



A Young Doctor's Notebook

Mikhail Bulgakov , Hugh Aplin (Translator)

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In this collection of short stories, drawing heavily from the author's own experiences as a medical graduate on the eve of the Russian Revolution, Bulgakov describes a young doctor's turbulent and often brutal introduction to his practice in the backward village of Muryovo.

Using a sharply realistic and humorous style, Bulgakov reveals his doubts about his own competence and the immense burden of responsibility, as he deals with a superstitious and poorly educated people struggling to enter the modern age. This acclaimed collection contains some of Bulgakov's most personal and insightful observations on youth, isolation and progress.

THIS EDITION INCLUDES THE PIECE '**MORPHINE**'

A Young Doctor's Notebook Details

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Author : Mikhail Bulgakov , Hugh Aplin (Translator)

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From Reader Review A Young Doctor's Notebook for online ebook

Ghanem Abdullah says

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Uyuyan Adam / Engin Türkgeldi says

4.5/5

Bulgakov, Moskova'daki tıp fakültesinden mezun olduktan hemen sonra kendini koca bir hiçliğin ortasında bulan genç bir doktoru konu edinmiş öykülerinde. Öyküler öyle gerçekçi ki, bu kitap öyküler toplamı değil de anı derlemesi olarak yayımlansa sanırım kimse yadırgamazdı. Kendisi de doktor olan Bulgakov'un yaşadığı veya tanık olduğu olaylardan/duygulardan beslendiği aşık. Anı ile kurmacayı dengeli bir şekilde harmanlamış ve ortaya bu bir çarpıda okunan, duyguların okura hemen geçiverdiği bu sürükleyici öyküler çıkmış.

Teoride her ?eye hâkim ama pratikte çok az deneyimi olan genç doktorun bu üçra sa?lık birimine ad?m att??? günden itibaren ba??na gelen olaylar kadar kendisiyle olan mücadelesine de tan?k oluyoruz. Bir olgunla?ma, kendini yaratma süreci de diyebiliriz buna. Kendi ad?ma en çok tereddütte kald???, dü?ünmemesi/hissetmemesi gereken ?eyleri dü?ündü?ü/hissetti?i ve kendisini sorgulad??? k?s?mlar?

sevdim.

Çok akılcı, görsel ve duygusal yönü kuvvetli, insanı avucuna alan bir anlatım hâkim öykülere. O küçük sahil birimini, odalarından eylemlerine, personelinin giyimine kadar zihninizde çok net bir şekilde canlandırabiliyorsunuz.

Kendisi de bir doktor olmasına rağmen mesleği idealize ve romantize etmemiştir olması hoşuma gitti. Zira bu sayede öyküler inandırıcı ve samimi hale geldi. Doktorun kendi içinde verdiği ama asla dışarıya yansıtmadığı iç çatışmalar, güvensizlik veya ümitsizlikler, duygusal ve mesleki gelgitler, (hep gülümsemeyle okuduğum) kendinden önceki müthiş doktorla karşılaşılan hissi, cehalet veya imkansızlıklarla verilen mücadele, başarı ile başarısızlık arasında yürünen o ince çizgi, hepsi o kadar dürüst ve açıkça belirtilmiştir ki, kitabı okuyan her doktor eminim kendinden, özellikle de gençliğinden bir şeyler bulacaktır. Ayrıca mecburi hizmete gidecek her doktorun bu kitabı okuması gerektiğini, bu sayede o zor günlerde kendilerini eksik veya yalnız hissetmeyeceğini düşünmeden edemedim.

Yanlış anlamasam istemem, sadece sahil çalınanların değil, herkesin zevkle, ilgiyle okuyacağını düşünüyüm bir kitap 'Genç Bir Doktorun Anıları'. Özünde, insan ve olgunlaşması ele alıyor çünkü.

Jonathan Terrington says

A Young Doctor's Notebook is a wonderful suite of short stories following a recently graduated doctor as he tackles various medical conditions afflicting the peasants of Russia. That is to say the peasants within his particular domain. Each story is a wonderfully sharp and pointed look at the ways in which this particular doctor tackles the issues he is confronted with, each one told from his sardonic and often flabbergasted perspective. There is a hint of irony and humour in how our narrator discusses with himself all the various ways things could go wrong when operating or diagnosing.

