

**Classic Poetry Series**

**Marina Ivanovna  
Tsvetaeva  
- poems -**

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# Marina Ivanovna Tsvetaeva(8 October 1892 – 31 August 1941)

Marina Tsvetaeva was born in Moscow. Her father, Ivan Tsvetayev, was a professor of art history and the founder of the Museum of Fine Arts. Her mother Mariya, née Meyn, was a talented concert pianist. The family travelled a great deal and Tsvetaeva attended schools in Switzerland, Germany, and at the Sorbonne, Paris. Tsvetaeva started to write verse in her early childhood. She made her debut as a poet at the age of 18 with the collection *Evening Album*, a tribute to her childhood.

In 1912 Tsvetaeva married Sergei Efron, they had two daughters and one son. *Magic Lantern* showed her technical mastery and was followed in 1913 by a selection of poems from her first collections. Tsvetaeva's affair with the poet and opera librettist Sofiia Parnok inspired her cycle of poems called *Girlfriend*. Parnok's career stopped in the late 1920s when she was no longer allowed to publish. The poems composed between 1917 and 1921 appeared in 1957 under the title *The Demesne of the Swans*. Inspired by her relationship with Konstantin Rodzevich, an ex-Red Army officer she wrote *Poem of the Mountain* and *Poem of the End*.

After 1917 Revolution Tsvetaeva was trapped in Moscow for five years. During the famine one of her own daughters died of starvation. Tsvetaeva's poetry reveal her growing interest in folk song and the techniques of the major symbolist and poets, such as Aleksander Blok and Anna Akhmatova. In 1922 Tsvetaeva emigrated with her family to Berlin, where she rejoined her husband, and then to Prague. This was a highly productive period in her life - she published five collections of verse and a number of narrative poems, plays, and essays.

During her years in Paris Tsvetaeva wrote two parts of the planned dramatic trilogy. The last collection published during her lifetime, *After Russia*, appeared in 1928. Its print, 100 numbered copies, were sold by special subscription. In Paris the family lived in poverty, the income came almost entirely from Tsvetaeva's writings. When her husband started to work for the Soviet security service, the Russian community of Paris turned against Tsvetaeva. Her limited publishing ways for poetry were blocked and she turned to prose. In 1937 appeared *MOY PUSHKIN*, one of Tsvetaeva's best prose works. To earn extra income, she also produced short stories, memoirs and critical articles.

In exile Tsvetaeva felt more and more isolated. Friendless and almost destitute she returned to the Soviet Union in 1938, where her son and husband already lived. Next year her husband was executed and her daughter was sent to a labor camp. Tsvetaeva was officially ostracized and unable to publish. After the USSR was invaded by German Army in 1941, Tsvetaeva was evacuated to the small provincial town of Elabuga with her son. In despair, she hanged herself ten days later on August 31, 1941.

## Before A Little Coffin

Mother has painted the coffin brightly.  
The tiny one sleeps in Sunday attire.  
Onto the forehead no longer is falling  
The light-brown hair;

A round comb no longer is pressing,  
Having seen so little, of the child's head;  
Only of joy knew  
The heart of the kid.

For five years so happily lived she  
Much played the deft arms!  
Fantasies, fantasies mid lilies,  
Nobody disturbed them.

The flowers seek a place nearer to her,  
(She seems tight in her new bed).  
The flowers know: Little Katya  
A golden heart had.

