

## A Dream of Moscow

The silence

1. Becomes noticeable as his mind's ear anticipates that deaf twang.
2. And then it begins.
3. Through the sun-pireced dust-clouds he watches those ghastly fingers fluttering about the strings and grimaces.

Crouched into the shadows, who crouch around her

1. Her fingernails are deep full of fur.
2. Her insatiable pupils are deep full too as they swallow in the dark.
3. And the shrapnel-dusted concrete presses cold on the muscular soles of her feet.

Here

1. Between the beautiful, grey buildings, along the shiny, grey streets, flies the escaped note of a flute.
2. With a million swift in full song in its train.
3. And Dasha halts, dazzled, by the way they hurl themselves into the distance with a faintness.
4. Will there be more?
5. Are there more?

The turnstile on the left please

1. The gaudy tourist crowd has been shepherded into the theatre, where dramatic shafts of shadow and a smell have turned them mute and suddenly grave.
2. The silence obliterated by a most dramatic shaft of sunlight tearing through a high window.
3. She is ancient.
4. Dead many times over.
5. She stands bandaged to a lofty pillar and gasps.

Today the professor is content to stare

1. And leave his papers in yesterday's most specific order.
2. That order's another mystery now.
3. He breathes deeply on the dust-clouds and tries, momentarily, to meditate.
4. The harp is such an ugly instrument.

She sees it now

1. Dormant in the close nests of the muggy shadows of the leaves.
2. The little wooden house chuffs smoke.
3. Set into walls grubby and sturdy with age, the dust-smearing windows peer inwards onto a strange and faded décor, where tassled lampshades and intricate net curtains hoard the dust and smoke of centuries.
4. An old professor lives there, Dasha. They say he won't move into the new kingdom.
5. She strains for a glimpse of the professor, but already the train is filled with an inky gloom -
6. The old city is coming.

Perched blackly on the oil-creamed canal bank

1. A fortress of black brick all abandonment.
2. Giant towers of shadow who still impose themselves upon the skyline.
3. Stony is the breath of the air out here – inside the dark has nested too long.
4. Living shadows now have webbed together.

Symmetry symmetry symmetry

1. He almost actually physically yawns and then does – better make a note of the symbols though.
2. Bear on left: apples.
3. Bear in centre: honey.
4. Bear on right: fox's tail.
5. Peacock! Two beautiful peacocks, sauntering among the bear-legs, then swerving apart asymmetrically so that he might gather the twig with the shiny berry in his delicate beak and chase her – have the bears moved?!

There are dramatic shafts of shadow

1. Somewhere deep in the bowels of what was once her palace, an ancient woman, dead many times over,  
stands bandaged to a lofty pillar.
2. And softly, incessantly does she snore, sunk in the utter realities of the other world.
3. And do not doubt that her kingdom is powerful.

Sunbeams are ecstatic

1. But the ancient forest eventually ambles into view, and a host of unpleasant secrets with it.
2. And somewhere beyond, in the far-off dark, lies the old city, fuming.
3. The jolly, grey sunshine of the kingdom is now overcome with a leafy, breathing gloom and a dampness.
4. The kingdom is gone, and the gloom lends its leafy, breathing damp to the train, now a rain-streak through the shadows.
5. And her granddad's face is swimming with leaves as he says, do you remember the wooden house, Dasha? The one in the heart of the forest?

Three bears now, and the professor groans inwardly

1. The day had started so promisingly as well!
2. He allows the words their moment to cease resonating – three bears now – before bringing his eye once more to the lens.
3. Three bears, anthropomorphic in that they – stand straight up – and also in that they gaze.
4. Yes, enigmatically gazing. And proud.
5. The pride is in their terrific paws – the way they each hold one behind and the other proudly forward presenting.
6. Like statues they are – or sentries or –

## Listen

1. It is piano today, bouncing between these narrow walls.
2. Thoughtless, spurious, romantic notes, waves of them, as confident our here in the boundless streets as in the little room that made them.
3. Unconcerned, beautiful and stupid little waves of notes, wafting as high as Masha in Red, who slams a window on them, then the curtains, emphatically.
4. But unconcerned and beautiful and stupid are the notes, gathering up a breeze to find a multitude of open windows.

They're very beautiful girls aren't they Dasha?

1. But you mustn't let that stern woman talk to you.
2. She trains those pretty girls in purple – she trains them to do things they shouldn't.

