



Asya

Ivan Turgenev

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Tolstoy considered Asya, written in 1858, one of Turgenev's two best stories, along with First Love. Asya is a tragic story of two Russians abroad who are in love but conceal it from each other. Constance Garrett and Isabel Hapgood translated Asya in antiquated style approximately 100 years ago. Despite the story's superb character portrayals, it has rarely been available since. This translation is based on the Russian text published in 1961 in Moscow by the Government Publishing House of Artistic Literature.

Asya Details

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Author : Ivan Turgenev

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From Reader Review Asya for online ebook

Nik Kiri says

I read the two novellas Asya and First Love in one sitting and was impressed by the ability of the author to create such dramatic, extraordinary and unforgettable women's characters like Asya and Zinaida, by his unquestionable talent to turn into a masterpiece a seemingly simple and straightforward story and by the magnificent and vivid descriptions of the people and places in the stories. Turgenev's writing style is poetic and melancholic, I devoured every word and every sentence admiring his exceptional skill of using words. Of both novellas I have a slight preference for Asya because the book kept me in suspense until the end and because of the deep psychological portrait of a complicated and contradicting person like Asya, a girl capable of many emotions and whose mental state, mood and behavior change a lot even in a short period of time. At one moment she is confident of herself, bright and ready to fly, the next moment she is despondent, pessimistic and hopeless which is due to her social and family status, upbringing and her fears. She falls in love with the main character but because he is confused of his feelings, he does not respond with the same passion and only when she disappears from his life because she mistakenly thinks he is indifferent, does he realize his true love and is hit by an enormous sense of loss and despair. When we lose something precious, we always regret the missed chance at happiness, love and wonder what would have become of us if we had acted in a different way and had made another choice.

Keely says

Turgenev has done it again. Another beautiful short masterpiece about nostalgia, love and regret. No one is better at such a thing. You could feel the pain in the last pages. Exquisite.

Fede says

I enjoyed *Asja* far more than I had expected.

A simple story, made poignant by the beautiful way it is written, I was really impressed by the way I became involved with the narration. Asja's character caught my attention, her changeability and care to what others think of her, as well as the way Mr. N. related to her, his inability to overcome prejudices. The way he fell in love with her was nice because it was realistic: slowly, day by day, without even knowing it till the end.

Really, really liked it.

Dmitry Zlokazov says

1. Memorable 2
2. Social Relevance 3
3. Informative 3
4. Originality 2

5. Thought Provoking 4
6. Expressiveness 4
7. Entertaining 4
8. Visualization 5
9. Sparks Emotion 5
10. Life changing 2

Total 34/10 = 3.4

Nhi Nguy?n says

V?n h?c Nga qu? là n?i t?ng v?i nh?ng c?u chuy?n t?nh ??p, trong s?ng nh?ng k?t th?c bu?n, và c?u chuy?n n?y c?ng kh?ng l? ngo?i l?... Ôi Ivan Turgenev, b?c n?i t?ng th? kia m? sao ??n gi? ch?u m?i ??c truy?n c?a b?c hu hu hu...

"Asya", ??ng ch?t bi th??ng (nh?ng kh?ng bi l?y) c?a v?n h?c l?ng m?n Nga, l? m?t c?u chuy?n c?a hai con ng??i y?u nhau nh?ng kh?ng n?i, c?a m?t nh?n v?t ch?nh N. ?ã t?ng ngh? m?nh s? kh?ng bao gi? k?t h?n v?i Asya - ng??i con g?i 17 tu?i t?nh t?nh b?c ??ng, l?n mang tr?n vai c?i g?nh n?ng v?o h?nh c?a ngu?n g?c và xu?t th?n c? kh?ng l?y g?i t? h?o c?. ?? r?i khi c?i kho?nh kh?c c?a h?nh ph?c qua ?i, t?t c? c?n l?i ch? l? ni?m ti?c nu?i ?au th??ng cho ng?n t? ?ã kh?ng ???c b?y t?, l? c?i v?y c?nh bay ?i m?t c?a nh?ng t?nh c?m tr? trung, s?i n?i, s?ng trong, ch?n th?n m? N. s? kh?ng bao gi? c?n ???c tr?i nghi?m trong cu?c ??i...