Marina Ivanovna Tsvetaeva

## Books In Red Binding

From heaven of a childhood life  
A farewell to me you're sending,  
The ever-loyal dear friends  
Within a red worn down binding.  
On learning homework from school,  
At once I ran to see you yet.  
'It's late' - 'Please, Mother, ten more lines' -  
But happily she did forget.  
The fires flicker in a lamp..  
How nice it is to read at home!  
To sounds of Greeg, Schumann and Kui  
I learned about the fate of Tom.  
It's dark.. the air is growing cold..  
Tom's full of faith in Becky's joy.  
Within the darkness of the cave  
Wanders with torch Indian Joe..  
A cemetery.. owl is screaming..  
(I'm scared) And now through hassocks flies  
The punctilious widow's foster-child,  
Like in a barrel Diogenes.  
Lighter than Sun is the throne hall,  
Over the graceful boy - a crown..  
At once - a beggar! God! He said:  
'Forgive, I'm heir to the throne.'  
To darkness comes, who comes from her.  
Sad is the destiny of Britain..  
O, wherefore not amid red books  
Not to go back to sleep again  
Before a lamp? O golden times  
Where sight is braver, heart is purer:  
O golden times, I say again:  
Huck Finn, Tom Sawyer, Prince and Beggar!

Marina Ivanovna Tsvetaeva

# Conversation With A Genius

Like mountains - on this brow  
Laurels of praise.  
'I can't sing!'  
- 'You will!' - 'Sound

(Put me on a diet  
of flour!)  
Like milk -  
Is gone from my breast.

Empty. Dry.  
In full-blown spring?  
I feel like a twig.'  
- 'That's an old song!

Drop it, don't blabber!'  
'From now on I'd better -  
Pound gravel!'  
- 'All the more reason to sing!'

'Am I a bullfinch,  
To sing  
Day in and day out?'  
- 'Even if you can't,  
My bird, sing!

Out of spite!'  
'What if I can't  
put two lines together?'  
- 'When could - anyone?!' -

'It's torture!' - 'Bear it!'  
'A mown meadow -  
My throat!' 'Then wheeze:  
That's a sound, too!'

'It's lions' business  
Not women's.' - 'Children's:  
Though disembowelled -

Orpheus still sang!

'So, even in the grave?'

- 'Under a headstone, too.'

'I can't sing!'

- 'Sing about that!'

Marina Ivanovna Tsvetaeva

# Dialogue Between Hamlet And His Conscience

- She's- She's in the riverbed, in algae  
And weeds...She went to them  
To sleep, - but there's no sleep there, either!  
- But she's the one I loved  
Like forty thousand brothers  
Couldn't love!  
- Hamlet!  
She's in the riverbed, in algae:  
Algae! . . And her last garland  
Has surfaced in the logs by the bank...  
- But she's the one I loved  
Like forty thousand...  
- Less,  
Even so, than a single lover.  
She's in the riverbed, in algae.  
- But she's the one -

I loved??

Marina Ivanovna Tsvetaeva

# Dis-Stance: Versts, Miles

To B. Pasternak

Dis-stance: versts, miles...  
They've dis-joined us, dis-mantled us,  
So that we would be quiet,  
At the world's farthest ends.

Dis-stance: versts, reaches...  
They've disbanded, disrupted us,  
Disunited and dissolved us,  
Not knowing that we are an alloy

Of inspirations and sinews...  
They haven't dispirited us, but they've dispersed us,  
Dissected...  
Wall and moat.  
Displaced us, like eagles-

Conspirators: versts, reaches...  
Not dismayed, but displanted.  
Across the slums of the earth's latitudes  
They disarranged us like orphans.

How many is it - oh, how many - Marches?!  
Since they disordered us like a deck of cards!

Marina Ivanovna Tsvetaeva

## For My Poems, Written So Early

For my poems, written so early  
That I didn't even know I was a poet,  
Hurled like drops from a fountain,  
Like sparks from rockets,

That burst like tiny devils,  
Into the sanctuary of sleep and incense,  
For my poems about youth and death  
-- For my unread poems!

Scattered in dusty bookstores,  
Where no one ever buys them!  
For my poems, like precious wines,  
A time will come.

Marina Ivanovna Tsvetaeva

## From Four Till Seven

Like in a mirror, there's shade in the heart  
I'm bored alone - and with men...  
Slowly drags the light of the day  
From four till seven!  
Everybody is cruel in the dusk,  
Don't go to people - they'll lie.  
Fingers have wound into a knot  
The kerchief. I want to cry.  
Only don't torture me so,  
If you hurt me I'll forgive!  
From four till seven o'clock  
I endlessly grieve.