They will ride the train all over again

1. The gleaming white and glass shuttle pulls up beside them like a sunbeam.
2. The gleaming white and glass doors shiver open.
3. And they step into a sunbeam's interior of white and glass.
4. It hums there, for a moment, while they find their seats, before sliding from the dock and rocketing  
over the shining, grey cacophony of the sunny kingdom.
5. Which whirs beneath them in the speed.

Whilst sunk beneath the sunken cathedral

1. Glaring colours eddy and swirl without light along the skin of an oil-clot deep as earth.
2. Sloshing ghostlike against the ridges of the planet's caverns – fisting for an opening, a chink of air.
3. As fresher sediments descend the slow inches of the dissolving black, which sits like an open palm, with  
its tendrils enveloping a beautiful young man, spinning artfully.
4. The oil has preserved his startling beauty, but his eyes betray the absoluteness of death.
5. For driven through his groin and stomach is the fierce tusk of a boar.

The park is green and an oasis

1. The trees are tall and predetermined.
2. The flowers are brilliant and organised.
3. The kingdom runs through it like a stream.
4. And, like a stream, the jolly people keep their path, allowing the flowers to stand their borders peacefully.
5. The darker trees are dense on the periphery, which no-one here looks to directly.
6. The sort of place unpleasant secrets gather, and have.

That wasn't the sentence

1. Lethargy catches him now. Lots of lethargy.
2. He wrestles his courage, wrestles his concentration, brings back the garden and says
3. *Let your heart not faint, O love. Be strong. O, it burns me, your failing breath.*
4. *It kindles through all my being a fire. My heart is aflame with –*
5. *With –*
6. His arms slump from the writing position to idle.
7. It's no good. And maybe that is the right sentence. Maybe that's the one.

## The white dress

1. Fluttering like a spectre, but two very real legs are thrashing the ground beneath it.
2. And two steadying arms like a swimmer's through the sunshine.
3. And bouncing hair making long, white ribbons for contrails.
4. And that wonderful, irresistible, uncontrollable smile.
5. All collides at once with his own open arms and warmth, which he takes her up in and smiles wonderfully.
6. Of course we can ride the train again Dasha, of course we can.

Unnoticed, a harsh wind rattles the shutters

1. The lampshade rests on the fox's corpse.
2. The fox's corpse rests on the birdcage.
3. The birdcage rests on the mannequin legs.
4. The mannaquin legs rest on the bicycle seat.
5. The bicycle seat stands of its own accord.
6. Exhausted, the woman stands back from the creation, her fingers laced with decay.

The lens is closing – the day must be nearly over

1. The professor pushes his nib against a work (and these are the strings of a harp).
2. At least, against what he feels to be a work (and these are the strings of a harp).
3. And he weighs it in the balance of several others which he already understands (and these are the strings of a harp).
4. But they fail to share any shade of their meaning (and these are the strings of a harp).
5. And another crucial sentence remains unbearably broken, and the professor despairs (and these are the strings of a harp).
6. And these are the strings of a harp.

A safe area is cordoned off

i. It is estimated that the cathedral boasts over fifty towers and domes, the majority of which have now sunken completely beneath the surface. In the name of economy it was the decision of the city authorities to build new towers rather than excavate the old ones. The many-coloured cockerels you can see perched on the domes were donated by a host of kind benefactors, and represent the qualities aspired to by the ancient city. Please consult your programs for a complete list of the cockerel's meanings. It is believed that some five tonnes of gold was used in the cathedral's construction, and that the bells amounted to a near-equal expenditure.

Night over the forest

1. And the wind brushes the bones.
2. The moon is thin and fearful here between the trees,

What is this?

1. Is it anything?
2. The professor remains calm, trusting, as he must, that it all does mean something.
3. He lowers his head and traces a whisper over these words he's squeezed too hard.
4. *Out on the plain, are all the swift-footed horses guzzling snakes?*
5. He swallows.
6. Could it really mean nothing?

But look inside the ferocious, appalling flames

1. Cavernous stairwells tolling footfalls, all aflame.
2. Sleepy wards of skeletal bedrows, deflating and inflating, all aflame.
3. Wandering nurses, clear-eyed, dividing up the hours as they amble, all aflame.
4. Ornamental gardens, haunted by the living, who follow the thought-through path of concept flowers,  
all aflame.
5. Screaming, ferocious and appalling flames, scourging every movement of this unfathomable labyrinth.

What's in the lens today, Professor?

- i. A frozen violin.

The sunbeam dives into ink

1. Splash.
2. It spins a slow arc, caught between gravities, then
3. Stalls – at the apex.
4. And what, suspended in ink, can a sunbeam do but wait?
5. So wait it does, and Dasha's pensive heart is pausing beats.
6. And the certain ghosts of leaves shimmer by the windows.

