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**Letters to Robot Werther**

[THINGAMAJIG]

*A One-Act Play*

HE:

about 40 years old

dressed in all black

STAGE:

a high-tech room

*HE at a laptop; a light tapping of keys can be heard.*

**First Letter to Robot Werther**

“Your letters make me so glad

Robot Werther

if only you knew

well my friend hello

hello

what a thing

to tell someone really

and why

why to explain

if l e t t e r s—

they

in packs

in streams

in caravans

they яеасн the wrought-iron heart

Werther Werther

there

in the sky

nothing boring happens

but here nothing

here

absolutely

nothing

*happens*

sooner or later we finish

getting ready with our school kits

the book of the dead Egyptian Tibetan

you say there is no death?

*not even death?*

but I say

t h e r e i s n o l i f e

author scorch author scorching author scorched”

*Stands, starts to pace nervously about the room*

\*\*\*

“And don’t think

don’t even think

of missing Mara,

like before:

i ’ l l k i l l:”—

I repeat every,

every morning.

“Is there a little *mar* in the world?”

But I’m lying:

in the morning to no one,

to nothing—

in the morning I’m not precisely, let’s say,

virile:

zero without caffeine,

a sick animal,

shooting it would be is simpler than simple—

shoot, yes;

behold this life, even this little life, takes aim.

I wanted to get off easy!

No, my dear friend, noooooo,

it’s too simple a deliverance.

But all this is in the past:

I don’t know myself why I chew all this over,

what else, it would seem, yesterday

was impossible to touch—

maybe, I need all this

to—

*The wind opens the window with a crash—a mechanical whirring swallows up his words.*

*He goes to the window, slams it shut.*

—yes, perhaps it’s for this very reason.

Well, we’re off to see the Wizard!

*The stage (a circle) turns. The backdrop: a city street.*

*The sound of cars, cacophonous voices.*

\*\*\*

I met Mara in the winter: no, that’s not quite—

We met in February:

no, no, wrong again!

When you don’t know what to say, just say it as it is, ha…!

But t h a t i s right, we literally ran into each other.

Forehead-to-forehead.

We fell down.

Together.

*A business meeting*, that’s what it was—

we’re a couple of those repugnant business people:

making money as we can.

I build sites,

Mara—words: she’s a journalist.

Needless to say these are in-demand positions

and I was actually going about something so, so different…

Let’s imagine a psychoanalysis appointment.

There you are, here and now,

Lie on the couch and talk, talk—

Talk, damn you!

In the end, you were silent your whole life—

your whole life, plus five minutes.

But that’s not too bad, not when there’s a doll in a white coat around.

Not a bad picture, but, generally spreaking, it’s effective.

The parsimony of power and money: no need to go anywhere

or pay anyone—it’s all quite simple:

you: “Elementary, my dear Watson!” lying on the couch,

you plant the doll nearby, turn away from her

and you dump everything that’s been boiling in your brain for the last century —

you drain all your emotional poison

right into her tender little ears:

(*playing* *doctor* for children of a tender age)

The best thing about the doll

is that she’s silent—and at the same time creates

the illusion of rapt attention.

Some primates, it’s true,

use plastic toys—t h i s won’t save me personally, I know that for sure.

A little s*e*x, particularly this manner of it,

whatever one might say at the temple, has never been an end in itself:

its “result”—we denote f i n i s h i n g with o r g a z m—

lasts from a few seconds to,

with the application of some technique or other, a few minutes.

Maybe I’m not a total *loner*

some sweet ladies name *a biped with balls*.

I’m not really a traditional *bull stud*, no.

I confess that in fact I don’t experience certain—fantasies…

I don’t dream of naked women.

I do not yearn with the tenacity of a maniac for—quote—

“for the little moist hole that promises bliss”

(which it was, it was—needless to say it was:

to tell the truth, all my g i r l s

as though by request all happened to be beauties.

