

RESEARCH ARTICLE

# The Problem Of Life And Death In The Story "Live And Remember" V.G. Rasputin

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## Abstract

This article is devoted to the description of moral relations revealed in the creative talent of V.G. Rasputin.

## KEY WORDS

Noble simplicity, sense of proportion, colloquialism, flexibility and amazing precision, duty, responsibility, love, humanism, conscience.

## INTRODUCTION

War, a terrible and tragic event, has become a test of humanity. It is precisely in such extreme situations that a person reveals their true character traits.

The protagonist of the story "Live and Remember," Andrei Guskov, went to the front at the very beginning of the war. He fought honorably, first in a reconnaissance company, then in a ski battalion, and finally in a howitzer battery. And while Moscow and Stalingrad were behind him, while survival was only possible by fighting the enemy, nothing troubled Guskov's soul. Andrei was no hero, but he didn't hide behind his comrades' backs either. He was recruited into reconnaissance, he fought like everyone else, and was a good soldier.

Everything changed in Guskov's life when the end of the war became apparent. Andrei was once again faced with the question of life and death. His instinct for self-preservation kicked in. He began to dream of being wounded to buy himself time. Andrei asked himself, "Why should I fight and not others?" Here, Rasputin condemned Guskov's selfishness and individualism, who, at such a difficult moment for his homeland, showed weakness, cowardice, betrayed his comrades, and became afraid.

Rasputin touches on the issue of the personal and the social

in Andrei Guskov's soul. Does a person have the right to put their own interests above those of the people and the state? Does a person have the right to transgress age-old moral values? Of course not.

Another problem that troubles Rasputin is the question of human destiny. What prompted Guskov to flee to the rear—a fatal error on the part of an official, or a weakness he had shown in his soul? Perhaps, if Andrei hadn't been wounded, he would have overcome his urges and reached Berlin? But Rasputin forces his hero to abandon his position. Guskov resents the war: it has torn him away from his loved ones, from his home, from his family; it constantly exposes him to mortal danger. Deep down, he understands that desertion is a deliberately false step. He hopes that the train he's traveling on will be stopped and his documents checked. Rasputin writes: "In war, a man is not free to control himself, but he has."

Guskov's actions bring him no relief. He must now hide from people, tormented by pangs of conscience. "Every day is a dark day for me now," Andrei tells Nastena.

Andrei feels no guilt. It's not his fault; those who are to blame are: the command, which refused to let him go on leave after

the hospital; the village, because he had to go to war; and even the Angara, which flows "indifferently" past. Resentment, anger, loneliness, fear—these are the feelings that dominate him.

And at the same time he thirsts for self-justification.

Having learned from Nastya that she was expecting a child, Andrei "quietly and earnestly prayed... That's it, that's it... I know... Now I know, Nastya: it wasn't in vain that I came here, it wasn't in vain. That's fate... It pushed me, it ordered it. That's it—no excuse needed. That's more than any excuse." Now he found an excuse: "Is there such a guilt in the whole wide world that it isn't covered by him, our child?!"

For Nastena herself, the war robbed her of her best years, love, and affection, preventing her from becoming a mother. The story "Live and Remember" begins with the disappearance of an axe in the bathhouse. This detail immediately sets the narrative's emotional tone, anticipates its dramatic intensity, and carries a distant glimmer of the tragic ending. The axe is the weapon used to kill the calf. Unlike Guskov's embittered mother, who lacked even maternal instinct, Nastena immediately guessed who took the axe: "... Nastena's heart suddenly sank: who the hell would think of looking under the floorboards?" From that "suddenly," everything changed in her life.

It's crucial that her hunch about her husband's return was prompted by her intuition, her instinct, her animal nature: "Nastena sat down on the bench by the window and, sensitively, like an animal, began sniffing the bathhouse air... She felt as if in a dream, moving almost by touch and not feeling any tension or fatigue from the day, but doing everything exactly as she had planned... Nastena sat in complete darkness, barely able to make out the window, and felt like a numb, miserable little animal." The meeting the heroine had been waiting for for three and a half years, imagining what it would be like every day, turned out to be "thievish and eerie from the very first minutes and from the very first words." Psychologically, the author very accurately describes the woman's state during her first meeting with Andrei: "Nastena could barely remember herself. Everything she had just said, everything she had seen and heard, had happened in a kind of deep, dull numbness, when all the senses grow numb and when a person exists as if not their own, as if a life connected from outside, an emergency life. She continued to sit, as if in a dream, when you see yourself only from the outside and can't control yourself, but only wait

for what will happen next. This entire encounter seemed too unrealistic, powerless, dreamed up in a bad oblivion that will vanish with the first light.