??ng nh? N. ?ã th?t l?n trong c?u chuy?n, h?nh ph?c ch?ng ph?i l? c?i g?i qu? l?n lao to t?t, n?o ??n gi?n ch? l? m?t kho?nh kh?c v?t ??n c?a t?nh y?u, c?a ni?m vui khi ???c ? b?n Asya. C? m?t th?i ng?n ng?n t?nh y?u và s?c s?ng, h?ra ch? c? th? nh? ?nh sao ch?i l?a trong tho?ng ch?c th? sao?...

Tatiana says

??????????, ?? ??????? ??????? :)?????? ?????????.

Quân Khuê says

C?u chuy?n v? cu?c g?p g? ng?n ng?i gi?a m?t ch?ng trai, nh?n v?t x?ng "t?i", và m?t c? g?i t?nh t?nh c? ph?n hoang d?i n?y c? v? ??p c?a m?t t?nh y?u b?t th?n. Trong s?ng m? ??n ?au, l?ng m?n m? kh?ng bi l?y, n?u ??c v?o t?m 18-20 tu?i n?o s? l? th? truy?n ?óng ?inh v?o tu?i tr?. Ti?c l? t?i qua tu?i ?y m?t r?i. T?i v?n c?m nh?n ???c v? ??p c?a n?, nh?ng s? rung ??ng m? n? g?y ra cho t?i, v?o th?i ?i?m n?y, ch? c?n ch?ng m?c m? th?i.

Andrei Tama? says

Nostalgia iubirii pierdute, iubire de ordin platonic povestit? cu o mare dezinvoltur? ?i f?r? nicio reticen?? ?ntr-un singur plan narativ.

O metafor? pl?cut?: "Ce cameleon mai e ?i fata asta!"

Hawk Zoro says

Read it 5 years ago ...

I was living an exact adventure!

Unfortunately I lived the same sad ending of the novel !

I don't know if you already noticed how can Russian authors be so deep, changeable and Outstanding!

Stevo Iliškovi? says

Velike su joj o?i gledale ravno, jasno, smjelo, no pokatkad bi vje?ama malo zažmirila i tada bi joj pogled iznenada postajao dubok i nježan.

Nisam mogao razumjeti, kako se taj sastanak tako brzo, tako glupo završio - završio se, a ja nisam kazao ni stoti dio onoga, što sam htio, što sam mogao re?i, i još ni sam nisam znao, kako se mogao završiti...

Htio sam ve? tada re?i Gaginu, da prosim ruku njegove sestre. No takva prosidba, u to doba... 'Do sutra, - pomislim, - sutra ?u biti sretan...'

Sutra ?u biti sretan! Sre?a nema svoje sutra, ona nema ni svoje ju?er, ona ne pamti prošlost, ne misli na budu?nost, ona ima samo sadašnjost, - i to ne dan - ve? trenutak.

'Zbogom, mi se više ne ?emo vidjeti. Ne putujem zbog ponosa - ne, druk?ije ne mogu. Ju?er, kad sam plakala pred vama, da ste mi rekli samo jednu rije?, jednu rije? samo - ja bih ostala. Vi je niste rekli. Možda je i bolje ovako... Zbogom zauvijek!'

Jednu rije?... O, bezumni?e! Tu rije?... u suzama sam je ponavlja?ju?er, rasipao je na vjetru, izgovarao je u pustim poljima... ali je njoj nisam rekao, nisam joj rekao da je ljubim... Pa ja i nisam mogao tada izustiti tu rije?. Kad sam se s njom sre? u onoj kobnoj sobi, nisam još ni pravo bio svijestan svoje ljubavi; ta se svijest nije probudila ?ak ni onda, kad sam s njenim bratom sjedio u besmislenoj i tegobnoj šutnji - ona je planula nezadrživom snagom tek nekoliko trenutaka kasnije, kad sam je, uplašen nesre?om, koja se mogla desiti, po?eo tražiti i dozivati... no onda je ve? bilo kasno.

