

Marina Tsvetaeva

Twenty More Poems

Translated by A. S. Kline © 2021 All Rights Reserved.
This work may be freely reproduced, stored, and transmitted, electronically
or otherwise, for any non-commercial purpose.

Contents

Three Ponds Lane (Tryokhprudny Lane)	4
Such Women	4
Separation from Sophie Parnok	5
For Sophie	5
For Osip Mandelstam.....	6
Osip in Petrograd	6
Osip in Moscow	7
For Alexander Blok.....	8
After the Visit	8
My Name is Marina	9
Last Summons.....	9
Orphic.....	10
Leaving for Berlin.....	11
Eurydice – to Orpheus (<i>Tsvetaeva – to Pasternak</i>)	11
The Seafarer	12
A Meeting of Minds (<i>For Pasternak</i>).....	12
Poem for My Son	13
The Arrests	14
Last Poem (<i>On meeting Tarkovsky in the prison line</i>)	15
Index by First Line.....	17

Three Ponds Lane (Tryokhprudny Lane)

You who still dream deeply,
Whose steps sound quietly,
Come to Three Ponds Lane,
If you should love my poetry.

Oh, how sunlit and how starry,
Life's first volume now begun.
I beg you, before it's too late,
Come see our house, at once!

A world that will be ruined,
Gaze at it secretly,
While the house is not yet sold,
Nor felled the poplar-tree.

Our poplar! In the evening
We children huddle there;
Midst the acacias, rising,
Ash and silver colours flair.

A world, irrevocably fine.
Quick! Make our house your goal,
Come to Three Ponds Lane,
To this soul out of my soul.

1913

Such Women

They have names, like suffocating flowers,
Their glances, are like dancing flames...
They possess dark sinuous mouths,
Whose corners are moist and deep.

There are women – their hair a helmet,

They're wrapped in a subtle, fatal scent.
Why, oh why – at thirty years old –
Desire my soul, that of a Spartan child?

Ascension Day, Thursday 13th May 1915

Separation from Sophie Parnok

No thought, no complaint, no argument.
No sleep.
No longing for the sun, the moon, the sea.
Nor a sail.

No sense of the heat of these four walls,
The garden's greenness.
No longing for the gift desired,
No expectation.

No pleasure in the morning, in the tram's
Jingling course.
Not seeing the day, forgetful, I live,
Nor yet the date, nor the century.

I seem to tread a fraying tightrope,
I – a little dancer,
I – a shadow, of another's shadow,
I – a sleepwalker,
Under two dark moons.

July 13th, 1914

For Sophie

A gypsy passion's separation!
Met – we're already torn apart.
I let my head drop in my hands,
And brood: staring at the night.

No one, leafing through our letters,
Could comprehend the depths of them,
How treacherous we were, that is –
How true we were to ourselves.

October, 1915

For Osip Mandelstam

Nothing's been taken from us!
It's sweet to me that we're apart.
I kiss you – across a hundred
Miles of separation.

I know our gifts to be – unequal.
For the first time my voice is quietened.
What could you want – young Derzhavin,
With my unsophisticated verse!

You place your trust in fearsome flight:
Soar, young eagle!
Unhurried, you bear the sun –
Is my young gaze so heavy?

Tenderly, and unwaveringly,
None has gazed after you so...
I kiss you – across a hundred
Years of separation.

12th February, 1916

Osip in Petrograd

Whence comes such tenderness?
Not the first – to stroke those
Curls – I've known lips

Darker than yours.

The stars rose and faded,
Whence comes such tenderness?
Eyes rose and faded,
Before my very eyes.

Never yet heard, such hymns
In the darkness of night,
Wedded – O tenderness! –
To the breast of the singer.

Whence such tenderness,
What to do with it, my lad,
Sly, minstrel visitor,
With eyelashes – none longer?

18th February, 1916

Osip in Moscow

A strange malaise afflicted him,
And a sweetness overcame him,
Standing, gazing at everything,
Seeing neither the stars, nor dawn
With the watchful eyes – of a child.

And in sleep – eagles came to him,
A loud-winged screeching band,
Quarrelling over him wondrously.
And one – the lord of the cliffs –
Tousled his curls with its beak.