Nastena, not yet understanding it, not yet consciously comprehending it, felt like a criminal before others. She went to a date with her husband as if it were a crime. The nascent internal struggle, not yet consciously acknowledged, was driven by the clash of two principles within her—animal instinct ("little animal") and morality (the date is a crime). Subsequently, the struggle between these two principles in each of Rasputin's characters pushes them to different extremes: Nastena approaches the higher group of Tolstoy's heroes, with their spiritual and moral nature, while Andrei Guskov approaches the lower. Still not yet comprehending everything that had happened, not yet knowing how she and Andrei would resolve the matter, Nastena, quite unexpectedly, signs up for a loan for two thousand: "Perhaps she wanted to buy off her husband with bonds... It seems she wasn't thinking about him at the time, but someone could have thought about her. " If Guskov's animal nature breaks through from his subconscious during the war ("animal, insatiable appetite" in the hospital), then in Nastya, unconsciously ("she still didn't feel guilty, didn't admit it"), the voice of conscience, the moral instinct, speaks.

Nastya lives solely on her feelings for now, pitying Andrei, her close, dear one, yet simultaneously feeling that he's a stranger, incomprehensible, not the same one she saw off to the front. She lives in hope that, with time, everything will surely end well; she just has to wait and be patient. She understands that Andrei alone can't bear his guilt. "It's beyond his strength. So what now—should she abandon him? Give up on him? Or maybe she, too, is to blame for his being here—not guilty, but guilty. Wasn't it because of her that he longed to go home?"

Nastya doesn't reproach or accuse Andrei, but feels guilty before him, responsible for him: "Whatever happens to him now, she's responsible," ready to take the blame. This motif of guilt runs through the entire story. "She believed and feared that she probably lived for herself, thought of herself, and waited for him only for herself." "Let's do it together. If you're to blame, then I'm guilty along with you. We'll answer for it together. If it weren't for me, this might not have happened. And don't take the blame on yourself alone. "

Nastya's first sense of guilt, alienation, and the realization that she "has no right to speak, cry, or sing with everyone else"

came when the first front-line soldier, Maxim Vologzhin, returned to Atomanovka. From that moment on, the tormenting pangs of conscience and the conscious sense of guilt toward others haunted Nastya day and night. And the day when the entire village rejoiced, celebrating the end of the war, seemed to Nastya the last "day when she could be with people." Then she was left alone "in a hopeless, deafening emptiness," "and from that moment on, Nastya felt her soul touched."

Rasputin's heroine, accustomed to living with simple, understandable feelings, comes to understand the infinite complexity of humanity. Nastya now constantly thinks about how to live, what to live for. She fully understands "how shameful it is to live after everything that has happened." But Nastya, despite her willingness to go "to hard labor" with her husband, finds herself powerless to save him, unable to convince him to come out and confess to the people. Guskov knows all too well: as long as the war continues, according to the harsh laws of time, he will not be forgiven; he will be shot. And after the war ends, it is too late: the process of "brutality" in Guskov has become irreversible. Nastya could not save Andrei, but she was obliged to save the child.

Only faith in God, in a higher justice, could save Nastya, give her the necessary strength and patience to endure everything ("She was tired. If only anyone knew how tired she was and how she longed to rest! Not to be afraid, not to be ashamed, not to wait in fear for tomorrow, to be free forever, not remembering herself or others, not remembering a drop of what she had to endure").

By hiding her deserter husband, Nastya recognizes it as a crime against humanity: "The judgment is near, near—whether human, God's, or my own? —but it is near. Nothing in this world comes for free." Nastya is ashamed to live, it hurts to live. "No matter what I see, no matter what I hear, my heart aches." Nastya says: "It's shameful... does everyone understand how shameful it is to live when someone else in your place could have lived better? How can you look people in the eye after this? Even the child Nastya is expecting cannot keep her in this life, for "the child will be born to shame, which he will never be parted from his whole life. And the sin of his parents will be his, a harsh, heart-rending sin—what can he do with it? And he will not forgive them, he will curse them—according to their deeds."

If anything happens to her husband, the door to the future slams shut in her face. Hiding from people, from her husband's

parents, she understands and accepts him, does everything to save him, rushes through the winter cold, making her way to his lair, hiding her fear, concealing herself from people. She loves and is loved, perhaps for the first time in this way, deeply, without looking back.