I preferred brunettes; but there again, redheads attracted me too—

but dyed-blondes, I confess, I kept miles away from—

I don’t know why, but I never tried

to equate, as we might say, brains with hair color.

I’m sure something kept me from those poisonously pale l i l i *e* s—

it may seem strange to somebody else, although:

I don’t have to justify or make excuses—

isn’t it enough that I’m talking to the doll, Sir Doctor?)

*Takes Baba Yaga in his arms, waltzes with her, then opens the closet and, finding a white coat there, puts it onto the puppet.*

“What’s the best way to reach you? Calling?”

Baba Yaga is what Rita left.

After the divorce she decided to, let’s say, act out—

she gave me a life-size doll… b r u t a l, yes, it was b r u t a l.

But I know she gave it to me without any malice,

teasing in moderation: “Behold, your beloved,” was all she said.

Kira forgot her white coat in her hurry.

Once upon a time I came to her in such pain!

She rescued my unlucky tooth—and, strangely enough, she saved me.

I stopped by a week later, to *follow up*, so to speak.

We dated for about half a year, and then—

I don’t know myself how it happened—we got married: it was absurd, of course.

It was all like a fairy tale, a fairy tale: you know what *a fairy tale* is, right?

And then Kira cheated on me. She cheated on me.

I saw—how to say it…

I saw *the Lady of Her Heart* in a photo:

nothing masculine—an interesting, Mongolian sort of face,

hard—and at the same time as though it were about to burst.

I understood her, I understood m y K i r a — a n d l e t g o:

I let go, what else could I do?

It might be possible with some, but our brother just can’t compete *with ladies*…

It was good with Kira. If we set out to tally the whole thing up,

if we took a calendar and crossed out

a few spoiled weekends, about half a year…

well, at least we managed to run off to Italy.

Venice didn’t really hit the spot,

Milan’s a hellhole, Rome—whatever, but Florence…

Florence is where we had our breakup honeymoon:

Kira had been tender,

unusually so—and then, as soon as we got to Moscow, c o n f e s s e d.

If we’re being honest, I considered eating my own gun—

but the realization that your love is not leaving you for a man

incites a rather idiotic hope that she’ll come back…

I still underestimated that goddamn *urge for same-sex blood*.

Maybe I would have even gone

to share Kira with her f r i e n d — what sin is there to hide,

I was curious to see how girls do it,

maybe to feel something new,

surrendering to the flood of forbidden sensations…

But Kira just shook her head:

“Look, it’s serious, very serious—

more serious than you think. I have to leave,”

with *I have to* she flicked her lighter,

and the fire lit up her face—

in that moment she was i n c a n d e s c e n t,

and I shattered,

I shattered from her blamelessness.

\*\*\*

*Sitting at the laptop*

**Second letter to Robot Werther**

“for a long time now I haven’t been in touch with the one

who won’t interrupt

or stiffly nod a *propos*

gazing between brows

expressing well-played

*sincere interest*

Old Uncle Carnegie taught the art of evil

the philosophy of кuntlickeяs

*watch your tongue*

the inscription on the grey fence of the brain

the brain fence

what strange

strange words

always out of season

but we

we are actually

brittle

very brittle

yes, yes

b r a n c h l e t s

tear me away, Werther

tear

if you aren’t afraid

*but don’t break*

what else to kill on a night so sultry?

what else to kill on a night so stormy

july the thunderth

eighteen years old?

… rend me Werther

as needed”

*Walks around the room*

\*\*\*

So anyway. We got divorced: or rather, they divorced us, and then—

then I wished her hepiberzday and hepinooyeer;

Kira said she was happy,

and I was almost pleased, almost pleased to death—but not at first.

It was probably the first time in my life I didn’t act selfishly,

the first time in my life I was able to understand a n o t h e r,

to delve into a n o t h e r dimension—

or maybe it was because of the very

oddness of the situation:

if Kira had left for some chump,

I’d have probably killed myself out of jealousy—

but I couldn’t be jealous of a woman for going to a woman.

