

Cornelia Grosu-Soare

**THE HOLIDAYS  
OF LOVE**

A Real-Life Romance



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## 1. LETTER TO MY HUSBAND (INSTEAD OF PROLOGUE)

Monday August 6, 2018

My dear,

Today we'd have celebrated your birthday together. You'd have turned 72. On this occasion I'd have prepared a beautiful anniversary day with a buffet dinner, with the goodies you liked most and a birthday cake, the 47th that I'd have prepared myself. The house would have been full of the guests you'd have invited. You'd have sat strategically at the head of the table in a place you couldn't leave easily, so that you could order:

"Nelly, please bring a bottle of mineral water; I'm stuck in here!"

Then you'd have been busy with the music, inviting all the ladies, one by one, to dance. I'd have been the first invited. You'd have taken advantage of the moment my hands were full, so that I couldn't refuse you motivating that I was busy; you'd have taken the objects of my hands scattering them where your eyes looked, on tables, cupboards, through the yard, to bother me.

Only today did I realize that in all these years I only wrote a letter to you and you didn't even read it because you never knew about it. It was a farewell note that I wrote to you in January 2007, a day

before my surgery, when they said I had little chance of survival. In that letter I asked for forgiveness for all the mistakes I made against you and I released you from the marriage constraints, giving you the freedom and blessings to go on with your life the way you wanted.

In fact, I'd written several letters to my dear ones: my mother, our daughter, my sister, my brother and my best friend. I left them on the desktop of my computer, to be easily seen with the request from who will open the computer and will find them to print them and give them to the addressees.

But God didn't want me to end my life then. So the first thing I did when I came back home from the hospital, was to delete all the letters without keeping copies.

I had no idea that you'd end your life before me seven years ago, without being able to ask forgiveness from each other.

Today, at this non-anniversary moment, I'm blaming myself.

I blame myself for having talked, lately, with my first friend for whom I had developed a teenage passion 50 years ago.

I feel guilty before you because I wrote to him so many letters and to you, I didn't even write one.

This is the first and the last letter I write to you.

I don't want to be unfair with you. Because we were all the time together, I've never betrayed you all the years we were married, nor during these seven years of mourning, of widowhood.

Because I witnessed your last communion; because I forgave you long ago.

On Saturday, I go to church at the Holy Confession. We usually went together. Now it will be the seventh year since I go there alone.

Forgive me!

Nelly

## 2. CONFESSION

Saturday 11 August 2018

I'm Nelly, daughter of a priest. I was raised and educated with fear of God and faith in God. My father was my confessor until I got married at the age of 22. I didn't dare to lie to him or hide the truth from him and I learned that the hardest thing is to apologize when you're wrong. But you can't ask to be forgiven if you can't forgive those who wronged you.

Before my wedding, my father called me to confession. At the end he told me that it was the last confession to him and I'd have to look for another confessor. I cried when I heard it, but he explained to me that after the wedding I shouldn't have confessed to him, because I wouldn't be a little girl all my life and there are things I couldn't confess to my father, even if he's a priest.

My next confessor was a colleague and friend of my father's, well-trained, educated and with plenty of grace, but I had other expectations. Nobody could replace my father. My confessions were very different from those times when I used to prepare them before, very excited.

I met my current confessor on Holy Easter Thursday in 2000. We were going to move into a house we finished building near the Church of my childhood.

I still remember how desperate I was not to skip confession and communion at Easter. The religious service was about to start and the priest interrupted the confessions right before my turn. Then I plucked up the courage and said:

“Father, I’m a priest’s daughter, please, don’t let me down!”

The priest looked at me, gave me the sign to get closer, and said:

“Get out, go round the church and come to the outer door at the entrance to the altar! Wait there!”

I think I was red-faced. I never dared to ask favors, especially in the church. I rushed to get out among the people and came to the door he indicated. I almost didn’t wait at all. The door opened and my new confessor ordered:

“On your knees, on the doorstep!”

I knelt. He asked my name and my father’s name. Then he began the confession procedure. Actually he listened almost as my father used to do. Since then, he’s my confessor, whom I look for whenever I’m in a standstill, I need help, I go off the country, or I plan to do something important. He became the spiritual family doctor I found after a long time.

I set with my confessor the day to come for the Holy Confession. Today is the day so I woke up early to get to the church on time.

