TATYANA IN LOVE (FROM [CHAPTER THREE OF] *YEVGENY ONEGIN*)

[XVII]

‘I can’t sleep, nanny, it’s so stifling:

Open the window; then sit here.’

‘What’s wrong, my Tanya?’ ‘I’m depressed;

Let’s talk of old times, nanny dear.’

‘Talk about what? There was a time

I could have told you not a few

Tales of witches and maidens fair.

I have forgotten what I knew;

My mind is now in darkness, Tanya.

Yes, bad times have come, my dear:

My memory’s gone.’ ‘Come tell me, nanny,

About those days of yester-year:

Yes, nanny sweet, tell me the truth,

Were you in love in your own youth?’

[XVIII]

‘And what next, Tanya? In those days

We hadn’t even heard of love.

If I had dared to think of it,

They would have killed me, heavens above!’

‘How were you married, nanny, then?’

‘That was God’s will. You know, my Vanya

Was even younger than me, sweetheart;

And I had just turned thirteen, Tanya.

My father gave his blessing when

The matchmaker had come to sue

A whole fortnight. And bitterly

I cried for fear; and they wept too,

Loosing the tresses on my head,

And sang as me to church they led.

[XIX]

‘And so I went into a house

Of strangers. But are you asleep?

You aren’t listening!’ ‘Ah, nanny, nanny,

I’m so wretched, I could weep;

My heart aches so.’ ‘My child, you’re ill;

Don’t be afraid, the Lord have mercy.

Pray God will help and succour you.

What do you want? Tell your old nursey.

First let me sprinkle holy water.

You’re burning hot!’ ‘No, I’m not ill;

I’m really …nanny…I’m in love.’

‘God save you, child, in his kind will!‘

And with her right hand, frail and trembling,

She blessed the girl, a prayer mumbling.

[XX.1−4]

I’m in love, dear,’ Tatyana whispered

Sadly again to the old crone.

‘My dearest heart, you are not well.’

‘I’m in love, leave me alone.’

[XXXIII]

The dawn Tatyana doesn’t notice.

She sits dreaming, her head bowed low;

Her signet ring she doesn’t press

Upon the letter. But the door

Quietly opens, and tip-toeing

Into the room comes now the grey-

Haired nurse, Filipyevna; she brings

The morning tea upon a tray.

It’s time, my child, to get up now.

But you’re already dressed, darling!

How well you look today, thank God!

My lovely little early starling!

Although last night you were so sad,

You’re like a poppy now, I’m glad.’

[XXXIV]

‘Oh nanny, please will you help me?’

‘Of course, my darling, tell me how.’

‘Don’t think…I mean…and don’t suspect…

You see…please don’t refuse me now.’

‘My dear, I swear to you by God!’

‘Well then, please send this little letter

Through your grandsons (it’s hush-hush, mind you)

To O…to him…the neighbour…better

To warn the boy he mustn’t say

A word about me, and still less

My name…’ ‘To whom, my dear? So dim

I’ve grown I just can’t guess

There are so many neighbours here,

I have lost count from year to year.’

[XXXV]

‘Oh nanny, nanny, you’re really slow!’

‘My dearest heart, I’ve grown so old,

My mind is dull. There was a time

I was quick-witted. If once told

One word of what the master wished…’

‘Oh nanny, nanny, how you chatter!

What have your wits to do with me?

You see, there is this little matter:

The note to Onegin.’ ‘Well, all right.

Don’t lose your temper, dearest, so:

You know how stupid I am now.

But why have your cheeks paled once more?’

‘It’s nothing, nanny, nothing really.

Now send your grandson, thank you dearly.’

[XXXVIII]

Meanwhile her heart ached ceaselessly;

Her languid eyes were full of tears.

A sudden clatter! Her blood froze.

Nearer! A galloping she hears:

He’s come ⎯ Yevgeny!’ ‘Ah!’ and leaping

Lighter than a shadow hares

Tatyana through the entrance hall,

From porch to yard; look back she dares

Not; straight into the garden now

She flies, she flies; across flower beds,

Over little bridges, down the path

Lakewards, scattering the lilac heads,

Towards the brook; till panting fast,

Upon a garden bench at last

[XXXIX.1−2]

She falls…

‘He’s here! Yevgeny’s here!

Oh God, what did he think of me?’

*From the Russian of Aleksandr Pushkin*

On the web at http://www.regisiriwardena.lk/node/54

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