I couldn’t… But luckily… Else—it’d be curtains for me!

Meanwhile “bi” appeared more often in my surroundings

than I would have liked: maybe,

the powers that be were testing my tolerance, so to speak—

A short-lived fling with one Arina three months after my first divorce

ended with her

admitting that she had not had a man in precisely five years.

I pitied the poor thing,

but she shut off my condolences:

“G i r l s are so much better” – “Then why were you with me at all?!” –

“To make myself feel better, probably…”

“You know, my ex left me for someone like you—

As she put it she just *isn’t for men*”

“Even one like you?” – “What do you mean, e v e n?” –

“You’re so gentle, men aren’t like that” – “Well here I am, so I suppose they must be”:

conversations like that, they don’t add or subtract anything.

The girl was odd, of course—

with unthinkable piercings and tattoos,

huge blue eyes and a hedgehog-shaved scalp:

she gave herself with the same feeling

you could mistake for falling in love—

but she just loved sex, good sex, and that was it.

After that I looked for a long time at pictures of Kira’s girlfriend on the internet:

finding a person with a search engine with any part of a name

is simpler than simple—that’s how a corporate site came up:

She seemed to be an HR director

of, as they like to write these days,

“a large, steadily-growing company.”

You could fall in love with her, true.

Falling head over heels

is something I can’t do myself, true.

Dark-eyed. Swarthy.

With luminous skin.

And her curly hair, *falling over her shoulders*…

Old-fashioned—*falling over her shoulders*…

“Sash*á*,” that’s what Kira called her, in the French way.

*She’ll make her happy*,

I thought, but then stopped short—

I was jabbed by the thought that it was impossible, unthinkable, simply inconceivable

to “make” someone happy: it’s nonsense, absurd,

the h o r r o r (that’s the point!) is not just R u s s i a n—

if you don’t r a d i a t e, like an outsider, d i f f e r e n t,

o t h e r, will it help you to shine?

Jab, the thought jabbed me, and the realization came

so much later—like all those “normal” people, for long years

I sought happiness o n t h e s i d e, not looking into the sunken pockets

of my own soul.

And what had been interesting in her, in that soul? … Now, now,

Let’s hit the brakes…

\*\*\*

*Sitting at the laptop*

**Third Letter to Robot Werther**

“you don’t have to answer

you

unable to load

unasking to eat

to drink

unalluding at coitus

unsaying “yes” “maybe” “I don’t know”

NO

for some time now they’ve frightened me

those two letters

one consonant one NO

vowel

at the end

a point on the golden ratio

a heart slapped onto a plate of oily borsch

a heart onto a plate of boiling borsch

my heart

and my liver too

my belly will receive

this habit of excess

hello Werther hello”

*Stands*

\*\*\*

Very recently I realized that all these years

I was searching hither and thither, infinitely intensifying

my own impossible need—

If I can put it this way, I hunted for someone’s love,

though what I’d needed to hunt for, we might say, was my own soul—

*all inside*: well yes, it’s all first grade, second quarter, I’m rather ashamed.

Floundering, I tried (probably unconsciously) to t a k e a w a y from women the miracle of love,

though generally there was nothing to take:

like me, they never really loved themselves,

that’s why they couldn’t make anyone feel anything h e a l t h y, not a drop.

Too late I realized that all my attempts to catch the Firebird by the tail

were a waste of time: I’ll never, never keep up with her;

what’s more I’ll never find that proverbial love in anyone:

in no one, except for myself—no matter how tedious that sounds.

I’ll explain: what we call love—

is a need that’s impossible to satisfy,

i n d e e d—it doesn’t even exist in the world,

it’s how they fool us; it’s what they write books and make films about.

Love—it’s a monstrous illusion, more precisely, in its human fulfillment,

when the two—gender doesn’t matter—

at the end of the *candy-bouquet period*

all they do is torture one another,

living under the Damocles’ sword of fear *of rejection*—

the worst fear encased

in those two—the 14th and the 15th—letters of this unbearable alphabet.