Marina Ivanovna Tsvetaeva

# Girlfriend

"I will not part! -- There is no end!" She clings and clings...  
And in the breast -- the rise  
Of threatening waters,  
Of notes...Steadfast: like an immutable  
Mystery: we will part!

Marina Ivanovna Tsvetaeva

# Grey Hairs

These are ashes of treasures:  
Of hurt and loss.  
These are ashes in face of which  
Granite is dross.  
Dove, naked and brilliant,  
It has no mate.  
Solomon's ashes  
Over vanity that's great.  
Time's menacing chalkmark,  
Not to be overthrown.  
Means God knocks at the door  
-- Once the house has burned down!  
Not choked yet by refuse,  
Days' and dreams' conqueror.  
Like a thunderbolt -- Spirit  
Of early grey hair.  
It's not you who've betrayed me  
On the home front, years.  
This grey is the triumph  
Of immortal powers.

Marina Ivanovna Tsvetaeva

# I Like That You Are Crazy Not With Me

I like that you are crazy not with me,  
I like that I'm not with you crazy, either,  
That ne'er the heavy planet's globe will be  
Drifting away under our feet, quite easy.  
I like that one might funny be and brave,  
And free-behaved - and not to play words, rather,  
And not to blush with choking a wave,  
At easy touching just a sleeve another's.

I thank you with my hand and all my heart  
For loving me (that you don't even know!),  
For the sweet peace, I own in the night,  
For the scarce meeting in the eve's fast flow,  
For our not-walking under the moonlight,  
For our not-standing under the sun's glow -  
That not with me - alas - you lose your mind,  
That not with you - alas - I lose my own.

Marina Ivanovna Tsvetaeva

## In Paris

Homes reach the stars, the sky's below,  
The land in smoke to it is near.  
Inside the big and happy Paris  
Remains the secretive despair.

The evening boulevards are noisy,  
Gone are the sundown's final rays,  
And there are couples everywhere  
Trembling of lips, daring of eyes.

I'm here alone. To trunk of chestnut  
It is so nice one's head to lean!  
And like in the abandoned Moscow  
In heart weep verses of Rostand.

Paris at night is sad and alien,  
Dear to the heart is madness gone!  
I'm going home, there's vial of sorrow  
And tender portrait of someone.

There's someone's glance, sad and fraternal.  
There's tender profile on the wall.  
Rostand and the Reichstadtian martyr  
And Sara - in sleep come they all!

Within the big and happy Paris  
I dream of grass, of clouds and rain  
And laughter far, and shadow near,  
And deep just like before is pain.

Marina Ivanovna Tsvetaeva

# Lady With Camelias

Your whole way with shining evil's coal  
Margaret, they all do bravely judge.  
What's your fault? The body sinned as such,  
Innocent you have retained your soul.

To all people it's the same, I know,  
To all nodded with a blurry smile.  
And with this sorrowful semi-smile  
You have wept yourself long time ago.

Who will know? Whose hand will help along?  
No exception to the rule, one thing entrances!  
They eternally await embraces,  
They eternally await, 'I'm thirsty! Be my own!'

Day and night the bane of false confessions..  
Day and night, tomorrow, and once more!  
Spoke more eloquently than the word  
Your dark glance, the martyr's dark expression.

The accursed ring is growing narrow,  
On the goddess of the world avenges fate..  
Smiling childishly, into your face  
A young tender boy glances with sorrow.

The entire world is saved by love!  
In but her salvation and defense is.  
All's in love. O Margaret, sleep in peace.  
All's in love. I'm saved because I love.

Marina Ivanovna Tsvetaeva

# Little World

Children - are staring of eyes so frightful,  
Mischievous legs on a wooden floor,  
Children - is sun in the gloomy motives,  
Hypotheses' of happy sciences world.