In many ways this book serves as an insight into the writer himself. However, moreover, it serves as a poignant way of approaching the whole idea of doubt and insecurity from inexperience. I know that on a personal level I have experienced similar thoughts to those portrayed by Mikhail Bulgakov through his character. My own thoughts have been more linked to teaching and being able to handle a classroom environment, while the doctor's are more linked to 'can I perform this operation outside of a classroom' or 'have I diagnosed correctly?' However, situations aside, one can see how doubts and lack of self-belief are similar issues across careers and lifetimes.

Whether you are looking for a set of brilliant and connected short story classics to read, or wanting to read something full of thoughtful ideas, I do recommend this. It touched me on a more personal level due to the whole connection between the doctor doubting in his ability and I, myself, at times doubting myself. I have in the past struggled with public speaking. I no longer do so much when I do impromptu, however when I have a planned speech things can be a touch tougher. Either way, I believe as fellow readers you will likely find something in this work to appreciate for yourselves.

Guna says

If you watched *A Young Doctor's Notebook* with Daniel Radcliffe and decided to read the original stories (like me), and were expecting a rather comical representation of a Russian hospital tucked away deep in the countryside (like me), a bit of a surprise awaits you. That is, while the adaption was very enjoyable, Bulgakov's stories are even better (not that hard to believe, though).

They are not particularly funny (which one would expect based on the mini-series), but there is a strong element of tragicomedy which managed to squeeze a laugh out of me at times. The stories can get rather nasty and disgusting (reading about pus and syphilis is no rainbows and butterflies), and the stubbornness and stupidity of people can be baffling (but that hasn't changed now, has it), and the overall picture is not very, ehm, promising, but it's a great read in a *thank-god-i-wasnt-there* way.

All this symphony ends on a powerful note. *Morphine*...wow. It puts all the other feeble attempts to describe drug addiction to shame. Impressive and rather disturbing.

I just wish my Russian skills wouldn't be the same as a two-year-old's, so that I could enjoy this in the original.

Somayeh says

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MJ Nicholls says

No one likes going to the doctor, even if the doctor is a hunk with the most fabulous cheekbones (like mine), or a hottie with the prettiest ass this side of the donkey sanctuary (like yours). When we look back at the history of medicine, we realise, although (in America) being sick costs money, at least we aren't having leeches shoved down our pants, amputations *sans* anaesthesia, or teeth extractions done by nurses.

Bulgakov's short fictions are drawn from his time as a doctor in a provincial backwater treating thick peasants, where patients bitch out the doc for a syphilis diagnosis, ignorant mothers refuse to let him save their children, and millers take twelve doses of medicine at once to speed things up. Idiots! Several stories read like deleted scenes from *Casualty* (or *ER*), and the longest 'Morphine' is a stark portrayal of addiction. My favourite, 'The Blizzard,' tells of a snowstorm where poor Mikhail nearly loses his toes. 'The Murderer' is also gently subversive and ironic, telling of an army doctor who blows holes in his Captain. (Bastard had it coming!) These are less contentious stories from the master satirist, but well worth a read.

Mevsim Yenice says

Bu Bulgakov ile ilk tanışmam. Günlerdir, bu kitaptaki öyküleriyle yatıp kalkıyorum.

Devrim Rusyas'nda geçen güzel öyküler. Hem dönemin çapkınları'na hem de okulu yeni bitirmi doktorun ücra bir yerde tüm imkansızlıklarla görevini yapmaya çalışması'na şahit oluyoruz. Soğuk, yalnızlık, vicdan, korku ve daha bir çok zorluğa rağmen, genç doktorun acemiliğini günden güne nasıl da geride bıraktığını görüyoruz.

Çok kolaylıkla takip edilen, akıp giden bir anlatım var ama bundan sıkı oldu'u çıkarılması'n. Anlatım "dipdiri". Zifiri karanlık, at arabasıyla başka bir köye hasta görmek için giderken tipiyeye yakalanan doktorla aynı kabinde seyahat ediyorsunuz sanki. Kar taneleri yüzünüze vurup ince keskin çiziklerle canınızı yakıyor, elleriniz çatlıyor soğuktan. Arabacı yolu kaybedecek ve oracıkta çakallara yem olacaksınız korkusuyla yüreğiniz pörpör.