The fruit of this love is a future child. Long-awaited happiness. But no—shame! It's considered that the husband is at war, and the wife is cheating. Nastena's husband's parents and fellow villagers have turned their backs on her. The authorities suspect her of having an affair with a deserter and are keeping an eye on her. To go to her husband means to reveal his hiding place. To not go means to starve him to death. The circle closes. In despair, Nastena throws herself into the Angara.

The character of Nastena is central to the story. Nastena embodies the traits of a village saint: kindness, a sense of responsibility for the fates of others, compassion, and faith in humanity. The theme of humanism and forgiveness is inextricably linked to her radiant image.

Nastena found the strength to pity Andrei and help him. She felt in her heart that he was near. This was a difficult step for her: she had to lie, cheat, dodge, and live in constant fear. Nastena already felt herself drifting away from her fellow villagers, becoming a stranger. But for her husband's sake, she chose this path because she loved him and wanted to be with him.

Thus, the universe in the story is divided into two worlds, the living and the dead, separated, as it should be, by the river of oblivion. Nastena belongs to the world of the living, Andrei — initially — to the world of the dead, which he chose by deserting, thinking he was choosing life ("You bear a name as if you were alive, but you are dead" — Revelation 3:1). Andrei himself told Nastena: "I cannot show myself to people, not even before the hour of death; you had only one side: the people, there, on the right bank of the Angara. And now there are two: people and me. We cannot bring them together; the Angara must dry up."

Andrei isn't mentioned in the story; he's merely an excuse for the author to talk about Nastena. Rasputin said, "This piece was conceived and written for Nastena's sake. But to fully express her character, I had to find some special circumstances, which I considered to be the story of her husband. And this also required some kind of trial before the verdict. I didn't want to paint him with a black eye..."

Nastena Guskova's character is as close to ideal as possible. "From the very beginning, she dreamed of giving more than receiving—that's what a woman is for, to soften and smooth life together; that's why she was given this amazing power, which becomes more amazing, more tender, and richer the more often it is used," wrote Rasputin. This is a woman placed in a tragic dilemma by life; her soul cannot reconcile opposing decisions: how to live according to her conscience, alongside the entire village community, united by the sorrows of war, and how to remain faithful and devoted to her husband, who violated the laws of brotherhood and comradeship and fled the battlefield.

Andrei Guskov's crime alienates Nastena from people, deprives her of confidence in the present, which is disintegrating into "separate, equal, alien pieces," and even her long-awaited child promises her only shame in the future.

Nastena, unable to choose her side, condemns herself to death, dying in the Angara along with her child, depriving Andrei of his final justification before the judgment of his own conscience. All that remains for him is eternal torment: to live in the realm of the dead and remember those who died because of him.

But why didn't Nastena survive? Because there wasn't a single person among them who would understand, believe, or support her.

Her mother-in-law kicks her out of the house. But Nastya "wasn't upset with Semyonovna—what was there to be upset about, really? That was to be expected. And she wasn't looking for justice, but at least a modicum of sympathy from her mother-in-law, her silent one, and a hint that the child she was attacking wasn't a stranger to her. What could she hope for from people then?"

And the people, themselves tired and exhausted by the war, did not pity Nastya. "Now, when there was no point in hiding her belly, when everyone and their dog was poking their eyes at it and sipping on its revealed secret, as if it were a sweet. No one, not even Liza Vologzhina, her own, encouraged her: like, hang in there, forget the talk, the child you're about to give birth to is yours, not someone else's, you have to take care of it, and people, give them time, will calm down. But why should she complain about people? She left them herself." And when people began following Nastya at night and "didn't let her see Andrei, she completely lost her way; fatigue turned into a desired, vengeful despair. She no longer wanted

anything, she had no hope for anything, an empty, disgusting heaviness had settled in her soul. "Look at what she's got in mind," she cursed herself sullenly and lost her train of thought. "Serves you right."

And the following night, when Nastya swam across the Angara to Andrei, she was openly pursued by a boat carrying Innokenty Ivanovich, Nestor, and Maxim Vologzhin, the first to return from the front. The author describes Nastya's final emotion, revealing the state of her soul: "Shame... does everyone understand how shameful it is to live? But shame will disappear, shame will be forgotten, it will set her free..."

At the moment of his wrong choice, Andrei doesn't know what he's betraying. He's betraying selflessness and compassion, depriving Nastya of the right to be proud of her heroic husband and the happiness of life. He's depriving his father's gray hair of respect, destroying the family's fond memories. He's condemning his unborn child to eternal judgment, who, had he been born, would have inherited his father's "harsh, heart-rending sin." From the protector of his loved ones, Andrei has become their executioner. His weakness has cost them their lives.