Eternal disorder in the ring's gold,  
Tender word's whispers in semi-sleep,  
On the wall in a cozy child's room, the dreaming  
Peaceful pictures of birds and sheep.

Children - is evening, evening on the couch,  
In the fog, through the window, glimmer street lamps,  
A measured voice of the tale of King Saltan,  
Mermaid-sisters of seas from tales.

Children - is rest, brief moment of respite,  
A trembling vow before God's eyes,  
Children - are the world's tender riddles,  
Where in the riddle the answer hides!

Marina Ivanovna Tsvetaeva

# Meeting

Evening dimmed, like ourselves charmed  
With this first warmth of the spring.  
Stirring alive, Arbat was alarmed;  
With sympathetic tenderness, the kind  
Gale touched us with a tired wing.  
In our souls, raised on a fairy tale,  
Sorrow quietly cried for past things.

He came - so unexpected! So hurriedly -  
He who helped in all things before.  
And far off in a line unconsolably  
The streetlamps' radiant dots  
Burned though light darkness some more...  
All around flowers we bought;  
We bought a bouquet.. What for?

Quietly withered away unseen garden  
In the sky violet-red.  
How to be saved from late trouble?  
All returned. For a moment? For long?  
We speechlessly looked at sun going to bed,  
And Gogol nodded, thoughtful, from  
The pedestral like a brother, sad.

Marina Ivanovna Tsvetaeva

# Much Like Me

Much like me, you make your way forward,  
Walking with downturned eyes.  
Well, I too kept mine lowered.  
Passer-by, stop here, please.

Read, when you've picked your nosegay  
Of henbane and poppy flowers,  
That I was once called Marina,  
And discover how old I was.

Don't think that there's any grave here,  
Or that I'll come and throw you out ...  
I myself was too much given  
To laughing when one ought not.

The blood hurtled to my complexion,  
My curls wound in flourishes ...  
I was, passer-by, I existed!  
Passer-by, stop here, please.

And take, pluck a stem of wildness,  
The fruit that comes with its fall --  
It's true that graveyard strawberries  
Are the biggest and sweetest of all.

All I care is that you don't stand there,  
Dolefully hanging your head.  
Easily about me remember,  
Easily about me forget.

How rays of pure light suffuse you!  
A golden dust wraps you round ...  
And don't let it confuse you,  
My voice from under the ground.

Marina Ivanovna Tsvetaeva

## New Moon

Over meadow stands new moon,  
Over boundary of dew.  
Come, we'll make a friend of you,  
Dear, distant, alien.

In the day I hide, am quiet.  
Moon above - I have no might!  
I rush on this lunar night  
To the shoulder of beloved.

I'll never ask me, 'Who's he?'  
All to know, your lips will say!  
Hugs are rude but in the day,  
In the day the fit is funny.

In the day, torn by a demon proud,  
With a smile on lips I lie.  
Night, though.. Darling, far away..  
Crescent stands above the wood!

Marina Ivanovna Tsvetaeva

# No Longer Now

No longer now the same god-given bounties  
Where now no longer the same waters glide.  
Then fly, and hasten, doves of Aphrodite,  
Through the great gates that sunset has swung wide.

And I on the chill sands shall lie, receding  
Into the dimness of unreckoned days . . .  
Like the shed skin the snake is coldly eyeing,  
My youth, outgrown, has shrunk under my gaze.

Marina Ivanovna Tsvetaeva

## Poems for Blok, 1

Your name is a—bird in my hand,  
a piece of ice on my tongue.  
The lips' quick opening.  
Your name—five letters.  
A ball caught in flight,  
a silver bell in my mouth.  
A stone thrown into a silent lake  
is—the sound of your name.  
The light click of hooves at night  
—your name.  
Your name at my temple  
—shrill click of a cocked gun.  
Your name—impossible—  
kiss on my eyes,  
the chill of closed eyelids.  
Your name—a kiss of snow.  
Blue gulp of icy spring water.  
With your name—sleep deepens.