Hem edebiyat hem kurgu yönünden oldukça doyurucuydu Genç Bir Doktorun Anıları. Şöra Bulgakov'un başka kitaplarında. Tanıştım'za çok memnunum.

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Guillermo Macbeth says

Como todo libro de temas médicos, este diario es una carnicería. Sin embargo, Bulgakov logra narrar mucho más, su intuición de la condición humana es extraordinaria. Por supuesto que nadie sabe realmente qué es el ser humano, por eso las aproximaciones literarias de este diario resultan luminosas. Creo que se trata de una narración ficcional que asimila experiencias autobiográficas, Bulgakov era médico. Se nota que pensó mucho sobre el dolor, la enfermedad y la muerte. Por ser un libro de un ruso-ucraniano, también es un libro político. Todavía más, la lectura en clave metafórica irrumpe todo el tiempo. La inmersión inevitable del ser humano en la espantosa dialéctica de la historia se muestra en toda su crudeza. Los últimos párrafos del último capítulo le dan un significado masivo a este diario. Una figura de Doppelgaenger desdobra al narrador, dice lo que Bulgakov no puede decir en primera persona: se ve a sí mismo como un asesino. Imposible resolver en este diario cuánto hay en eso de médico y cuánto hay de ser humano sin más. El estilo es brillante. Las frases fluyen con naturalidad, saturadas de ideas, intuiciones y emociones. El diario de un cura rural -libro de Bernanos y película de Bresson- queda trivial en comparación con este diario de un médico rural. Ambos diarios se parecen por la personalidad kafkiana del protagonista, pero difieren en todo lo demás. Por supuesto, hacer esta comparación es imposible, como la división por cero en matemáticas. Aunque esa división sí se puede hacer, su resultado no es un número sino un concepto, algo indefinido que tiende al infinito, lo cual es impensable, como la enfermedad y la muerte en este diario.

Steven Godin says

Written between 1924 and 1927, these short stories are a mile away his most famous novel 'The Master and Margarita', here instead adopting a raw, realistic account of his experiences as a 24 year-old doctor in remote north-west Russia, where he was put in charge of a small hospital and left to get on with it, sometimes in conditions that were dreadful. Isolation is a big thing running through the book, the distance from civilised society weighs heavily on the soul. Alone at night in his study, with only his oil lamp for comfort, he reflects: "The midnight express to Moscow rushes moaning past and does not even stop... The nearest street lamps are 32 miles away in the district town." This is a world of grinding hardship and violent contrasts, induced warmth, the bitterly cold wilderness outside; months of darkness that drags on with just the fragile light of the kerosene lamp for company. The brutal, impersonal force of the physical world not only endangers his patients, but threatens to extinguish the metaphorical light of reason, knowledge and social progress. At first, Bulgakov's "university-trained" mind is his sole weapon against the ignorance, cunning and superstition of the peasants, but as the months pass, he grows increasingly cunning himself, learns to outwit their objections with displays of confidence he does not feel and knowledge he does not always possess. Bulgakov casts a wry, self-deprecating humour. What shines through in Bulgakov's hero is that this worry, although at times exhausting for the doctor, has a flip side. It's what makes him so good at his job. It is what helps him to learn, bestows him with compassion for his patients, brings him satisfaction when the sick recover. For Bulgakov, the anxiety experienced by this doctor is not necessarily something to be "cured" as much as managed and even, at times, celebrated. His compassion for human folly is unfailing, and he nails his own foibles as unflinchingly as everyone else's. A country doctors's Notebook stands testament both to human resilience and a remarkable literary talent. Along with 'The White Guard', this is Bulgakov getting deep down in real life situations of his time. He definitely belongs up there with the great 20th century writers.

Yakup says

Öncelikle bana bu kitabı önerdi?i için Açelya'ya teşekkür ediyorum.

