

Title: Individual Identity and the Pursuit of Happiness: Kashtanka's Long Day's Journey into a Three Dog Night

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Before Kashtanka is unwillingly separated from her owners, the drunken joiner Luka Alexandritch frequently hits her, curses at her, and feeds her next to nothing, while his son, Fediushka, plays exceptionally cruel games with her for his own amusement. Life is objectively improved when the virtuous M. Georges shelters and feeds the neglected and malnourished Kashtanka, but she cannot find happiness under his care. The fact that she longs for her former abusive masters puzzles the reader. We shout during Kashtanka's reunion with the joiner and son, "Don't go back!" Yet this marks the point of her highest bliss. And who are we to deny her that bliss? How are we to explain it? This paper examines the treatment of the mystery of Kashtanka's happiness at the end in the existing scholarship on the story. It then attempts its own reading of Kashtanka's journey as an archetypal descent into hell that recalls Dante's journey from *Inferno* to *Paradisio*. The paper proposes that Chekhov takes the journey inward, through the inner life of Kashtanka, to expose the profoundly idiosyncratic nature of personal happiness that makes the happiness of anyone else difficult to access, judge or understand.

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