Marina Ivanovna Tsvetaeva

## Poets (Excerpt)

3

What can I do, blind and outcast  
In a world where all are fathered and sighted,  
Where passions go over anathemas  
As if over embankments! Where a lament  
Is called - sniffles!

What can I do, by rib and Providence  
Singing! - Like a wire! Sunburn! Siberia!  
I travel my delusions - like a bridge!  
With their weightlessness  
In a world of weights.

What can I do, singer and firstborn,  
In a world where the blackest - is gray!  
Where inspiration is kept, as in a thermos!  
With this infinity  
In a finite world?!

Marina Ivanovna Tsvetaeva

# Prayer

Christ and the Lord! I thirst for marvel  
Now, here, as the day would start!  
The life is like a book to me,  
So let me die. Let me depart.

You're wise, and sternly 'Now be patient,  
Your time's not ripe' you will not say.  
Yourself you gave me - too much now!  
I thirst at once - for every way!

I want it all: with soul of gypsy  
To run to plunder with a song,  
To suffer for all near an organ,  
To run to war, an Amazon;

To divine stars in a black tower  
The kids through shadows to lead...  
That yesterday would be a legend,  
That each and every day be mad!

I love the cross, the silk, the helmet,  
The minute's trace of soul of mine..  
You gave me childhood - better than fiction  
Now let me die at seventeen!

Marina Ivanovna Tsvetaeva

# Terminal Silhouette

I know you not and in no way  
I want to lose starry illusions  
With such a face in worst confusion  
People are loyal to a ray.

All that the fate has marked for grave  
Have such closed-off face instead.  
You are a page that was not read  
And no, you will not be a slave.

A slave with such a face? Oh no!  
There is no error here by chance.  
Your slender figure and your glance  
Will be secret to many, I know.

A heavy bracelet of your hair  
Under the thrown-over scarf  
(You'd do with guitar or a harp)  
And your pale face, as pale as air.

I know you not. And possibly  
You're kind and moderate like all.  
Maybe! May these be ravings all!  
For only raving ones may be!

Perhaps the day is not so far  
When I will fathom what's unseemly...  
But this to err - it is so relieving!  
It is so easy yet to err!

Touching the scarf with a light hand,  
There where the whistles shrilly blow.  
This is the you that I will know  
Where you just like a riddle stand.

Marina Ivanovna Tsvetaeva

# The Demon In Me

The demon in me's not dead,  
He's living, and well.  
In the body as in a hold,  
In the self as in a cell.  
The world is but walls.  
The exit's the axe.  
("All the world's a stage,"  
The actor prates.)  
And that hobbling buffoon  
Is no joker;  
In the body as in glory,  
In the body as in a toga.  
May you live forever!  
Cherish your life,  
Only poets in bone  
Are as in a lie.  
No, my eloquent brothers,  
We'll not have much fun,  
In the body as with Father's  
Dressing-gown on.  
We deserve something better.  
We wilt in the warm.  
In the body as in a byre.  
In the self as in a cauldron.  
Marvels that perish  
We don't collect.  
In the body as in a marsh,  
In the body as in a crypt.  
In the body as in furthest  
Exile. It blights.  
In the body as in a secret,  
In the body as in the vice  
Of an iron mask.

Marina Ivanovna Tsvetaeva

# The Window

In the sweet, Atlantic  
Breathing of spring  
My curtain's like a butterfly,  
Huge, fluttering  
Like a Hindu widow  
To a pyre's golden blaze,  
Like a drowsy Naiad  
To past-window seas.

Marina Ivanovna Tsvetaeva

## To Asya

Evening noise in the burning sunset  
On twilight of winter day.  
The third call. Hurry, remember me,  
You that are going away!  
Emerald wave is awaiting you,  
Splash of an oar of blue,  
To live our life underground, difficult,  
Was not possible to you.  
Well then, ahead, that our murky struggle  
Into our ranks never calls,  
If the transparent wetness appeals to you  
Flight of the silver seagulls!  
Give my regards to the hot, the brilliant,  
Burning sun,  
Your question pose to all strong and bright -  
Answer will come!  
Evening noise in the burning sunset  
On twilight of winter day.  
The third call. Hurry, remember me,  
You that are going away!

