

The Bridegroom

by Alexander Pushkin

For three days Natasha
The merchant's daughter,
Was missing. The third night,
She ran in, distraught.
Her father and mother
Plied her with questions.
She did not hear them,
She could hardly breathe.

Stricken with foreboding
They pleaded, got angry,
But still she was silent;
At last they gave up.
Natasha's cheeks regained
Their rosy colour,
And cheerfully again
She sat with her sisters.

Once at the shingle-gate
She sat with her friends
-And a swift troika
Flashed by before them;
A handsome young man
Stood driving the horses;
Snow and mud went flying,
Splashing the girls.

He gazed as he flew past,
And Natasha gazed.
He flew on. Natasha froze.
Headlong she ran home.
'It was he! It was he!'
She cried. 'I know it!'
I recognized him! Papa,
Mama, save me from him!'

Full of grief and fear,
They shake their heads,
sighing.
Her father says: 'My child,
Tell me everything.
If someone has harmed you,
Tell us ... even a hint.'
She weeps again and
Her lips remain sealed.

The next morning, the old
Matchmaking woman
Unexpectedly calls and
Sings the girl's praises;
Says to the father; 'You
Have the goods and I
A buyer for them:
A handsome young man.

'He bows to no one,
He lives like a lord
With no debts nor worries;
He's rich and he's generous,
Says he will give his bride,
On their wedding-day,
A fox-fur coat, a pearl,
Gold rings, brocaded
dresses.

'Yesterday, out driving,
He saw your Natasha;
Shall we shake hands
And get her to church?'
The woman starts to eat
A [pie, and talks in riddles,
While the poor girl
Does not know where to look.

'Agreed,' says her father;
'Go in happiness
To the altar, Natasha;
It's dull for you here;
A swallow should not spend
All its time singing,
It's time for you to build
A nest for your children.'

Natasha leaned against
The wall and tried
To speak – but found herself
Sobbing; she was shuddering
And laughing. The
matchmaker
Poured out a cup of water,
Gave her some to drink,

Splashed some in her face.

Her parents are distressed.
Then Natasha recovered,
And calmly she said:
'Your will be done. Call
My bridegroom to the feast,
Bake loaves for the whole
world,
Brew sweet mead and call
The law to the feast.'

'Of course, Natasha, angel!
You know we'd give our lives
To make you happy!'
They bake and they brew;
The worthy guests come,
The bride is led to the feast,
Her maids sing and weep;
Then horses and a sledge

With the groom – and all sit.
The glasses ring and clatter,
The toasting-cup is passed
From hand to hand in tumult,
The guests are drunk.

Bridegroom:
'Friends, why is my fair bride
Sad, why is she not
Feasting and serving?'

The bride answers the
groom:
'I will tell you why
As best I can. My soul
Knows no rest, day and night
I weep; an evil dream
Oppresses me.' Her father
Says: 'My dear child, tell us
What your dream is.'

'I dreamed,' she says, 'that I
Went into a forest,
It was late and dark;

The moon was faintly
Shining behind a cloud;
I strayed from the path;
Nothing stirred except
The tops of the pine-trees.

'And suddenly, as if
I was awake, I saw
A hut. I approach the hut
And knock at the door
-Silence. A prayer on my lips
I open the door and enter.
A candle burns. All
Is silver and gold.'

Bridegroom:
'What is bad about that?
It promises wealth.'

Bride:
'Wait, sir, I've not finished.
Silently I gazed
On the silver and gold,
The cloths, the rugs, the silks
From Novgorod, and I
Was lost in wonder.

'Then I heard a shout
And a clatter of hoofs ...
Someone has driven up
To the porch. Quickly
I slammed the door and hid
Behind the stove. Now
I hear many voices ...
Twelve young men come in,

'And with them is a girl,
Pure and beautiful.
They've taken no notice
Of the ikons, they sit
To the table without
Praying or taking off
Their hats. At the head,
The eldest brother,

At his right, the youngest;
At his left, the girl.
Shouts, laughs, drunken
clamour ...'

Bridegroom:
'That betokens merriment.'

Bride:
'Wait, sir, I've not finished.
The drunken din goes on
And grows louder still.
Only the girl is sad.

'She sits silent; neither
Eating nor drinking;
But sheds tears in plenty;
The eldest brother
Takes his knife and,
whistling,
Sharpens it; seizing her by
The hair he kills her
And cuts off her right hand.'

'Why,' says the groom, 'this
Is nonsense! Believe me,
My love, your dream is not
evil.'
She looks him in the eyes.
'And from whose hand
Does this ring come?'
The bride said. The whole
throng
Rose in the silence.

With a clatter the ring
Falls, and rolls along
The floor. The groom
blanches,
Trembles. Confusion ...
'Seize him!' the law
commands.
He's bound, judged, put to
death.
Natasha is famous!
Our song is at an end.