The day had started so promisingly as well!

1. But clouded over mid-morning, the kingdom is a sky of edges bent about their angles.
2. An abandoned roundabout creaks into the wind and its first dash of rain.
3. All about the multitudinous slamming windows float the jolly faces of the kingdom, pink with warmth.

The professor gags on a whole sentence

1. And feels that damned maze of puzzlements all untwisting slightly.
2. Because the beast sank its tusk deep into someone's groin and stretched him dying across the ground.
3. He reads it through again.
4. He says it out loud.
5. He could say it all day long, and will.
6. He will sing it along to the harp.

The turnstile on the left please

1. The gaudy tourist crowd has been shepherded into the theatre, where dramatic shafts of shadow and a smell have made them mute and suddenly grave.
3. The silence obliterated by a most dramatic shaft of sunlight tearing through a high window.
4. She is ancient.
5. Dead many times over.
6. She stands bandaged to a lofty pillar and winces.
7. And winces and howls.
8. And winces and howls.

Only the brightest stars are still going

1. A stern lady, full of pride, hurries from the cathedral door, and all along the safe, cordoned passages through the marsh.
2. Does she believe in oracles?
3. So then why is she so scared?
4. She strides over the oil-wells and steps up to the platform.
5. Instantly the long sunbeam slips into position, and the white and glass doors shiver open.
6. Her pretty girls will all be waiting for her.

Yes, this is what it's like inside a sunbeam

1. Glee full lightspeed with ease.
2. In one shake over the kingdom oblivious.

## This string

1. This string means so little – as little, even, as the next string.
2. And there's no time before another accidentally plucks itself.
3. Yes – a sense that she is the harp's puppet – folded around it as she is like a flap of dead skin with ten fingers.
4. Dusty! dusty! dusty! – was the study so dusty before? Does she exude dust?!
5. And what dust is to matter these half-mute fumbling notes are to music.
6. And likewise, they never end.

Here

1. Between the beautiful, grey buildings, along the shiny grey streets, flies the escaped note of a violin.
2. With a million swift in full song in its train.
3. And Dasha halts, dazzled by the way they hurl themselves into the distance with a faintness.
4. Will there be more?
5. Are there more?

The jolly afternoon sun is in riotous good form

1. The children's voices leap lifelike through the shining, grey streets.
2. Leap through the multitudinous open windows of stacked apartments.
3. From where Masha in Green fails to cry over the jumbled, grey panorama of the sweltering kingdom.
4. And the same old visions of the sunken cathedral haunt her again.

Dasha watches the sky through the window and wonders what time of day it is

1. The train shoulders the old city's curve, so that the black-yellow labyrinth of the hospital complex comes into view and dominates the horizon.
2. Dasha thinks that, even from this great distance, she can make out the sick people crawling about in those dark windows.
3. They say the ancient hospital surrounds the whole city, Dasha, because it's grown so large.
4. There are evenings when the entire hospital bursts alight and all around the city, the skyline dances with fire.
5. The people who still live here call it a red sunset.

The bears have not moved

1. He knows, removing his focus from the lens and suddenly blinded by the murk.
2. The room is dotted with black visions of bears as he crouches beneath the sloped ceiling and mimes his way to the desk.
3. Assuming that old chair's favourite position, he finds the old inertia stinging.
4. Pen.
5. Holding the pen.
6. Holding the pen, he knows that the day did start promisingly, with the construction of a whole and very helpful sentence that can't be taken away from him.
7. He smooths out a sheet of paper – it remains crumpled.

## Behold

1. Over the sorry silhouette of a city turning into oil.
2. Over the rusted, cluttered, frayed and sodden stonework.
3. Between pipes and narrow arches that weep.
4. The fox's monstrous shade lumbers painfully and slow.

What's in the lens today, Professor?

1. I stoop through dim, yellow corridors, like tunnels, but am always aware of the awesome enormity of the building.
2. I sense that I will know the room when I see it, and that something of the utmost importance will be inscribed on the door, in a language I can understand.
3. In the meantime, nurses flow back and forth along these tunnels like blood cells.
4. And the occasional body-trolley goes jittering over the tiles.

Sunset over the forest

1. And rain has roused the bones.
2. The sun is quick and real here between the trees.

Symmetry symmetry symmetry

1. He almost actually physically yawns and then does – better make a note of the symbols though.
2. Bear of left: cherries.
3. Bear in centre: bandages.
4. Bear on right: boar's tusk.
5. Peacock! Two beautiful peacocks, sauntering among the bear-legs, then swerving apart asymmetrically so that he might gather the twig with the shiny berry in his delicate beak and chase her – have the bears moved?!