Marina Ivanovna Tsvetaeva

# To Mother

In the old Strauss waltz for the first time  
We had listened to your quiet call,  
Since then all the living things are alien  
And the knocking of the clock consoles.

We, like you, are gladly greeting sunsets,  
And are drunk on nearness of the end.  
All, with which on better nights we're wealthy  
Is put in the hearts by your own hand.

Bowing to a child's dreams with no tire.  
(Only crescent looked in them indeed  
Without you)! You have led your kids past  
Bitter lifetime of the thoughts and deeds.

From the early age the sad one's close to us,  
Laughter bores and home we left behind..  
Our ship not in good times left the harbor  
And it sails by will of every wind!

Azure isle of childhood is paling,  
On the deck of ship we stand alone.  
It appears, oh mother, to your daughters  
You've left an inheritance of woe.

Marina Ivanovna Tsvetaeva

# To The Next One

Tender caresses of kind little sisters  
Are ready for you.  
With the birds' songs, O the charmed prince,  
We're waiting for you.  
Branch drunk with sun, you grew, visage of heaven  
Before my eyes.  
Like a girl tender, like a child quiet,  
All - surprise.  
They'll often say: 'These sisters are treacherous  
In each reply!'  
Cocky with daring ones, kids with a boy, timid  
With someone shy.  
We love, like you, melting clouds and birches  
And melted snow.  
We love the tales about grandmother's daughters,  
Little and slow!  
Pitiful is the wind, spring remembering,  
Gems in the skies..  
We wait for you, one that knows nothing of life,  
And has blue eyes!

Marina Ivanovna Tsvetaeva

# Tryst

In a world where all  
Are hunched and lathered  
I know only one  
Equal to me in strength.

In a world where we  
Seek so much,  
I know only one  
Equal to me in might.

In a world where everything  
Is mold and vines,  
I know: only  
You are equal in essence

To me.

Marina Ivanovna Tsvetaeva

# Whence Cometh Such Tender Rapture?

Whence cometh such tender rapture?  
Those curls--they are not the first ones  
I've smoothed, and I've already  
Known lips--that were darker than yours.

The stars have risen and faded,  
--Whence cometh such tender rapture?--  
And eyes have risen and faded  
In face of these eyes of mine

I'd never yet hearkened unto  
Such songs in the depths of darkness,  
--Whence cometh such tender rapture?--  
My head on the bard's own breast

Whence cometh such tender rapture?  
And what's to be done with it, artful  
Young vagabound, passing minstrel  
With lashes--to long to say.

Marina Ivanovna Tsvetaeva

# You Walk, And Look Like Me

You walk, and look like me,  
Your eyes directed down.  
I also used to lower mine!  
Hey you, passer by, stop!

Read-when you've gathered  
A bouquet of buttercups and poppies,  
That I was called Marina  
And how old I was.

Don't think that this is a grave,  
That I will appear, scary...  
I myself loved too much  
To laugh, when I shouldn't have!

And the blood would come to my face  
And my hair was curly...  
You passer by, I also was!  
You passer by, stop!

Break yourself off a wild stem  
And after it a berry,-  
No wild strawberry is larger or sweeter  
Than one from a graveyard.

Only don't stand gloomily,  
Dropping your head on your chest,  
Think about me easily,  
As easily then forget!

How the sun's ray shines upon you!  
You're all covered in golden dust...  
-Don't let it disturb you,  
My voice from underground.

Marina Ivanovna Tsvetaeva

# You Who Loved Me With The Falseness

You who loved me with the falseness  
Of truth - and the truth of lies.  
You who loved me-beyond  
Anything!-Over the edge!  
You who loved me beyond  
Time-Right hand, wave!  
You love me no more:  
The truth in five words.

Marina Ivanovna Tsvetaeva