Everyone, everyone knows the fear of NO! (Don’t believe anyone who says otherwise!)

For so long I tried to explain it to myself—

I think I managed to come up with a little something;

listen to me, listen, hey, anyone!

This fear—it’s full of expectations,

it’s commitments, it’s veiled shame,

it’s the main means of domesticating a simian in a suit,

spending most of your life in front of a screen.

But the worst fear is the fear of that same love:

but why?

It doesn’t expect anything. It doesn’t need anything.

It doesn’t experience cheap pity, but, ideally

(ah, ideals, ah!) it empathizes and helps.

Love doesn’t owe anyone anything.

Do you hear? Are you listening to me?

What a feeling, it’s like I’m talking into the void—

What now—

That’s that.

(*sipping cognac*)

… and when I met Rita: “met,” of course, that’s not the word at all…

To fill a vomitous evening, I was

looking through some dating sites—and there, I came across her profile.

There weren’t any pictures, but something caught me in the phrasing of the questionnaire—

So I wrote.

We messaged for a week, and then met:

we were broken, yes, broken—two swaggering halves,

powdered and embellished

(I bought a dozen new sweaters and shirts—a gesture more ritual than rational: *everything new*, just to have *everything new*),

halves, denying themselves their own selves (what else can we expect from others?):

solid notches straight into the heart!

We needed each other if only to make ourselves feel better,

proving to ourselves that we were still needed by somebody else—

we dreamed (oh, yes!) of wading through our own illusions of reality

and running away from our own constructions of misfortune…

Oh, of course, a t t h a t t i m e we didn’t suspect anything like that:

we thought it was—love, yes…

We used that word too often, and it faded, became worthless,

fit to be handed over at a pawn shop—

but what’s there to hand over! drag it there, drag it! –

we doggedly mended it and patched it,

because being alone was scarier,

and we cloaked ourselves, cloaked ourselves in fear,

like a patchwork quilt, dwelling in a sort of strange, viscous dream, in suspended animation,

and its mold sucked us in more and more, stronger and stronger—

it seemed like the sailor’s knot that bound our solar plexuses

had come to life—and instead of fastening them together, it devoured them.

We traveled all over, although

all there was to be seen wasn’t all that happy:

the emotional poison we infected each other with

quickly ate up what we still reffered to as a soul.

We dealt each other constant pain—

it was all the easier since she was supposedly numb to it, and it never got any better:

all this (sad as it is to admit your own weaknesses),

degenerated in the end into what we call domestic drunkenness—

but vilest of all, there was nothing left for us to talk about,

*absolutely nothing*—

No we never made “saints” of ourselves,

the problem was that I knew my limit, and Rita—she didn’t:

Christ, she didn’t know when to stop.

So I stopped bringing alcohol home;

but Rita would get hammered, hammered as a carpenter,

and spectacles of shattered dishes and nighttime wailing became our

quiet family life—

all my bargains with her had, to use official language, “brought about no discernible effect.”

Her whirlwind romance with alcohol forged ahead—

over the course of a few years my wife became haggard, she seemed to dim,

though she still had her beauty, yes, it was there, but

it was the beauty, if it can be put this way,

of *an accelerated process of decay*, that’s what was terrible:

Rita was in a downward spiral with booze—slowly, but steadily, and I could do nothing,

absolutely nothing against it.

How she lay twisted up on the couch,

how she begged for a drink, how she lashed out at me with accusations:

“This is all because of you, you!” –

and wept, and beat my chest with her little hands.

What else can I say! We lived in hell for a few years—

until at long last I filed for divorce, and Rita moved out

back to her apartment outside Moscow, the one she’d kept the whole time we’d lived together:

she’s got nothing left to drink now—she got fired, and I fretted terribly,

wondering whether our breakup would push her to what they call the edge of the abyss:

even when Kira left seemed less painful to me—

this time I suffered ferociously, unbearably.

In any case, I didn’t want to be left alone.

And I was left alone.

