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ROAD TO EMMAUS

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EXCERPTS FROM “IVAN SHMELYOV”: PILGRIMAGE MORNING

Forbidden publication during the Soviet period, this classic nineteenth-century story of the life of a young Russian boy, Ivan Shmelyov, was recently unearthed and reprinted to the great satisfaction of contemporary Orthodox Russians. *Road to Emmaus* is pleased to be the first to translate portions of this forgotten classic for English readers. In our initial offering, young Ivan, Gorkin (an old family friend), and a few of the servants have risen early to go on pilgrimage from Moscow to St. Sergius-Holy Trinity Lavra...

Chilly dawn breathes through the window. The morning is so quiet that I hear pigeons running over the roof and our dog Bushuy shaking the sleep from himself. For a moment I lie in bed stretching, listening to roosters crow, to Gorkin’s voice in the yard...

We drink tea in the front room, father and me. The clock has just cuckooed four. The door to the dining room is slightly closed in order not to wake anyone. Father is also going somewhere; he has his riding boots and his coat on. He drinks dark red tea from a cut glass, makes calculations in his notebook, kisses me absent-mindedly. He waves his hand strictly when I want to tell him that our samovar has become pink and the front room has also turned pink in quite another way! “Later, later! Don’t dangle your legs. Here, spread the caviar on your bun.”

And he goes on calculating, “Seven thousand trees and more from the new grove...well, twenty thousand trees...” A thatch of hair swings over his forehead as if it is calculating, too. I swallow hot tea and the clock tick-tocks. Why is the steam over the samovar pink, and the tablecloth and the wall-paper? The dark humpbacked icon of the Lord’s passion seems to have become new. The crucifix can be seen on it. Why is it so...?

Beyond the window — you can reach it with your hand — there is a pink brick wall with a stripe of sunshine on it. That is why there is light in the front room. It has never been so before. I tell father, “The sun has dropped in on us.” He looks vacantly at the window and I see his face brighten. “Eh?... Yes, yes, it has come to our by-street.” He stares and thinks of

something. “Yes... only seven or eight days a year does it peep into our little cranny. Your grandfather used to wait for the long days to come... he always drank tea here with the sun, as we are now, and showed it to me. I was little and then I forgot, and now I am showing it to you. So everything goes...” he says thoughtfully. “... Pray for grandfather.”

He looks about the room. It is getting dim again; only the icon is shining. He looks up and sings without words, his favorite: “Before Thy Cross, we fall down O Maaasterrrr, and Thy Holy Resurrection we magnify.” The sun crawls away from the wall.

In this sliding light, in the sad tune, in grandfather who has gone somewhere and saw what I see now, I feel as a vague thought that everything passes... and that father will go too, as did this accidental light. Up through the window, between our rooftop and the next house I see a stripe of blue sky and I am flooded with joy.

“Well, have you eaten your fill?” Father asks. “Remember; obey Gorkin. He has a bag with small coins and will give you some for the beggars. If God wills we will catch up with you in Troitsa.” He crosses me, puts me on his shoulders and runs down the stairs...

It's so cheerful outside in the yard because of the sun, and it's a little fresh. Our horse Krivaya is shining as if he had been polished; the shaft-bow is also shining, and the harness. The cart, which is brand-new, looks like a little toy. Gorkin is wearing a canvas tunic, a May cap tilted on his head. He carries a cloth bundle. His cheeks are pink with cold and excitement and his beard is silvery. Antipushka is holding Krivaya's reins and Fedya looks like a city man with his polished knee boots as if he were going to church. By his side there hangs a bag with a tin kettle tied to it. On the porch sits Domna Panfyorovna in a headscarf, her baggy neck so red that one can see she is very hot. She wears a grey *talma*, a sleeveless cloak with tassles and trinkets hanging from it. There is a heavy carpet bag in her lap and a big-bellied white umbrella. Anyuta is peering from under her headscarf like a little doll. I ask if she has brought the tiny glass ball with her. She looks at Babushka and stays silent, groping in her pocket.

“The package has been handed over; deliver it in one piece!” Father says, putting me on the hay.

“Be sure, we won’t spill it,” Gorkin replies, then takes off his peaked hat and crosses himself. “Well, a good hour for us, and for you who stay here happily, never missing us. Forgive me a sinner, if I have been rough in anything. Bow to Vasili Vasil’ch for me.” He bows to father, to our cook Marushka, to the carpenters and furriers who have gathered to work. They have spent the night in the cart and scratch their heads as they climb from under the quilted blanket to see us off. He bows also to the yard, silent at this hour.

A clamour of voices say, “Good hour to you;” “Bow to the God-pleaser for us...” Gorkin laughs, shaking hands with father in farewell. They kiss. I jump off the cart. “Let him show off a little and then we will put him back,” says Gorkin. “Don’t walk too fast. Watch and follow me. Let’s tread lightly as pilgrims do, then we won’t tire ourselves. And you...Domna Panfyorovna, hold onto your fashions and don’t shame yourself.”

“I’ll roll along like a little round stone...just let me put my carpet-bag up here.”

Trifonich, barefoot, runs out of the entryway; he has overslept and almost missed us to say goodbye. He thrusts up a parcel for Sanya, his grandson who is a novice at Troitsa. “Tell him his grandmother and I will come in autumn to visit him. The trade cannot be left now, just at the working season.”

“Well, bless us, Lord...! Let’s go!” +

Translated by Inna Belova and M. Nectaria McLees