The train is charged with an ethereal blue

1. When the windows are blinded by it, blocks of ice, the train becomes halted.
2. We're here, Dasha. Time to get off now.
3. The doors shiver open, to the howls and blasts of the ice furnace.
4. Absorbed in the blue air's billowings of glitter, Dasha sees the outlines of spires, and the many-bladed stars sitting atop them.

The professor slumps, momentarily defeated

1. He is a mystery to this language.
2. This language is a mystery to itself.
3. And the queued up dusty tomes tower awfully around his study like battlements.

There are dramatic shafts of shadow

1. Somewhere deep in the bowels of what was once her palace, an ancient woman, dead many times over, stands bandaged to a lofty pillar.
2. And softly, incessantly does she babble some mystic tongue into the echoes an an empty auditorium.
3. Until such an echo as shakes the walls fires her eyelids open and silence –
4. Tonight, the lady of the stars has spoken.

The purple leotards hug their puppy-fat

1. They prance ahead of their long hair, ahead of their fine buttocks.
2. Into a queue governed by a lady all sternness and pride.
3. As the last beauty disappears behind her, she draws the two great doors together, and a bolt chirrup  
into place.
4. But from time to time unruly laughter still breaks that bolted silence.
5. And apparitions of nakedness do still swim along the dusty barred windows.

A fire kindles through all my being

1. That wasn't it.
2. *Through all my being kindles.*
3. Anger catches him now. Lots of anger.
4. He scrawls the words kindles, being and fire beneath the two aborted sentences and looks up towards  
the lens.
5. The black visions are faded out.
6. He imagines pressing his eye again to the lens, and pictures –
7. The garden.
8. He takes the bears out, revealing the fountain, and says, kindles, being, fire.
9. ... *it kindles through all my being a fire...*
10. Yes! The pen lands.
11. *My heart is aflame with despairing desire!*
12. He reads it through.
13. He reads it through.
14. It isn't right.

Do you know where we're going Dasha?

1. We're going to the old citadel – you'll like it there,
2. From top to toe, it's been frozen over!
3. It's an incredible sight, all preserved in a magical ice like that.
4. But one day, we will travel like this and find that it's disappeared –
5. It will be all gone, Dasha!

What's in the lens today, Professor?

1. Crab spiders.
2. Two of them.

After countless hours the dark and damp is endless

1. But the sunbeam shows no remorse in shrugging off that leafy gloom and exploding with a soot-cloud onto the ancient city, where it veers madly against its own reflection in the oil-marsh.
2. Dasha allows herself a deep breath, and brings her face to the window.

A safe area is cordoned off

1. It is estimated that the cathedral boasts over fifty towers and domes, the majority of which have now sunken completely beneath the surface. In the name of economy it was the decision of the city authorities to build new towers rather than excavate the old ones. The many-coloured cockerals you can see perched on the domes were donated by a host of kind benefactors, and represent the qualities aspired to by the ancient city. Please consult your programs for a complete list of the cockeral's meanings. It is believed that some five tonnes of gold was used in the cathedral's construction, and that the bells amounted to a near-equal expenditure. Yes Madam.
2. Why does this dome here not have a cockerel?
3. All the domes boast cockerels Madam, in fact it was in – oh. It appears to be missing.

Whilst beneath her feet

1. Glaring colours eddy and swirl without light along the skin of an oil-clot deep as earth.
2. Sloshing ghostlike against the ridges of the planet's caverns – fistng for an opening, a chink of air.
3. As fresher sediments descend the slow inches of the dissolving black, which sits like an open palm, with  
its tendrils enveloping a chipped, green cockerel, spinning artfully.
4. Hurling so slowly into the patient stomach of a darkness bloated and wet with oil.
5. The old city has closed its mouth on this and swallowed.

The professor strains his everything

1. If he loses concentration for a second, then all the figures turn ridiculous.
2. And when that happens the world too turns ridiculous with it.
3. The harp is edging in – but it's always edging in. He knows that.
4. The dead woman seems to be playing in her sleep.
5. He unstrains gladly, and wonders what would happen if he threw something at her.

Masha in white doesn't frown

1. But the dancing girls circle something, like her imagination.
2. And their beauty wraps great surges of nostalgia about her.
3. So the same old visions of the sunken cathedral haunt her again.
4. And she drowns gladly in that ravenous bog.