Are you listening, Werther? Can you hear me?

I want you to hear.

*Sitting at the laptop*

**Fourth Letter to Robot Werther**

“curses cripple

the genetic apparatus

dooming the being to death

I’m trying in vain to grasp

the process of progress

from matter living to inert

and back

the separation of spiritual substance

from its material medium

is called death

Werther Werther

if only you knew

what I dream of

and what I see in my sleep…

ask me sometime

ask me

\*\*\*

I plunged headfirst into work—what else? …

Not possessing any higher talents, I made websites.

The pay isn’t half-bad—at least a few times a year I flew somewhere f a r a w a y.

I didn’t need to use a company to book, and passing English took care of most questions.

I can’t say which one country I liked best—

no, they all have their own… — ah, you know. and so on and so on.

But, Cuba—yes, probably Cuba.

Not Mexico, not America, not even Peru. No, no. Cuba! *Cuba libre,* hot damn!

A perfect place, no matter what they say

(do flings with mulattas count?—I got tested when I came back: all clean).

I came to my senses: I read Eco, opened Hesse back up,

leafed through Bukowski and Miller with a beer in hand.

I collected records (Kitaro and Karunesh, Garbarek and Vaclavek).

For some contrast probably I rewatched all of Hitchcock,

though I’d never been particularly drawn to his work,

but *in it* an antidote lurked; *in it*, strange, there was no pain.

I didn’t want, I didn’t want more of that, what we call serious relationships.

I didn’t believe in them, not anymore.

And then there, like a sin—

do you understand, Werther, like a sin—

Mara enters the scene.

\*\*\*

*Sitting at the laptop*

**Fifth Letter to Robot Werther**

“you ask

what I dream about—

I’ll tell you

I wanted to function

like a limitless field of consciousness functions

yes yes that’s right

can you want anything more?

tension

arising between pain and pleasure

there is creation

death

like an outpouring of life

there is creation

it is as true as

what lies outside the bounds of the earth’s atmosphere

the sky is a l w a y s b l a c k

infinity closed on the latch of words

cantus firmus of the Gregorian chant”

\*\*\*

Anyway, Mara.

Maybe I’ll even try to describe her.

5 foot 6, a brunette with a classic bob, nary a flea nor flaw,

those huge eyes, so easy to drown in,

they changed color with her mood—but usually they seemed dark blue.

No false lenses—that was their real color.

She had clear, matte skin—I don’t know

if this came from any special treatment, I don’t know.

Slender fingers, not too skinny—*just right*. The manicure always pristine.

The nails, it’s true, were it seemed to me a little too long

to be able to hold her hand.

“They’re fine for using a mouse and a keyboard,” she laughed, scraping my heart.

*(Clutches his heart; shouts)*

I can’t love Not The Ones anymore! And they’re Not The Ones, always Not The Ones!

Mara also turned out to be Not The One—maybe The Very Last Not The One!

But she was always honest, always: I mean,

she only ever spoke of a complete lack of feelings—but at the same time she didn’t let go,

she never let me go, till the end.

The whole thing was complicated—I was already divorced, Mara wasn’t yet.

The only thing linking her to her husband was a child—a son, a boy of about ten, I saw…

Mara hadn’t slept with her husband in a long time, preferred to *do that* with people

she did not have tender affection for—and, of course, with those who didn’t love her in return:

such masochism.

so there was no way I could end up in Mara’s bed.

Despite it all we spent one night together (cognac played no small part)—

that was all in the end: “You know, this doesn’t change anything,”

Mara, in the morning, pulling up her skirt.