Bio sam tada mlad - i budu?nost mi se, ta kratka, brza budu?nost, ?inila beskona?na. Zar se ne može vratiti ono, što je ve? bilo, mislio sam, i još bolje, još krasnije?... Poznavao sam i druge žene - no ?uvstvo, što ga je u meni probudila Asja, to vru?e, nježno, duboko ?uvstvo, to se nikada više nije ponovilo. Ne! nijedne mi o?i nisu zamijenile one o?i, koje su neko? bile s ljubavlju uprte u mene; ni na ?ije srce, koje je palo na moje grudi, nije moje srce odgovorilo s onakvim radosnim i slatkim premiranjem. Osu?en na osamljenost besku?nika, provodim puste dane, no ?uvam, kao svetinju, njena pisamca i sasušeni cvijetak geranija, onaj isti cvijetak, koji mi je ona neko? bacila s prozora.

Protivno od piš?evih muških junaka, žene su mu i djevojke uvijek na?istu sa sobom, osje?aju ?isto i neposredno; nepogrešiv ih instinkt uvijek vodi na put, koji je za njih prav. One jednako nalaze u sebi i odvažnost i snagu za djelo, kao i za odricanje i patnju.

Bogdan Liviu says

O, privire de femeie care iube?te, cine o s? te poat? descrie vreodat??

"Condamnat la singur?tatea unei vie?i de holtei lipsit de familie, îmi tr?iesc stingher anii plictico?i, dar p?strez mereu, ca pe o relicv?, bile?elele ?i floarea uscat? de mu?cat? pe care mi-a aruncat-o cândva de la fereastr?. Din petalele ei se ridic? pân? ?i azi o mireasm? abia sim?it?, pe când mâna ce mi-a dat-o, mâna pe care doar o singur? dat? am dus-o la buzele mele, poate c? zace demult în mormânt... Iar eu? Eu însu?i, ce am devenit? Ce a mai r?mas din mine, ce a mai r?mas de pe urma acelor zile de zbucium ?i fericire, de pe urma acelor n?zuin?e ?i speran?e înaripate? ...Astfel mireasma u?oar? a unui firicel neînsemnat de iarb? d?inuie uneori mai mult decât toate bucuriile omene?ti, ba chiar decât omul însu?i."

Spyros says

An investigation of characters, their origins and their prospects. The story is very simple: three people meet and they enjoy life. This time it is about youth and love. Very well written with very beautiful words and metaphors.

d says

Tardé 7 horas en leer estas 50 páginas. Me interrumpía a cada rato, lloraba de alegría, me iba a tomar un té, volvía, leía unas páginas más, volvía a llorar de absoluta felicidad.

Una novelita bellísima. Turgenev te mete en un mundo donde lo único que importan son las relaciones justas entre los hombres, la naturaleza, el amor y la paz. Esto puede sonar muy hippie, pero no. Acá hay humanidad, y esta descrita como los dioses:

En la calle, debajo de la baja cerca del jardín, se había reunido una gran cantidad de gente: los pacíficos ciudadanos de la villa de L., que no querían perderse la ocasión de echar un vistazo a esos huéspedes recién llegados. Me uní a esa muchedumbre de curiosos. Me divertía contemplar los rostros de los estudiantes; sus abrazos, sus exclamaciones, su inocente presunción, sus miradas ardientes, sus risas sin motivo —las mejores del mundo—, todo ese alegre bullicio lleno de vitalidad y frescura, ese afán de ir hacia delante, sin importar adónde, con tal de que fuera hacia delante, y esa benévolas despreocupación me conmovían y me exaltaban. «¿Por qué no unirme a ellos?», me pregunté...

Florencia says

The Peach Blossom Spring is a Chinese tale written by Tao Yuanming (c. 365–427). It tells the story of a fisherman who, by chance, discovers a beautiful place where its community and the natural surroundings were in perfect harmony. Dynasties, people, politics, fashion - everything outside their haven of peace and plenty was unbeknownst to them. The fisherman was received and treated with great cordiality and after several days of idyllic landscapes and hospitality, the man left not without marking the route with signs. He tried to return but never found it again. This story is the inspiration for Wei's poem.