"Live and Remember" is a reminder of the primordial human laws upon which alone our lives can be based. Moral and philosophical questions about the meaning of life, conscience and honor, and human responsibility for one's actions come to the fore. The writer discusses selfishness and betrayal, the relationship between the personal and the social in the human soul, and the problem of life and death.

Thus, in the story "Live and Remember," Rasputin continues the theme of the destruction of connections between people and presents to the readers the story of the deserter Andrei Guskov and his wife Nastya.

Why didn't Nastya give her husband away? Do we blame her for that?

Nastya understands well that a wife is one with her husband. They must share a common destiny, no matter what happens. She consciously shares with Andrei the shame of a deserter, the suffering, and the pangs of conscience. Perhaps Nastya hopes to save her husband, to save the man within him, to persuade him to return to the front. That's why she didn't abandon him, but helped him as best she could. As long as she stands by her husband, he will remain a man.

What does Nastya experience while hiding her husband? It's

incredibly difficult for Nastya: she's forced to lead a double life, living and working among people. But her conscience prevents her from honestly looking into the eyes of those who are also struggling during the war. Nastya understands that she is part of this people, a part of their shared life, and she cannot hide her husband's secret.

Nastya is a very selfless woman. Not everyone could endure such torment, the incessant judgment of their own conscience. I just feel so sorry for her: Andrei isn't worth the suffering Nastya endures. She couldn't save Andrei from being human.

She inspires admiration. To save her husband, Nastya sacrifices her life and the life of her long-awaited child, who never saw the light of day. She devoted herself entirely to her husband.

What caused Nastya's death? Could it have been avoided?

Nastya found herself between two fires: she is one with her fellow villagers, with her homeland, but she cannot leave her criminal husband; it is not human.

So she's forced to. Nastya is torn between people and her husband. She can't decide which shore to land on. Perhaps it was unavoidable. Nastya found herself in a tragic conflict between her duty to people and her duty to her husband. After this, she couldn't live among her fellow villagers.

How do we understand the meaning of the title of the story "Live and Remember," and to whom are these words addressed? What is their purpose?

These words are addressed primarily to Andrei, who destroyed Nastya, forcing her to become a traitor, a traitor in the eyes of the people. May Nastya remain a reproach to him for the rest of her days. These words seem to be shouted at him at the last second. On the other hand, they are addressed to us, the readers, as a moral lesson, a warning that it is impossible to live outside of society, apart from the people and the Motherland.

Thus, the war changed much in the souls of the main characters. They realized that all their quarrels and distance from each other in peacetime were simply absurd. The hope of a new life warmed them in difficult times. The Secret It separated them from people, but brought them closer to each other. The test revealed their best human qualities.

Driven by the knowledge that their time together would not last, Andrei and Nastena's love flared up with renewed vigor.

These were perhaps the happiest days of their lives. Home, family, love—that's what Rasputin sees as happiness. But his heroes had a different destiny in store.

Nastena believes that "there is no guilt that cannot be forgiven." She hopes Andrei will be able to come out to the people and repent. But he can't find the strength to do so. Guskov only looks at his father from afar, unable to bring himself to show himself.

Not only did Guskov's actions spell the end of his and Nastena's lives, but Andrei didn't spare his parents either. Perhaps their only hope was that their son would return from the war a hero. Imagine their grief when they learned their son was a traitor and a deserter! What a disgrace for the old couple!

For her determination and kindness, God grants Nastena a long-awaited child. And here arises the story's most crucial question: does a deserter's child have the right to be born? The news of the child became Andrei's only meaning. Now he knew that the thread of life would continue, that his family line would not end. He tells Nastena: "If you give birth, I will vindicate myself; this is my last chance." But Rasputin shatters the hero's dreams, and Nastena dies along with her child. This is perhaps Guskov's most terrible punishment.

The central theme of V. Rasputin's novella "Live and Remember" is a person's moral responsibility for their actions. Using the life of Andrei Guskov as an example, the author demonstrates how easy it is to stumble, show weakness, and commit an irreparable mistake. The writer rejects Guskov's explanations, as other people, who also had families and children, died in the war. Nastyona, who pitied her husband and accepted his guilt, can be forgiven, but there is no forgiveness for a deserter and a traitor. Nastyona's words, "Live and Remember," will pound in Guskov's fevered mind for the rest of his life. This appeal is addressed to the residents of Atamanovka and to all people. Immorality breeds tragedy.

Everyone who reads this book should live and remember what must not be done. Everyone should understand how beautiful life is and never forget the cost of so many deaths and ruined lives that victory was achieved.

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