\*\*\*

*Sitting at the laptop*

**Sixth Letter to Robot Werther**

“and these freaks Werther

listen

these freaks t h i n k

that freedom of information poses a threat

a regional survey

58% are “for” censorship

(26% “strongly agree”)

24% of the respondents were “against”

(8% were “strongly against”)

18% “found the question too difficult to answer”

of course they *found it too difficult to answer*

they can’t do anything at all

just gawk

gawk into the box

void themselves

producing little bastards

or rather, copies of themselves

a second shift

meat from meat

it seems to me Werther

it’s about time to blow this planet to kingdom come

they tell me

“if they’ve killed in past lives

it means they’ll watch a thriller in this one

indicating evolution…”

what’s more

“if they were illiterate in those lives

but read t a b l o i d s now

they’re evolving…”

if you spit from that steeple

then dames with detectives

and old scandalmongers by the door

and thieving concierges

and airheaded salesgirls

and putrid butchers

and workers in vivariums “specialists”

and lawmakers “specialists”

and copulators with goats “horsemen”

and drinkers of themselves to death “horsemen”

are e v o l v i n g

*anamnesis morbi*

a hatchet into the heart

a rusty hatchet

nothing elitist

a functional thingamajig

Werther Werther

it’s not that I’ll never love them

Werther Werther

if I only had a gun

I’d start with these vivarium ‘specialists’”

\*\*\*

Once, sitting in a café, I studied her, trying to find a flaw—

with that, with a flaw, it would be so much easier for me to stop loving her, I thought:

yes, I did think…

shutting my eyes to her virtues and accentuating her defects,

with surprise I realized that Mara was no beauty at all,

that her facial features were misaligned, and in profile, so, generally speaking,

and to put it gently, were far from ideal—

But even if she were a one-legged hunchback, I would have loved her all the same.

But now it’s easy, unbelievably easy—I can hardly believe it.

Perhaps, my present calm, even rational, relationship to the process of the friction of some parts of the body on another

and triggered by my mad history with her…

\*\*\*

*Sitting at the laptop*

**Seventh Letter to Robot Werther**

“I was afraid of one do you know

devilishly afraid

of hearing my beloved in a different key

oh, not that one

not that key

that would be curtains for me Werther

the curtains laid over the piano

A major and B minor a monstrous mix

“you’re old-fashioned”

my beloved says

let

let her say what she wants

let her just speak

I like the sounds of her voice

they’re like birds released from a cage

she is a bird

Werther

but I never

you never understand

I can n e v e r touch her wings

there is pollen upon them

like a butterfly…

how it should have gone

these lines look at themselves

in the body of the letter

fly

fly off hurry away

a chord for falling out of love

to the glacial bald mountains

to the iron copper mountains

be their mistress

you modulated

you just modulated to the wrong key

goodbye”

\*\*\*

SHOOT! *right into the hearts of Mara and K\*!!*

*Chanting:*

*See the stalker so weary,*

*through the Zone he thieves,*

*the sniper: “We’re behind!”*

*he cries out and he leaves;*

*with a silencer the sniper*

*clogs the mouth of the heart.*

*And the stalker goes grey*

*And his beard does sway…*

*…*

Take aim, stalker, take aim!

Take your best shot!

Look, it’s her, beautiful Mara!

They reward failure with drawing and quartering, drawing and quartering *their own*—I saw,

I’ve seen executions like that more than once: it’s a vile spectacle.

mэn of aяt—you understand, we’re speaking of them—

most of them are dull misanthropes with puffed-up egos,

prone to domestic tyranny and *paltry* plagiarism;

we’ll add to the aria with envy and a piccadillo for despondency,

and a clinical picture will come clear—

but it’s no secret:

I know that you know that I know.

*Sings with a woman’s voice*:

*“My peace is gone, my heart is spent.*

*I’ll find it nevermore, nor where it went.”[[1]](#footnote-1)*

While scanning their agonies

(ticket booking; seats are limited)

all I was missing were my *s l i p p e r s*—

they were a present, remember?

They were from Riga.

With pompoms.

With thin leather soles.

So soft and warm.

You know, if they asked me my three wishes before my execution,

I would ask for these tchotchkes to be fetched from the ground…

(ah it seems you don’t know,

what tchotchkes are, my stalker!).

…

the other two? you’re want to know about the other two?

You aren’t afraid of the banal? How about rented apartments?

