

A SONG FOR THE MAN
N.I. Vaptsarov

We speak with a lady
 in a shady
 tradition:
"The man
 under present condition".
The lady however
 is stubborn,
 you know,
she argues and burst into tears,
she floods me
 with muddiest torrents of woe
and showers
 with curses
 my ears.
"Be kind..."
 I retort.
 "Wait, allow me again..."
But she shots
 with adverse reflection:
"O, please,
 don,t insist, I hate him, the man,
he does not deserve your protection.
I read once how
 somebody
 brutally slew
by axe
 his own
 innocent brother,
next washed off the blood
 and further anew
went home absolution to gather."
I trembled,
 perplexed
 and obsessed with sadness,
but I am not strong in the theory,
and tried

with insistence,
without vain madness,
to calm her with that simple query.

The story had happened
in Village of Forthet.

The father
had hidden
some dough.

The son had discovered it,
had taken by force it,
and killed the old man with a blow.

But after a month
of incredible strain

police
had found his trace,
he was caught,
was trailed
in chains,

and finally sentenced to death.
Returning to prison

this subject
was guarded
as criminal
almost insane,

but there
surprisingly met
some good-hearted
young people,
becoming
a man.

His pedigree,
frankly said,
to me is unknown,

I don,t know
if he is
a coward,

but there,
imprisoned and sentenced,
his own

ideal
in a song
he discovered.
And later he talked:
" How I was embarrassed!
The bread was
too far
from sufficient,
and after so long
being as animal
harassed,
the virtues were hardly efficient.

And you have to wait
as a bull
to be slaughtered,
your eyes full of horror
and bloody...

No doubt, the devil
of this world
is the author
but, surely,
it otherwise
should be."

He started then
singing his song
without fear,
sung slowly, quietly, calmly,
a life as a dream
before him
did appear,
and he got asleep well,
smiling.

Talk out of season
is heard in the prison;
steps of some people
who run;
door is wide open
as though by no reason;
officers;

guard
with a gun.
Somebody told him
severely
and sadly:
" Stand up!
It,s already time!"
Others observed him
tensely
and badly,
ready to further the crime.
He unmistakably saw that,
no doubt,
life was
for him
at an end,
got up enraged
as wild beast
just caught,
looking in vain for a friend.
But little
by little
the lethal
convulsions
receded.
The debt he must pay.
Too late is already
for any indulgence.
"Shall we
now be going?
O.K."
He left.
And they followed
closely
thereafter
but trembled
as having a cold.
A soldier, embarrassed, said: "Let it be faster,
the finish.
You, brother,

stay bold!"

A talk
out of reason
is heard out of season,
all over is hidden in dark.
They came downstairs
to the yard
of the prison
and gathered
in form
of an arc.
The man looked thirstily
towards Aurora
and her
heavenly
stellar
estate,
and thought of his
owned,
renowned,
ferociuos,
non-cautious bad fate.

"My life,
it is over.
I face execution
but world is still going ahead,
the future
will come
as a new institution,
the spring of the man is not dead."
He started
the song
of the man,s resurrection
(his eyes radiating and gay),
he smiled,
yes, he smiled
in the mood,
with affection,
as though
to welcome the day.

through an awkward
entanglement,
his song
still was trying
to press.
And here is starting
the end of the story.
You, reader,
what do you think? -
The poor lady
showed
a great deal of worry
in fainting
with anger
to sink:
"Preposterous!
Awful!
Today you are hinting
that you have been there,
I guess."
No horror at all.
The man had been singing...
And this is
beautiful!
No less!

(Translated from Bulgarian by Stefan K. Robev-1998)