

# **Azarius's Motive: an inner monologue**

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## Statement of Intent

Whether we are prepared to agree upon it or not, it is an indubitable fact that Azarius is an under-developed character in *The Tin Flute*. His motivation, at least from the reader's standpoint is unclear, and his thoughts and ideas rarely come to surface. It seems that Gabrielle Roy, the author, has deliberately withstood placing too much emphasis on a character who is expected to be minor.

It is for this very reason that I chose to place the limelight on Azarius and focus attention on his motivation and his final means of escaping the grinding poverty of Saint-Henri. My work is based primarily on Chapter 32 of the book, and serves as a preface for it. During my reading, I encountered several occasions when I almost wanted to scream out "But why? Tell me why Azarius! Why are you acting the way you are?" I desperately wanted to grab hold of Azarius's head, fling it upside-down onto a table, and violently shake it until I was content with the items and answers that fell off from it. And this is what I have tried to perform in my work, albeit with words: an inner monologue that draws a wholesome sketch of Azarius by means of an inner harangue, attempting to explain his rather eccentric decision to "run away" from his problems.

My work, unfortunately, is not the first of its kind. I have tried to imitate (although a bit amateurishly I must admit) the style found in James Joyce's ground-breaking piece *Ulysses*. I have tried to incorporate a constant *stream of consciousness* without having to delete punctuation (I haven't earned my poetic license yet). Azarius is in a state of surrealism where he himself gives out answers without his knowledge. His subconscious mind is open to scrutiny, and we unearth the harshest of scars that are but his dreams, fantasies and aspirations.

My work stands as is: a meticulous charcoal sketch of an unheeded character. My work isn't pathos; it does not aim to elicit feelings of sympathy or tenderness. I have tried to combine Roy's theme of indigence with my own scant knowledge of poverty-afflicted families to extend Azarius's character and provide a modest justification for his actions.

I have attempted to establish sharp contrast by constantly vacillating between sadness and happiness. This alludes to Azarius's own way of thinking and creates a very dramatized effect thus

placing much needed emphasis on Azarius's oppressed life. Coherent pictures are seldom formed, but this does not stop him from meandering between high tide and low tide, joy and sorrow, success and failure.

I have tried to employ vivid imagery as is evident by my choice of words ("damp daylight", "sparkling river", "shadowed silhouettes"). Where emphasis is deemed necessary, typical literary tools such as alliteration have been used ("magnificent May mornings"). I have also tried to shed more light on Azarius's relationship with other characters—Rose-Anna in particular.

One of the deepest effects that I have tried to create and maintain throughout is the dark-bright colour contrast which is a representation of Azarius himself. To this effect, I have gone as far as to almost forcibly require the room where Azarius is contemplating to be dark. The light bulb is switched off and does not go back on until the very end when Azarius finds a brilliant yet tragic solution to his deep-rooted problems. Dawn brings with it an admittedly remarkable solution but the effect is deeply mitigated by the grimness of a cold, winter morning. This *new* light, both from the Sun as well as the bulb, symbolizes the shimmer of hope that has ignited itself inside Azarius.

Azarius Lacasse. Turn off the bulb. Let the darkness of this cold, wintry night cast a shadow upon you. Look at yourself in the mirror. So weak, so powerless, so impoverished, so despondent, so submissive, so uncaring, so helpless. Is that you I see there Azarius? So barely recognizable. Bitter, poor, tainted, depilous, vainglorious. What a waste of a lifetime Azarius, what a waste. Why were you born? Tell me now! Why were you born? To leave poor Rose-Anna in her tormented world? To be mindless of your own daughter? Florentine! Your dear Florentine! How could you have had the heart to let go of her? They are yours Azarius, yours. The future is bleak. Is this how you had planned to live? Poverty everywhere, total darkness, broken relationships, jobless routines. What happened to that bright future you had so carefully nurtured when you were young, when you were strong, powerful, muscular, visionary, when you were so undaunted by the facets of life? The magnificent May mornings, the chirruping cuckoos, the melodious voices, the blinding sun, the damp daylight, the azureous sky, the sparkling river, the protective cocoon. The chattering children littered all around your cozy home, their liveliness keeping you company, their innocent laughter so dulcet to your ears, calling you funny names, demanding you play games with them. Papa, I spotted an earthworm in the garden. Papa, I bruised my knee. Disease-free, worry-free, destitution-free, carefree. Sweet little Rose-Anna ringing the bell, inviting everyone to have their luncheons, her delicate hands serving delicious food with infinite love and warmth. Silver spoons, glowing candles, burning wood, soft voices, romantic auras. You were to be ecstatic, delirious, joyful. Every day, every hour and every second.

Nuisance! Yes, nuisance! That's what you've become to those in whom you had invested your unimaginable hopes. Florentine hates you! Eugene hates you! Rose-Anna has lost even the slightest optimism she had had in you. Daniel on his death-bed counting pearl beads. Daniel! You killed him! How could you have Azarius? What have you done? How gently he has gone with none a sound of a weep. Yvonne! Her rosary has fallen. You've made her seek love elsewhere. Dark, gloomy clouds surround the horizon, punishing storms about to shake your foundations, disaster, indigence, homelessness. Your sentimental personality, your forgotten sanity, you. You abscond into an infinite abyss. Ravaging floods carry you away. You, Rose-Anna, Florentine, Eugene, poor little Phillippe out in the biting cold unclothed, strewn on the streets, homeless, shelter-less. Hunger,

starvation, dredgery and death. Azarius! Azarius! Listen to me! Show me your face in the mirror! How could you have let this happen to you? Your heart so heavy, your mind so perturbed, your thoughts so childish, you so naïve.

Cry Azarius. Cry! You deserve to! You haven't cried in a long time, have you? Cry until this pelting rain pities you and stops pounding the ground. Cry until the lump in your heart is dismantled to make you light. Cry for your poor wife Rose-Anna, whose daily drudgery keeps you constantly worried. Cry for Florentine, who has decided she has no father. Cry for Eugene, whose has had unmatched ideals, who has given up his only possession, his life, for family upliftment. Weren't you supposed to do that Azarius? WEREN'T YOU? Where were you all these years? You are so sentimental to the people around you, and yet so useless. Aren't you ashamed Azarius? Answer Azarius, are you not ashamed? You dare to call yourself a man when you're incapable of supporting your own family? Cry Azarius, cry! You deserve to! Let your tears flood your cheeks.

What a jumbled puzzle your life is. Everlasting sadness, haunted children, shadowed silhouettes, broken schemes. Imagine a streak of hope, a silver lining, a shiny ray of light creeping through this eternal darkness, promising auspiciousness, prosperity, a glorious end to this seemingly perpetual blackness, replenishing you with confidence, rejuvenating you with your old hunger for happiness. The War! Go to the war, Azarius. Go there. Your last chance is here. Avail this opportunity! Azarius the courageous, Azarius the audacious, Azarius the spiritual. Prove your fearlessness, be decisive, be vehement, be resolute, be Azarius. Do Anna a favor, leave her. Azarius! A messed up puzzle that is your life is about to be rearranged to form a picturesque panorama. A new day has dawned. You can still win!

Azarius Lacasse. Turn on the bulb. Look at yourself in the mirror. I want to see you.

**Word Count:** 1356

## Works Cited

Gabrielle, Roy. *The Tin Flute*. Trans. Alan Brown. Toronto: McClelland, 1980.