Well sure, I can do that:

I’d ask for a cigarillo, stalker,

for a cigarillo and for melon vodka—yes, the same kind

I drank a hundred years ago from a certain supple nipple,

behind it hid the heart of Mara—

hiding from your bullets, stalker.

*Sings:* *“Everywhere he is not, is to me a grave,*

*There is no life left here for me to pave.”*

Recently I’ve been interested in the question

of the velocity of a hollow-point bullet into a non-protein body

and the radius of the destruction on the latter party—

and, namely, the pain administered on the fifth thoracic vertebrae:

Plexus solaris—the one veiled target

subject to annihilation.

“So emerges the Great Jihad in the Name of the Emotion

Which Can Never be Named,” you joke crassly,

but that’s not funny, stalker, not funny at all.

*Sings:* *“My poor head spins night and day,*

*My poor mind seems to have gone away.”*

Serving staff, doctors, killers, and other various scum

must be paid well, else they, banished to the left flank,

get fat, lose their qualifications,

as teachers in foreign-language schools lose them.

Mara went to one of those schools too—

they didn’t particularly like her (well, maybe there were a few who did):

she certainly never picked her nose in public

before eighteen or after:

like you, stalker,

like me,

like this sexless author,

tapping in 90-degree heat at the keyboard black from grief—

that’s why we’re not on the list of the living:

instead we have a h i t l i s t.

*Sings: “My peace is gone, my heart is spent.*

*I’ll find it nevermore, nor where it went.”*

A telescopic scope allows for higher accuracy

aim the weapon at the fixed point of the flighty Anahata:

the crosshairs will do—or, perhaps, the German…

Do you know the distance between the lateral lines?

Can you detect the angular dimensions of an object?

Your weapon is *subtle,* stalker—delicate and demanding:

it demands respect,

respect for the body, for the beautiful body

with an optical eightfold sight:

a twentyfold sighting range:

the starting velocity of a bullet is 830 m/s.

*Sings: “Only for him do I look out.*

*Only for him do I leave the house.”*

“Oh, my rifle I’ll polish and peel,

I’ll iron the 610mm barrel of steel,

I’ll swat ten rounds with zeal…!” sings Mara.

Well done, Mara! Ah Mara, ah you bitch’s spawn!

…

Pff, stalker, do you know what I’d do?

I’d tie these pigs’ tubes, yes, I’d tie them up:

Discussing the crisis of overpopulation is bad manners, true—

Meat cr[eat]es meat non-stop, from fuck to fuck.

Yet only a *woman* can turn the Wheel of Chance.

I knew this one woman, I knew her well.

She suffered a mild form of gadget addiction,

smoked a hookah and lived according to Tarot cards.

She didn’t sweat the little things—

and the little things adjusted to her personal circumstances,

she went to the Beginning, letting Him do whatever he pleased with her—

and so never submitted and never subdued;

she didn’t presume; she didn’t worry what others thought of her

and, besides, she was irreproachable in words and deeds,

shooting back incessantly on her own thoughts and reactions—

she fired at the black holes of her own soul,

she was, when all was said and done, a clever sniper.

Someday, stalker, I will be the same,

I’ll just reread Castaneda—starting from the third book.

*Sings: “His proud gait, his noble stance,*

*His lips’ sweet smile, his forceful glance…”*

Take aim, my stalker.

Take aim. Defuse the grey rubble

masked by my heart—*my* heart,

my pocketheart

(every night I take it, steaming, out of my chest,

and place it into a glass of distilled water—

not a bad cure, you know, for insomnia).

But how your hands tremble… where is your skill?

Really, have you given up? Really have y o u g i v e n u p?!

But some *movements* are never discussed—

so it makes no sense to incite a debate, say,

like that the gap between the sexes is stipulated

by just one—one!—chromosome.

But, stalker, you’ve forgotten that I don’t have

any copyright on that mistake.