Yet, with eyes tight-closed,
And mouth half-open – he slept:
Not seeing those night-visitors,
Not hearing how, sharp-beaked,

The golden-eyed bird screamed.

20th March, 1916

For Alexander Blok

Your name – a bird in the hand,
Your name – ice on the tongue.
One swift movement of the lips.
Your name – four letters long.
A ball – that's caught in flight,
In the mouth jingling silver.
A stone, thrown in a quiet pond,
No sigh, like your name ever.
At night a light clatter of hooves,
Your name a noisy rumble.
We name your noble brow
With that loud click of a trigger.
Your name is – oh, impossible!
A kiss on the eyes – your name,
In this tender, chill, frozen time.
Your name is – a kiss in the snow.
At the core is a blue gulp of ice.
Sleep soundly – with your name.

15th April, 1916

After the Visit

After a sleepless night, the weakened flesh
Is dear, but is no one's – not your own,
Arrows still reside in the sluggish veins,
And you smile at people – a seraphim.

After a sleepless night, the weakened hands
Are deeply indifferent to enemies, friends.
There's a rainbow in every random sound,

And the sudden scent of chilly Florence.

Your lips have a brighter sheen, the shadows
Gold near sunken eyes. Night has illumined
This noble face – and, with night's darkness,
One thing alone is darkening, yet – our eyes.

19th July, 1916

My Name is Marina

Some are made of stone; some made of clay –
But I am made of silver and sunlight!
Treason is – my trade; my name – Marina,
I am the mortal foam of the sea.

Some are made of clay; some made of flesh –
Theirs the coffin and the tombstone...
I was baptised in the sea's font – and
In flight – I am eternally breaking!

Through every heart, through every net,
My headstrong will must penetrate.
From me – do you see these wilful curls?
No earthly salt, ever, will be gained.

Pounding hard on your granite knees,
With each wave – I shall resurrect!
Long live the foam – the playful foam –
The high, the rising foam of the sea!

23 May 1920

Last Summons

I know, I'll die in the half-light! In which of the two,
At which of the two, will not be in my command!

Of, if only my torch might be extinguished twice!
So I could depart with the dawn and the sunset.

Gone, dancing over the ground! – Heaven's daughter!
Her skirt filled with roses! Not breaking a stem!
I know I'll die in the half-light! In hawkish night,
God will not choose to summon my swan's soul.

My gentle hand pushing away the un-kissed cross,
I'll rush into the generous sky, to that final greeting.
In the early twilight – answering with a broken smile...
– To the last death-rattle, I remain a poet!

December 1920

Orphic

Like the sleeping, the intoxicated,
Unaware and unprepared.
The temporal abyss:
Remorse unsleeping.

Vacant sockets:
Dead and gleaming.
Dreaming, all-seeing,
Vacant glass.

Was it not you,
Could not endure
The rustling of her dress –
Reversing Hades' windings?

Was it not this,
This head full of silvery sound,
Floating down
The sleepy Hebrus?

25th November 1921

Leaving for Berlin

I'm no prettier for these years of separation!
Will you not be angered? By rough hands,
That have grasped for black bread and salt?
– The partnership of common labour?

O let's have no preening for a meeting
Of lovers! – No scorn of my common
Language – ill-advised and neglected:
A chronicle of my scattergun speech.

A disappointment? Say it, fearlessly!
– Torn from friends, from affectionate
Spirits – in a chaos, harbouring hope,
My clear grasp irretrievably broken!

23rd January 1922

Eurydice – to Orpheus (*Tsvetaeva – to Pasternak*)

Those abandoning their last ragged
Covering (no speech, no breath...!)
Oh, do you not exceed your powers,
Orpheus, in descending into Hades?

Those abandoning their last earthly
Ties...on a bed of lies they lie
And contemplate the great lie –
In sight – a meeting with the knife.

I have paid – for all these roses of blood,
For this loosely-fitting immortality...
As far as the Lethean upper reaches,
Beloved – it is peace I need,

Forgetfulness...for in the house of spirits,
Here –your ghost exists, yet is real –
I am dead...what can I tell you, but:
'You must depart now, and forget!'