Her ne kadar Teorik kitapların dü?ünel dünyam?zda ayrıcalık? yerleri olsalar da Edebi-Kurgusal yapıtların ayrı? bir dü?ünel bo?lu?u doldurdu?unu gerçek anlamlı? tüm okurlar bilir. K?sa da olsa keyifli bir okuma sundu?unu ilkin söylemek istiyorum. Bu Eser daha ilk sayfaların?nda kendisinin sade ve keyif verici olaca?ın? iddia ediyor gerçekten de öyle oldu benim için...

Rusya'nın ücra bir kö?esinde daha çiçe?i burnunda, yeni yetme bir doktorun i?ine yeni ba?larken ki acemilikleri, kaygılar? ve i?in içinden ç?kma çabalar?, her yeni bir i?e ba?lad???m?zda ba?m?za gelen iç sancılar? aynen yansım?? oluyor bir çok anlatım? ile. Cerrahi i?lemleri dinlemekten veya okumaktan pek haz etmesem de yazarın kendisinin gerçek ya?am?nda da doktor olmas? ve bunlar? edebi olarak yaz?ya yansıtma biçimi beni bu ilme katlanmam? sa?lad?. Bazen tüylerim diken diken olduysa da keyifli bir okuma sunmasıyla hoşuma gitti. Rus Klasiklerinden göz ard? etmemeniz gereken bir eserdir. iyi okumalar.

Laleh says

As a medical student, I am naturally terrified of what I might have to face out in the real world.

Well, this book -portraying a young Russian doctor's experience of practice in a small village hospital- confirms that my worst nightmares probably will come true and I'll be faced with every gory scene that I can imagine.

Well...we'll just have to see how it goes then

Antonomasia says

Alma Classics edition, translated by Hugh Aplin

(James Herriot - animals) + human patients + Russian lit = great stuff.

Only days after I'd read about another young early twentieth-century Russian rural doctor, Lydia Kochetkova, in Mikhail Shishkin's essay and story collection *Calligraphy Lesson*, an online friend recommended this, among other Russian books. It's nice to follow up that sort of coincidence where possible. *Young / Country Doctor's Notebook* was also made into a TV series quite recently, which I'd not heard about before.

(This is one of the instances when the “Readers Also Enjoyed” algorithms look to be working rather well: at the same time I was also recommended some other Russian writing less well-known in the west: Ilya Ilf, Mikhail Zoshchenko, and Leonid Andreyev's *Seven Who Were Hanged* – all are listed under RAE for this book.)

I like Michael Glenny's Bulgakov translations because they have the feel of something written a few decades ago [phrases like "What the devil? &c], and there's the connection to what others read in English over the years. Old translations of C19th classics don't feel so alive to me, and I rarely read them, but one of fifty rather than 100 years ago is just fine. However, this new version by Hugh Aplin was available on loyalty points for about 1/3 the amount of the Glenny . I may prefer Glenny's overall style, but Aplin's has one modern translation habit I prefer, leaving some local terms untranslated. Thus the young doctor has a

feldsher rather than an assistant - and whilst the extent of samples makes accurate comparison limited, it's great to have the opportunity to go off chasing references that tend to be fully Anglicised in older versions, like the *plica polonica*, which I last encountered browsing some reference book as a kid, but the info found has now just changed the way I imagine traditional dress in central Europe. The main downside of this translation is that there's an extra story, 'The Murderer' in the *Glenny* which for some reason isn't in the *Aplin*.

As with James Herriot, these are tales of a green young practitioner, newly qualified and moved to the sticks; similar sort of gripping adventures, but there are no delightfully eccentric supervisory colleagues – he's on his own with [more experienced] assistants and nurses, whom he thankfully the wisdom to listen to. And likewise the reader – for most of these stories were first printed singly in Soviet medical journals – is invited to take the practitioner's viewpoint, which, best part of a century ago, is very much about shining the light of science into the deplorable darkness of peasant ignorance. There is horror in the scourge of disease itself – whole families laid waste by syphilis as has been the case more recently with AIDS in some parts of the world - and in both some of the folk remedies. and the overconfident application of what now seems relatively undeveloped conventional medicine: you would have needed a strong constitution to survive that never mind anything else.