*Sings: “And his words—pure bliss,*

*The press of his hand, and oh, his kiss!”*

I throw it away, stalker, I throw away my heart—

it isn’t really

the most important thing—the second, either…

a synthetic one would in any case be more reliable:

you pay for it dearly—but then you sleep soundly, so soundly,

aloneallalone, with no woman at all

(having lived half your life, you come to the banal conclusion

that all evil comes from them)—

I scorched the frog skin and there I saw:

the carriage turned into a pumpkin,

and the beautiful princess into a red butch-faced monster

the mask the Nagual ripped off—gone.

*Sings: “My peace is gone, my heart is spent.*

*I’ll find it nevermore, nor where it went.”*

Recently She Whose Name Must Not Be Said

took me to a strange place.

Closing the door behind her, she nodded at the walls,

and then pointed to the floor—I looked closely, and my eyes were dazzled.

What didn’t I see:

arquebusses and bayonets, lances and muskets, hand cannons and rapiers,

hunting swords and black powder rifles, sabres and epees, mortars and culverins—

there were halberds too, and poleaxes with bardiches, and daggers, and flails,

and pikes, and spears, and arrows, and krises, and swords with knives,

and pistol swords, and double-headed axes, tomahawks, and longswords,

and darts, and shurikens, and stilettos, and scimitars, and even morning stars…

In the other room there were aerial bombs

(the caliber reaching up to twenty tons), tanks and water cannons,

between which lay various sorts of rifles and carbines:

there was also an *Avtomat Nikonova* assault rifle—it interested me especially.

“An AN-97,” She Whose Name Must Not Be Said read my thoughts,

and her eyes, like frozen tears

rolled from mountainous crystal, came for a moment to life—

“a variable rate of fire; it can even be fired with single shots:

three-shot bursts with high speed—about a thousand per minute—

enhance the likelihood of a quick hit.”

A bayonet came with the AN-97, a mounted optical sight,

as well as an underbarrel grenade launcher:

“This is what I need,” I nearly said, clutching at my heart,

but She Whose Name Must Not Be Said

had already opened the door to the last room—

where I saw the most ordinary, common shovel, and froze:

it was sharpened, with a noose on the handle,

it was all at once a hatchet, a dagger, and even—even!—a sword.

Well, there’s just a little more, I thought…

*Sings: “I feel my heart begin to race,*

*oh, to run to him, to welcome him in embrace!”*

…and shouted with all my strength:

SHOOT! SHOOT, STALKER, WHAT ARE YOU WAITING FOR?

I can numb my body, but never reach the p a i n!

I’ll never—do you hear? n e v e r!—reach the Anahata!

SHOOT, WHAT ARE YOU WAITING FOR?

… and Mara whimpered in my stomach,

and She Whose Name Must Not Be Said lowered her eyes,

and even the woman-sniper turned aside:

a brig? a galley? a corvette?

each one thought, dreaming of hiding,

and I stood there and shouted: SHOOT! SHOOT!

*Sings: “I would have forgotten everything with him alone,*

*though it would have been*

*though it would have been*

*though it would have been my ruin,*

*though it would have been my ruin.”*

…but you, of course,

don’t care at all,

do you?

T H A T’ S E N O U G H !

*(lies on the ground)*

\*\*\*

**Eighth Letter to Robot Werther, Final**

“a set of successive

morphological

physiological

psychophysiological

and biochemical transformations

puts me into a stupor

I well

all too well understand

that two bodies

colliding

act upon one another like this

as though their shared movement didn’t exist

the laws of pain

the pain of brotherhood

the pain and the heat

the heat

the hellish heat

the closest

become the furthest

but they

these people

can never leave *till the end*

we digress

not those curtains

rip them right off

according to statistics

*67% of users suffer from phantom phone syndrome*

*яingxiэty…*

I do too

I also suffer

like you

artificial intelligence

from romanticized suicide

the phantom pain of sensitive natures

*Die Leiden des jungen Werther*

well, my friend, hello

hello”

1. Gretchen’s song, *Faust*. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)