soul a treasure is buried.  
The key is mine and only mine.  
How right you are, you drunken monster!  
I know: the truth is in the wine.

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## The Twelve

III

Our sons have gone  
to serve the Reds  
to serve the Reds  
to risk their heads!

O bitter, bitter pain,  
Sweet living!  
A torn overcoat  
an Austrian gun!

-To get the bourgeoisie  
We'll start a fire  
a worldwide fire, and drench it  
in blood-  
The good Lord bless us!

-O you bitter bitterness,  
boring boredom,  
deadly boredom.

This is how I will  
spend my time.

This is how I will  
scratch my head,

munch on seeds,  
some sunflower seeds,

play with my knife  
play with my knife.

You bourgeoisie, fly as a sparrow!  
I'll drink your blood,

your warm blood, for love,  
for dark-eyed love.

God, let this soul, your servant,  
rest in peace.

Such boredom!

XII

... On they march with sovereign tread...  
'Who else goes there? Come out! I said  
come out!' It is the wind and the red  
flag plunging gaily at their head.

The frozen snow-drift looms in front.  
'Who's in the drift! Come out! Come here!'  
There's only the homeless mongrel runt  
limping wretchedly in the rear ...

'You mangy beast, out of the way  
before you taste my bayonet.  
Old mongrel world, clear off I say!  
I'll have your hide to sole my boot!

The shivering cur, the mongrel cur  
bares his teeth like a hungry wolf,  
droops his tail, but does not stir ...  
'Hey answer, you there, show yourself.'

'Who's that waving the red flag?'  
'Try and see! It's as dark as the tomb!'  
'Who's that moving at a jog  
trot, keeping to the back-street gloom?'

'Don't you worry ~ I'll catch you yet;  
better surrender to me alive!'  
'Come out, comrade, or you'll regret  
it ~ we'll fire when I've counted five!'

Crack ~ crack ~ crack! But only the echo  
answers from among the eaves ...  
The blizzard splits his seams, the snow  
laughs wildly up the wirlwind's sleeve ...

Crack ~ crack ~ crack!  
Crack ~ crack ~ crack!  
... So they march with sovereign tread ...  
Behind them limps the hungry dog,  
and wrapped in wild snow at their head  
carrying a blood-red flag ~  
soft-footed where the blizzard swirls,  
invulnerable where bullets crossed ~  
crowned with a crown of snowflake pearls,  
a flowery diadem of frost,  
ahead of them goes Jesus Christ.

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## To the Muse

In your hidden memories  
There are fatal tidings of doom...  
A curse on sacred traditions,  
A desecration of happiness;

And a power so alluring  
That I am ready to repeat the rumour  
That you have brought angels down from heaven,  
Enticing them with your beauty...

And when you mock at faith,  
That pale, greyish-purple halo  
Which I once saw before  
Suddenly begins to shine above you.

Are you evil or good? You are altogether from another world  
They say strange things about you  
For some you are the Muse and a miracle.  
For me you are torment and hell.

I do not know why in the hour of dawn,  
When no strength was left to me,  
I did not perish, but caught sight of your face  
And begged you to comfort me.

I wanted us to be enemies;  
Why then did you make me a present  
Of a flowery meadow and of the starry firmament --  
The whole curse of your beauty?

Your fearful caresses were more treacherous  
Than the northern night,  
More intoxicating than the golden champagne of Aï,  
Briefer than a gypsy woman's love...

And there was a fatal pleasure  
In trampling on cherished and holy things;  
And this passion, bitter as wormwood,  
Was a frenzied delight for the heart!

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