These days we might be more interested in how the peasants thought and why, and understanding their mindset, partly as a way of learning how best to explain things to them. In 'Morphine', not originally part of this collection in Russian, we see the somewhat different attitude towards another young doctor, also based on Bulgakov himself – at least once an educated rational person - who became a morphine addict. The fortitude of the narrator of the *Doctor's Notebook* stories contrasts with the fear and helplessness of the morphine addict as if Bulgakov had split his past self into good and bad; the addict worked in the “good” doctor's old practice after the latter had left for a hospital job in town. (view spoiler)

Glenny's introduction, readable at the beginning of ebook samples, is excellent in describing the world of the young Dr Bulgakov (and Kochetkova – though it sounds like she had far worse facilities to work with):

Bulgakov's assignment to this remote country practice was much like learning to swim by being thrown into the deep end of the pool. Nowadays it can only be in some of the remoter parts of the 'third world' that totally inexperienced young doctors find themselves 'thirty-two miles from the nearest electric light', entirely cut off from the outside world for long spells, or obliged to keep a pack of wolves at bay with a pistol while driving back from a night call. Perhaps most demoralising for a nervous beginner were the primitive communications: carts or sleighs the only transport, roads that were poor at the best of times and often impassable in the springtime thaw or the winter blizzards, erratic mails or none for weeks on end and above all – no telephone. The effects of this isolation and confinement on anyone of less than robust and balanced temperament is grimly illustrated in the story called 'Morphine'.

*For Bulgakov, however, the greatest underlying source of unease, amounting at times to despair, was something less tangible though very real to him, since it occurs as an ever-present refrain throughout these stories. This was the sense of being a lone soldier of reason and enlightenment pitted against the vast, dark, ocean-like mass of peasant ignorance and superstition. ... Although his patients are his contemporaries and fellow citizens of what purports to be a modern state, Bulgakov is constantly haunted by an awareness that in dealing with them he is actually at the point of contact between two cultures which are about five hundred years apart in time. ... Despite this background intimation of an almost mythic conflict between enlightenment and unreason, Bulgakov's writing in *A Country Doctor's Notebook* is thoroughly down-to-earth, realistic, and far removed from the grotesque fantasy that was the distinctive style of much of his other work in the mid-twenties.*

Banafsheh says

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Nataliya says

*"I am a doctor, thrown straight from the university bench into a far away village, in the beginning of the revolution."*¹

¹ **EXTRA! EXTRA!** Now to be translated to a small screen featuring Daniel Radcliffe. And it will be "a new black comedy". I kid you not. I'm still trying to decide how I feel about it.

Mikhail Bulgakov, the amazing Russian writer of *The Master and Margarita* fame, was a medical doctor by training. Just like the young protagonist of his semi-autobiographical collection of short stories *The Notes of a Young Doctor* (translated as *A Country Doctor's Notebook*), he has spent the time of his internship in a country hospital in the middle of nowhere, having to deal with **insane patient volume, confusing diagnoses, and plain human stubbornness and stupidity that can make any medical professional's life a living hell**. And what amazed me is that so many of these things are still present even in our sophisticated modern-day medicine. Some things never change, do they?

" We are cut off from people. The first gas lights are nine miles away at the railroad station [...] A train to Moscow would rush by with a whistle without stopping - it does not need a God-forsaken station lost in the blizzard [...] We are alone here."

A Country Doctor's Notebook describes the 'highlights' of the internship time of a brand-new young medical graduate Dr. Bomgard, sent straight from the medical university in Russia in the winter of 1917 to be the only doctor in a provincial hospital (the staff there consisting of a couple of nurses and a pharmacist) **without any supervision or backup** - save for quite a few medical textbooks and brand-new medical knowledge that he brought with him. This gives quite a new meaning to the whole '**thrown in at the deep end**' phrase, doesn't it?

