

Nailya YAMAKOVA
Poems

Cain

for Sasha Kabanov

...I write that I love you,
And that my foolish youth,
And, actually, all of my foolish life –
None of it matters now:
You'll have it all corrected, regardless of the maps:
And I will also be a boy
Deep in the garden filled with fists, wild cherries,
Where they cry and, when hit, fight back.

I beg of you to give me back to me:
Whole, filled with blood, with spring,
Vibrating with mumps and rubella
Civilization, habits, plights
And I will take myself
The way I take a woman and a fortune

And what I'll do with me – you'll sure guess

In this unkind high-tech era
I ask you, like a human being
Give me to me without leaving
I'll do the rest.
I'll live like an illegal worker.
Without rights, constructing homes,
And selling persimmon and baklava,
And singing praise to you and all,
Forgetting everything, recalling it again,
When asked by him, when he
Decides to play and says to me,
“So, which of them is Joseph?”

The iron apple aftertaste is spreading on my palate.
My useless argument is filled with bile.
I'm rounded up, encircled from all sides.
I am my own prohibition.

Deep in the garden the brothers: truth and lie,
Two herods, sit in silence holding their knees.
They cast their gaze into the black.
All's quiet. The darkness stares back.

Pavlovsk

My soul is in a quarrel like a squirrel.
It feels like it will gnaw through my aorta
I give it slaps and cookies.
Announce aloud the list of all invited.
I'll be the first for you; I'll be your fourth.
I'll live with you 'til Sunday.

And afterwards, I will be your acquaintance.
We'll meet at rental places, supermarkets.
We'll take out loans and then we shall repay them.
As for the wolf-like passion, the darkest languor pain,
(Such languor makes you want to run away from home)
I'll put it in a box and hide it under-bed.

The park is empty, and the squirrel is sad:
There's not a whisper, rustle, or a movement here.
The statues are undressed. And as I pass an arch,
Some Katya, or perhaps a Masha, looks out at me
As if my death is near.

Anthony*For Chulpan*

I won again, my dear wife
Why aren't you happy now, my dear?
This blood is running on my lips,
Mixed with the grapes.
This golden wine is my reward.
Don't be afraid, no need.
As I will perish, I will drown,
I will be ambushed, killed
For her, for golden guilt of mine.
I won't have a chance to sip
To taste my life, when loving, killing.
With the world in my pocket, a stone 'round my neck.
I aim at him, and sure shoot myself.
The chariot, the helmet, Anthony, Apollo,
I won't lose my country or my wife.
My friends will help, my horses always save me
For golden wine or for the golden mine.
Now the world is in ashes, it went to a forest,
Where all dogs and foxes are dark.
Where did you, the kindest, throw me like an extra?
Based on which right and onto what scales?
These, the fearful spots are not frightful to me.
I'm a pilgrim, Odysseus, I'm from the SS.
I am living through this forty-one, forty-five.
I am guilty, discovered, seduced, crucified.
And this blood on my legs is forgiveness to me.
Golden guilt is my golden reward,
If you are here; you are here with me.

Taming

For two years I kept silent. I kept si-
I wanted a stone to hit me in the face
To fill my mouth with broken brick.
She gave me milk all covered with some film
A year passed by, two years passed by or three.
Don't look, but if you want to – spit at it.
Don't look at me from there watching how
They showered me, unworthy, with gifts.
The people were so happy and so kind.
I shouted to her, “beat it, bitch!”
The April ice, May lilacs, oysters, shears!
The laziness, the swallows, piles of grapes!
The January raspberries, the cards, the greetings!
And now, the light of day is anything but clear,
black tea, no longer sweet or liquid.
Post office sealing wax is slowly turning sour.
My stairwell is filled with urine smell and sawdust.
To hell with mothers and to hell with daughters.
I only have but water, stones in kidneys.
I have forgotten how to write my notes.
I use valokardin for the heart illness,
But who is this, whose voice is quietly singing?
Who visits me? And here once again ...

Springtime in the Kremlin

Don't ask any questions.
 No need for the reasons,
 Repressions, Chechnya, or for guys
 No need for tall guys in pea-jackets.
 Enormous stars are in the sky.
 And under the sky, there lie
 The cities: Kazan, Stalingrad.
 Good gracious, it's simple
 There's nothing so simple:
 The water, sheets stained in blood.
 It's so out of place, my God.

The Kremlin stars burn down.
 The soviet stars burn down.
 Pioneer stars go down.
 Into the black ploughed ground.
 In the two thousandth volume,
 The year of the two thousand,
 The two thousand year sentence ends.
 The labor was bloody crimson,
 But the communal waters
 Were long ago forgotten.

The birch sap ran through the tonsils,
 Morozov, Pavel, hit in the kidneys,
 Remember, of what is important,
 Not even a single word.
 The springs hit us in the plexus.
 Communal cunts are calling
 To youth for heroic deeds.
 They call to the narrow-foreheads
 They call to the narrow-hipped
 You'll see: I will bet you a tweak.
 Tom-Sawyer- bull-dog-and-a-drum.

That May, pea-jackets are marching.
 That May, the monsters are marching.
 They are the same breed as us
 Break me, the way you used to.
 The sky has enormous stars.

It's shameful and scary and fiery.
 Lilies-of-the-valley and a machine gun.
 She will get it all right away.
 In whose beard the mice are running.
 And who will touch the thin ice,
 Who breathes the stolen air,
 And who sings the war-time songs.