There is no such thing as a utopia, but even something remotely beneficial is hard to find. One of the many ironies of life is that, when we find it, we are usually oblivious to its existence until we lose it.

We are prone to clichés.

That's the rule. To imagine it, to see it, to finally grasp it. And to let it go, unaware of the transient nature of things and people. To contemplate the distance between the bodies, the unspoken words, the constant glances. There, where the soothing Rhine, whitened by the moonlight, became the path to confusion, intense happiness and immeasurable loss. Turgenev told his story using a most delectable language, the kind that is often inspired by a bittersweet reminiscence.

The sound of a **soft, carefree laugh** which could melt glaciers. The eyes to which everything is saying goodbye. A withered **geranium flower** given as a gift amidst laughs. The only permanent thing he owns is the memory of its faint fragrance, which finally outlived him: N. N., who spent unforgettable days **in the small German town of Z— on the left bank of the Rhine**, when he was about 25. The unwary writer who thought he could buy time, control circumstances, trick fortune. The one who would later travel the world to find that fragrance again, just to see his enthusiasm wane at the thought of defeat. The one whose love **had burst alight with irresistible force only a few moments later**, when there was nothing to be done.

Loss is everywhere and regret, a faithful companion.

A similar issue is addressed in one of the books I've read recently which left a deep impression on me. Using the kind of gorgeous language whose lucidity stirs the heart, Yoshida Kenk? discusses the nature of delay: the art of vacillation, the tendency to procrastinate. I'm one of its victims trying to recover, so this monk's words kept reverberating through my head: **...always intending to make more effort later. And if such are your days, how much less aware must you be of the passing moment's indolence. Why should it be so difficult to carry something out right now when you think of it, to seize the instant?** To seize the instant. To seize the instant that will never repeat itself. The simplicity of the statement is overwhelming. Taking into account the natural awareness of human finitude, why should it be so difficult to...?

Loss is everywhere and time never calls a truce. It's inevitable. Alone, in a little room, you find a tiny piece of paper with a few words written in pencil: **...if you'd said one word to me, just one word, I'd have stayed. You didn't say it.**

Turgenev knew it well. So do we. Countless examples with solutions and complete desolation.

The keys you lost because of your general absent-mindedness. The job opportunity that slipped out of your hands due to perpetual doubts. The potentially entertaining conversation with a stranger that never started thanks to your shyness, even your mistrust. The quarrel you couldn't avoid because of your **senseless and**

oppressive silence, or a shameless lie that never knew guilt; a mixture of both and the following distance that preserves ‘dignity’. The possibility of a little happiness you didn’t pursuit because of fear. Or the arrogant thought that the unique was going to appear in your life a thousand times.

Jan 16-Feb 05, 18

* Also on my blog.

** Actual rating: 4.5 stars.

Ivana Books Are Magic says

Asya is a story about love. Would it surprise you if I added that it is a story about a tragic love? Probably not, for what is more suitable to be called literature than a well told tale of a tragic love. I would describe Asya as one of the best novellas that I have ever read. The writing is simply superb. Turgenev’s prose flows effortlessly. As always, Turgenev writes beautifully. The plot and the pace of the story are both impeccable. With the way the story is told, it’s impossible not to be moved by it, unless one has a heart made of stone. That is how it seemed to me anyhow, for I remember being extremely touched while reading it.

The story opens with an unnamed narrator (N.N), a mature Russian man who thinks about his youth. After this brief introduction, we are transported to N.N’s past, to the time when he was a young man, staying abroad, recovering from an end of an affair with a married woman. N.N moves to an unnamed German city L., a city he took a liking of and like many other Turgenev’s protagonist’s he seeks solace in long walks, admiring nature and studying the scenery. N.N observes rather than acts, describing what he sees, for example German students on the streets. There is some kind of gathering on the streets, there is music, and N.N enjoys observing the cheerful faces of students, but not surprisingly he is, at the same time, in a melancholic mood. N.N is Russian after all, his soul is a mixture of joy and sadness.