I had many things to confess, and I had to prepare myself, to summarize as much as possible without omitting anything. What would the priest say if instead of talking, stuttering and forgetting something important to confess, I’d have given him a piece of paper where I’d write everything? And he only had to read what I had written. Quite insolent, isn’t it?

I was heading for the church. I was sitting in the almost empty bus. I repeated in my mind what I wanted to confess, and I was afraid I wasn’t well prepared for what I was going to say. I was almost willing

to postpone for tomorrow, like a student who, fearing a bad mark, asks a delay from the teacher, apologizing for not having properly learned the lesson of the day.

The Liturgy began when I arrived. The church was full of scaffolds for interior refurbishment. I walked in and headed to the altar. The door on the left of the altar opened and my confessor signaled me to come to him. I didn’t get to say anything because he placed the edge of his epitrachelion over my head and read the special Orthodox prayer on this occasion, whispering in my ear to start my confession.

Then I told him the truth, the reason why I came, changing almost everything I repeated in my mind. And I did it while the service was in full swing.

“Father, the time I have, I feel it’s too short for everything I want to confess.

I’m fasting by the book, I pray in the morning and in the evening, and I seek to live a spiritual life as worthy as possible for my age.

However, lately I got strange feelings related to my youth. Shortly ago, I met on the internet my first boyfriend. We separated 50 years ago. Now we started to talk to each other.

Throughout our friendship, we never had inappropriate interaction. It was the purest, the most sincere, the most beautiful and envied friendship in the village where my father was then a priest. I went there only on holidays and I got back to study in Bucharest, to my grandparents’ who raised me.

We were both devoted to study and we were both admitted to faculty but in different cities.

For reasons that we hardly remember since the fall of 1967, we haven’t seen each other anymore.

At present, we are mainly communicating through writing and we’ve talked about four or five times on the phone.

At first we remembered some situations and asked questions to clarify things. Then we remembered that we had beautiful feelings of love and realized that they remained as strong as they used to be.

I also brought evidence, because I have a personal diary in which I keep writing since 1965, when I was only 16 years, which my friend appreciated.

The moments of excitement and enthusiasm were very intense, but they faded into cruel reality. My friend got sick and about two months ago he was operated on with that disease we fear all.

Currently, he gets postoperative recovery treatment and he feels very bad.

Still, he plans to surprise me and see me in real life.

On the other hand I want to surprise him too by writing a book that I've already started and dedicate exclusively to him.

All this troubled us both. We have different lives, families, grown-up children and grandchildren. There is no question of unworthy interaction between us.

I'm at the crossroads and I don't know what road to pick. I can ask for help only from you. Maybe you can help me ..."

My confessor listened to me attentively, then, without giving me any answer or repentance prayer, he considered me worthy of the Holy Communion. He didn't wait for me to light my candle from a candlestick nearby. He took out of his cassock's pocket a box of matches and lit himself my candle almost shaking in my hand.

Now I feel relieved with my sins confessed. But what am I going to do from now on or what path will I follow?

The priest let me find my ways and choose one of them.

No one can choose for me.

### 3. THE CHALLENGE

Six years ago, in May, I stayed for a few weeks in Brașov, where I held some specialized courses organized for adults' training.

On this occasion, I took advantage of Reli's company, my best friend, whom I like to say I know for a lifetime.

We found accommodation near the building where I gave the lectures at a hotel where we booked room weekly.

My friend had nothing to do with my work there. She was free to do what she wanted, walk or visit while I was delivering the courses. She used to wait for me and after classes we went for a walk and in the evening we used to eat at a restaurant or a pizzeria. We never got bored of each other. We always had different topics for interesting discussions that extended late at night.

Reli knew the city very well and had relatives in Hărman, in Întorsura Buzăului and in Brașov. I knew almost all of her relatives, and some of them treated me as if I were part of their big family.

One day, a nephew of Reli's, Liviu, who lived in Brașov, invited us to visit an aunt in Întorsura Buzăului. I accepted with great pleasure, especially since I had enough time to go back to my classes.

At the same time, I had the opportunity to see the beautiful village Poiana Florilor, where I had the dearest memories and where I hadn't been for too long.

During the journey, I was filled with unpredictably strong emotions, lost, disoriented and melancholic. The road where I had