The map of the republics

*It's the first time that I see a cat that loves sufferings so. She probably has read a lot of Dostoyevsky.
(from a letter of K. I. Chukovsky. June 24, 1939.)*

Her eyes are blue like the sky
Her voice bursts like the wind
Her hands and her back are white
Like all the statues in museums
Her back is the embodiment of silence
I ask, did you dictate to Dante?
She looks at me and smokes and that is unbearable

Gloomy girls
From all the former republics of the Soviet Union

Russian SFSR
Ukrainian SSR
Belorussian SSR
Transcaucasian SSR
In 1936 split into Azerbaijan, Armenian, and Georgian SSR
Uzbek SSR
Turkmen SSR
Tajik SSR
Kazakh SSR
Kirgiz SSR
Moldovan SSR
Latvian SSR
Lithuanian SSR
Estonian SSR

Girls from Kislovodsk and Kabardino-Balkariya are different
Gloomy, I say, St. Petersburg will soon be flooded
And, by the way, it's right
They say, then we'll go to Kislovodsk,
We'll sit by a fountain in the evening
There's only one street where everyone strolls
Shows off
They make sorrel soup there with mutton broth
And I make it with water
Kabardinian girls, girls from Erevan
Fat sour cream, walnuts, prunes, garlic
<.....>

Masha, how did you gain weight then?
And then, I got married.

Masha gave birth.
Katya gave birth.
Lena gave birth.

Natasha gave birth.
<.....>

Strawberries cherries wild cherries raspberries blueberries
Crimson ink in my notebook
Scarlet streaks wine stains semolina
I never liked but it is so sweet to make peace
I give you my hand and we laugh
I never loved it but it is so sweet to give up
Only to you and not to anybody

I don't like to talk
You don't like to talk
But people haven't thought of anything else
And we, it turns out, have
We don't need to talk
We hold hands and we don't need to talk about anything
It's not that we don't have anything to talk about everything is already clear

I feel such gratitude
The most gloomy and pink-cheeked girl
Beloved beloved beloved
I like red and blue,
Orange and yellow
And I used to – only black
I like eating cheese cakes with you
Laughing with you
Tucking the blanket into the duvet cover with you
The way you did it with me
<.....>

Let's read Charlotte Bronte in the evening
Let's read Jane Austin in the evening
Let's read Tove Jansson
Or Marguerite Duras
Silvia Plath or *Neznaika in Sun City*
Let's not read Dostoyevsky or Chukovsky
<.....>

OK OK I won't I won't
Thank you thank you thank you

Summer Garden

I feel such a joy in my chest, my Lord
 Looking at the elaborate black portal
 And there is nothing that I need, my Lord
 I tell you, don't come to me at all

My stolen childhood is behind
 And, can you imagine, so is everything else
 I tell you, don't come to me at all
 We'll sit a little bit together

And we'll remember our golden times
 We will remember our golden names
 And all of my forsaken guilt
 Looks right at me, and I am glad to see it

My poor city is leaning over the wide river
 The siege, the dairy, the bakery, the cobbler
 My Ligovsky, Suvorovsky, Liteynyy,
 The sanitarium in Pesochnaya, the park in Udelnaya,
 Where the reward and the trouble found us.

The Senate square is covered with shame,
 You come out to Gorokhovaya under surveillance
 You go to Siberia, as nobody's wife
 And now St. Isaac's has been executed
 And here is the iron ore

Give me, my Lord, neither happiness nor luck
 I am not asking. I won't cry at all.
 Let it be the way it is, as usual.
 While the water stays high, still.
 The Neva is wide and the garden is green,
 All children are toddlers and the maples are small.

Growing Cities

Visiting at the Poklonnogorskaya Street

From the frozen land, cities grow up into the sky
 Salt pillars of telegraphs stand, the roads, and the cables run.
 Glossy memory: the forehead and the skating rink, the ridges of the skates,
 All in scratches, our days,
 Dear doubles, and diaries,

There are no more stadiums, colds, or injured cheekbones,
 The domes are not visible from the ravine, and there is no more praise.
 But, look, look! There is glass and cement everywhere.
 From the belfries of these churches the crimson bell is ringing.

You are wide open, barefoot, blue light is pouring down into your eyes from the sky
 Christmas won't come, but halva is desired all the same.
 You are taken apart, torn, stared at, opened up,
 You have three stamps on you and even a residency card.
 Stained glass made out of ice on the windows, and a bottle on the table.
 Only the storm is inside and the two silhouettes are in the darkness.
 This is the wind of the North dryly laughing in your face
 This is me remembering all the dead with quotes.
 Cities, sleeves, mittens, pieces. The ritual is so scary.
 With each shot glass their row is getting longer. All of them say,

This is just snow falling, that is so, and this is just a headache.
 This is me, forgetting simple words in the district of new constructions.
 And there is no need for motherwort, but maybe for snakeweed.
 Your contemporary is successful, reliable and skin-headed.
 Now there are playgrounds where there used to be always empty spaces.
 This is teething, these are fish bubbles in the ice.
 This is a sweet itch; they are bringing something out, look.
 Refined sugar will be cut through, the snow will be melted, whether you cry or not.
 For others, not for us, there will be hunger and cold.
 Cities grow out of the frozen land up towards the sky.
 These are the best years and the best children go to barracks.
 To a factory whistle and to the howl of all the lost dogs
 They wake up in the morning and quickly produce waste.

I finish up drinking my absinthe for the two of us; you finish up your hashish,
 A neighbor told me that I have an evil pencil, too sharp,
 Find me a deep black hole in the ice:
 I won't jump, but I'll spit and break it with my heel.
 This steam coming from my mouth, the stupid lip, the proverbial seven wait.
 This is me; I have crumpled my handkerchief into a rope.
 Now, there is no place for me to hurry to.
 I have one more thing left to do: to pass by the construction site towards the garage,
 To finish up drinking this bitterness, and to ask for more,
 And to watch senselessly my reflection in the blackness of these slums' windows.

All poems translated by Masha Petrenko