*From Chapter One of* Evgenii Onegin

XXX. Alas, I have wasted much of my life on various amusements! But if morals did not suffer, I would still love balls. I love the furious youth, the crowded hall, the brilliance, the joy, and the ladies’ carefully planned dresses; I love their feet; only you’d be hard put to find three pairs of beautiful women’s feet in all Russia. Oh for a long time I could not forget two feet… Sad, chilled, I still remember them, and in my dreams they still disturb my heart.

XXXI. When and where, in what desert, madman, will you forget them? Oh, feet, feet! Where are you now? Where are you crushing the spring flowers? Nurtured in oriental bliss, you left no traces on sad northern snow: you loved soft carpets’ voluptuous touch. Was it so long ago that I forgot for you the thirst for fame and praises, and the land of my fathers, and incarceration? The happiness of youthful years has vanished like your light trace on the meadows.

XXXII. Diana’s chest, Flora’s cheeks are charming, dear friends! But Terpsichore’s foot is somehow more charming to me. Prophesying for the eyes a priceless reward, it brings with it, in its peculiar beauty, an idiosyncratic swarm of desires. My friend Elvina, I love it under the long tablecloth, in spring on the fresh meadow grass, in winter on the fireplace’s cast iron, on the ballroom’s polished parquet, by the sea on the granite rock.

XXXIII. I remember the sea before a thunderstorm: how I envied the waves which ran in stormy succession to lie down lovingly at her feet! How I desired then with the waves to touch the dear feet with my lips! No, never in my seething youth’s ardent days did I desire with such agony to kiss the lips of a young Armida or the roses of fiery cheeks, or breasts full of languor; no, never did the impulse of passions tear my soul apart like this.

*From Chapter Eight of* Evgenii Onegin

X. Blessed is he who was young from youth, blessed who matured in time, who gradually managed to endure life’s cold with the years; who did not indulge in strange dreams, who did not shun society’s rabble, who at twenty was a dandy or fop and at thirty profitably married; who at fifty was free of private and other debts, who calmly in due course won fame, money and rank, of whom all his life it was repeated: ‘N.N. is a fine person.’

XI. But it is sad to think that youth was given to us in vain, that we have constantly betrayed it, that it has let us down; that our best desires, that our fresh dreams have burnt out in rapid succession, like leaves in a rotten autumn. It is unbearable to see facing us a long series of just dinners, to look at life as a ritual, and to follow the solemn mob without sharing common opinions or passions with it.

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