Suddenly, N.N hears a masculine voice addressing a girl by the name Asya, asking Asya (in Russian) whether she had had enough. Upon hearing them, N.N turns around and sees a handsome young man and a girl whose face isn’t clearly visible. N.N proceeds to ask them whether they are Russian. Gagarin introduces himself and after a second of hesitation introduces Asya as his sister. N.N introduces himself to them. Usually, N.N. avoids other Russians when he travels/stays abroad, that is what he tells us (the reader), but N.N makes an exception, as he takes an instant liking to Gagarin, noticing that his face is that of an honest man. In addition, N.N observes that there is something special about Asya and takes a notice of her big dark eyes.

What happens next is that Gagarin says to Asya that they had watched Germans enough and she agrees with her brother, and then Gagarin invited N.N to visit them in their home. N.N follows the brother and sister to their place, and when Asya takes her hat off, N.N notices Asya’s black hair, cut short as a boy’s hair. Three of them spent hours together, their talk lasting for hours. The day turns into night, and they can still hear music from the city. Once it gets late, Asya excuses herself and goes to bed. Gagarin and N.N talk a bit more and

when N.N returns home, he feels happy, but he can't understand why he is so happy. What does it mean, N.N asked himself? Am I in love?

Early in the morning, Gagarin pays N.N a visit. Long story short, the three become friends and end up spending a lot of time together. Asya's acts a bit odd at times, and this confuses N.N, but it is pretty obvious that these two are falling in love with one another. However, N.N continues to be confused by Asya's inconsistent behaviour. What confuses N.N is that something Asya acts like a well brought up young lady and sometimes not. N.N starts to suspect that Asya's is not truly Gagarin's sister, but his mistress, until there comes a time when Gagarin speaks to N.N openly. Gagarin ends up telling N.N the full story of Asya's history, something they have been keeping secret for a good reason. Asya is Gagarin's half-sister, a bastard daughter of Gagarin father, raised with love but in difficult circumstances. Gagarin's father only begged Gagarin to take care of her on his death bed. After hearing this story, N.N is better able to understand her character. All the things that seem contradictory about Asya's behaviour, now appear more clear to N.N. Asya's behaviour and her strong attachment to her brother suddenly make sense in context of the isolated way she was raised. Gagarin begs N.N to be careful of the way he treats Asya, because she is such a sensitive girl.

I absolutely loved the characterization of the main female character Asya. The view into her soul was both fascinating and extremely touching. Asya's sensibility could move anyone. There are so many things one can admire in this novella, for example the painfully accurate way the falling in love is described, but what I admired most about this one was the wonderful portrayal of this innocent young girl. Is there anything sweeter than a first love? The theme of first love is something Turgenev explored often. Supposedly, Turgenev drew from his own life experiences when he wrote this novella. In my view, that makes it even more touching.

What happens next? Is a spoiler to say that they didn't live happily ever after? After all, I said that in the very first paragraph, warned you that this is a story about a tragic love. Like Lermontov's protagonist of *Hero of Our Times*, our N.N is indecisive and afraid of his own emotions. In addition, N.N seems to be confused by the enormity of the love he feels. Perhaps N.N feels that his love, as great it might be, cannot possibly measure up to the object of his love. So, N.N waits, while Asya suffers. The reader is tempted to hate N.N because of his passivity, only if N.N wasn't so reluctant to defend himself. N.N honesty and self-reproach, make it hard for us readers to reproach him. Finally, aren't we all afraid to love? Aren't we all afraid of those we love? Aren't we afraid for those we love? Isn't love as frightening as it is wonderful? Isn't it so easy to miss that perfect moment? Sometimes a moment in which we can profess our love is but a fleeting instant. Sometimes life takes that one opportunity to love from us. Sometimes it is our own fault, but it is not always easy to seize love, to know what the right moment is, to recognize it when it's there. When we are young, it seems to us that the opportunities for love are endless. When we grow older, we realize how fragile and fleeting love can be, even when it is true.