"Well, and what if they bring in a woman in a complicated labor? Or, let's say, a patient with a strangulated hernia? What am I supposed to do then? Please, kindly tell me. Forty-eight days ago I graduated with high distinction, but distinction is one thing and hernia is another. Once I

saw my professor operate on the strangulated hernia. He was doing it, and I was sitting in the audience, watching him. And that's it. I felt cold sweat running along my spinal column when I thought about hernias. Every night I sat in the same pose, having drunk tea: on my left side, I had all the manuals on operative gynecology, with Dodelein's atlas on top. And on my right - ten different illustrated surgical manuals."

Some of the situations seem almost surreal in their severity and grave danger. Picture a young doctor having to perform a maneuver to turn a malpositioned fetus in the mother's womb to save two lives - and never having done this procedure before, flipping through the pages of the textbook minutes before the surgery to figure out what the hell he is supposed to do. Imagine him performing a tracheostomy (surgically opening a throat to enable breathing) on a small dying child with diphtheria while her frantic mother is waiting outside. Think about discovering that your seemingly intelligent patient has taken his entire course of medications all at once (to speed up the healing process, apparently) and now is almost dying in front of your eyes.

Imagine the entire villages infected with syphilis without having any idea about the disease or its severity, and abandoning life-saving treatment halfway through at the earliest signs of improvement. Think about realizing that your colleague has fallen prey to the deadly morphine addiction, painstakingly documenting the horrific mental and physical destruction (by the way, probably one of the earliest realistic portrayals of narcotic addiction in fiction, and based on personal experience with the drug, no less).

"I felt defeated, broken, flattened by the cruel fate. Fate threw me into this wilderness and made me fight my battles alone, without any support or instruction. What unbelievable difficulties I have to suffer through. They can bring in any strange or difficult case, most often a surgical case, and I have to face it, with my unshaven face, and win. And if you don't win, then you have to suffer and torture yourself - like now, riding along a bumpy country road, leaving behind an infant's little corpse and his mother."

The young doctor's patients are **poor peasants - illiterate, superstitious, ignorant of their diseases, frustratingly suspicious of surgeries and other "out there" treatments.** After building up a favorable reputation after a miraculous life-saving amputation on day one, the doctor ends up seeing **over a hundred patients daily** (that's in addition to the hospitalized patients), often having almost no time to sleep, and often still having to make a house call to a woman dying in labor or a patient too sick to be transported to the hospital, often riding miles in miles in the middle of Russian winter blizzard.

"After that, I started seeing about a hundred peasants a day. I stopped eating dinners. Mathematics is a cruel science. Let's imagine that I was spending only five minutes - five! - with every one of my hundred patients. Five hundred minutes - eight hours and twenty minutes. All in a row, please note that. And besides that I had a hospital ward for thirty patients. And in addition to that, I was still performing surgeries."

The young doctor/ Bulgakov's alter ego laments the ignorance of his patients that endangers their lives and the lives of their loved ones, facilitates the spread of diseases, and causes harm and grief. **And yet, so unlike the doctor stereotype of that long-gone era he exhibits astounding patience and perseverance, fighting the uphill battle and actually succeeding with every life saved, every disaster averted.** These stories are often sad but at the same time life-affirming. And I happily give this book about my colleague almost a hundred years ago, facing similar problems that we encounter even in modern medicine, **five well-earned stars.**

"In a bout of inspiration, I opened a clinic patient roster and began counting. I counted for an

hour. In a year I have seen 15,613 patients, I had 200 hospitalized patients, and only six died."

Buse says

Son iki öykü d???nda hepsine bay?ld?m,ablam olmasayd? kim bilir ne zaman okuyacakt?m.

Leylak Dal? says

?lk Bulgakov okuyu?umdu ve bunca zaman atlad???ma hay?fland?m. Sade ama ?ahane bir edebi dil-
çevirmenin marifetini de unutmamak gerek-ile yaz?lm??, geçen yüzy?l?n ba??nda geçmesine ra?men
güncelli?ini yitirmemi? öyküler okudum. Öncelikle "Usta ile Margarita" olmak üzere gelsin di?er kitaplar?...
"Ak?ll? insanlar mutlulu?un sa?l???a benzedi?ini çok önceden fark etmi?tir: Mutluyken fark etmezsiniz; ama
y?llar geçtikçe, geçmi?te kalan mutlulu?unuza ili?kin an?lar, ah, an?lar!..."