I'll not be stirred! Not be drawn to you,
No hands, here! – No mouth, no lips
Meeting. Snake-bitten, immortality
Has put an end to female passion.

I have paid – remember my moans! –
For this final spaciousness.
No need for Orpheus to follow Eurydice,
Nor for a brother to disturb a sister.

23rd January 1922

The Seafarer

Rock me to sleep, starry boat!
My head's tired of the waves.

Too long I've sought a mooring –
My mind weary of feelings:
Hymns – laurels – heroes – hydras –
My head's weary of these games.

Let me lie on pine-needled grass –
My mind's tired of these wars.

12th June 1923

A Meeting of Minds (For Pasternak)

In a world, where all
Are stooped and sweating,

I know – you alone
Mirror me.

In a world, where so many
Go wanting,
I know – you alone
Are my peer.

In a world, where all –
Is slime and spit,
I know: only you –
Are a match for me.

3rd July 1924

Poem for My Son

Our conscience – is not yours!
Enough! – Be free! – Forgetting all;
Children, write your own story
Of your passions and your day.

Here stand Lot's family –
In the family-album!
Children! – You must settle
Your own score with Sodom's –

Hail. Not at war with your brothers,
It's up to you, my curly-headed boy!
Yours the land, the age, the day, the hour,
Ours the sin, the cross, the quarrel, ours –

The rage. Dressed in an exile's
Rags from birth –
Cease to perform funeral rites
In that Eden, in which you've

Never lived! Among fruits – and views
You've never seen! Blind, those
Who lead you to perform such rites,
For a people who eat

The bread that you'll be given – once
You've left Meudon – for the Kuban.
Our quarrels – are not your quarrels!
Children! Address the ills –

Of your own day.

January 1932

I've not sought revenge, and never will –
Nor have I forgiven, nor will forgive –
From the day my eyes opened – till the oak
Coffin, I'll not lower myself – God knows,
I'll not further the age's ruinous descent...
– Yet some are deserving of it? ...
No: I've fought in vain: against none.
Nor have I forgiven: a single thing.

26th January 1935

The Arrests

He's gone – I don't eat.
Stale – the taste of bread.
Everything – like chalk.
Whatever I reach for.

...Mine was the bread,
And mine the snow.
The snow's not white.
The bread unpleasant.

23rd January 1940

Last Poem (On meeting Tarkovsky in the prison line)

'I laid the table for six....' Arseny Tarkovsky

Everyone repeats the first line,
Everyone passes on the word:
'I laid the table for six...'
Yet you forget one – the seventh.

Mirthless the six of you.
Down your faces – the rain streams...
How could you, at such a table,
Forget the seventh one – the seventh?

Mirthless your guests,
The crystal decanter idle.
Disconsolate – are they, disconsolate – am I.
The unnamed the most disconsolate of all.

Mirthless and mirthless again.
Ah, they fail to eat and drink!
– How could you forget their number?
How could you err in the sum?

How could you, dare you, not know
That the six (two brothers, a third –
You yourself, wife, father, mother)
Are seven – since I am here on earth?

You laid the table for six,
Though the sixth is not yet dead.
As a scarecrow among the living,
I long to be a ghost – with you,

(With them) ...timid as a thief

Oh – not touching a soul! –
Like an out of place implement,
I sit, the uninvited seventh.

6th March 1941

Index by First Line

You who still dream deeply,	4
They have names, like suffocating flowers,.....	4
No thought, no complaint, no argument.	5
A gypsy passion's separation!.....	5
Nothing's been taken from us!	6
Whence comes such tenderness?	6
A strange malaise afflicted him,.....	7
Your name – a bird in the hand,.....	8
After a sleepless night, the weakened flesh	8
Some are made of stone; some made of clay –	9
I know, I'll die in the half-light! In which of the two,.....	9
Like the sleeping, the intoxicated,	10
I'm no prettier for these years of separation!.....	11
Those abandoning their last ragged	11
Rock me to sleep, starry boat!.....	12
In a world, where all.....	12
Our conscience – is not yours!	13
I've not sought revenge, and never will –	14
He's gone – I don't eat.	14
Everyone repeats the first line,.....	15