

Cossack lullaby

Spi mladyenets, moi prekrasný,
bayushki bayu,
tikho smotrit myesyats yasný
f kolýbyel tvayu.

Stanu skazyvat' ya skazki,
pyesenki spayu,
ty-zh dremlj, zakryvshi glazki,
bayushki bayu.

Sim uznayesh, budit vremya,
branoye zhityo,
smyelo vdyenish nogu f stremya
i vazmyosh ruzhyo.

Ya sedeltse boyevoye
sholkom razoshyu.
Spi, ditya mayo radnoye,
bayushki bayu.

Bogatyr ty budish s vidu
i kazak dushoi.
Pravazhat' titya ya vydu,
ty makhnyosh rukoi.

Skolko gorkikh slyoz ukradkoi
ya f tu notsh pralyu!
Spi, moi angel, tikho, sladko,
bayushki bayu.

Stanu ya toskoi tomit'sya,
byesutyeshno zhdai',
stanu tseliy dyen' molit'sya,
po notsham gadat'.

Stanu dumat', shto skutshayesh
ty f tshuzhom krayu.
Spi-zh, paka zabot nye znayesh,
bayushki bayu.

Dam tibye ya na darogu
obrazok svyatoi,
ty yevo, molyasya bogu,
stav pyered saboi.

Da, gotovyas v boi apasný,
pomni mat' svayu.

Sleep, good boy, my beautiful,
bayushki bayu,
quietly the moon is looking
into your cradle.

I will tell you fairy tales
and sing you little songs,
but you must slumber, with your little eyes closed,
bayushki bayu.

The time will come, then you will learn
the pugnacious life,
boldly you'll stem your foot into the stirrup
and take the gun.

The saddle-cloth for your battle horse
I will sew you from silk.
Sleep now, my dear little child,
bayushki bayu.

You will look like a hero
and be a cossack deep in your heart.
I will hurry to accompany you,
you will just wave your hand.

How many secrete bitter tears
will I shed that night!
Sleep, my angel, calmly, sweetly,
bayushki bayu.

I will die from longing,
I will wait inconsolably,
I will pray the whole day long,
and at night I'll tell fortunes.

I will think that you are in trouble
far away in a foreign land.
Sleep now, as long as you don't know sorrows,
bayushki bayu.

I will give you on your way
a small holy icon,
and when you pray to God, you'll
put it right in front of you.

When preparing yourself for the dangerous fight
please remember your mother.

Spi, mladyenets, moi prekrasný,
bayushki bayu.

Sleep, good boy, my beautiful,
bayushki bayu.

Words: Mikhail Lermontov, ca. 1837

Music: Russian folksong

Pronunciation:

a as in "bar", *e* as in "bed", *i* as in "bid", *o* as in "bore", *u* as in "blue"

y = as in "yellow" / *y* = dull *i*, as in "bill"

s = always voiceless, as in "son" / *z* = voiced, as in "zone"

sh = voiceless, as in "mesh" / *zh* = voiced, like the *s* in "measure"

kh = mostly rough, like the *ch* in Scotch "loch", but smooth when "e" or "i" follows

a, e, i, o, u, y = the underlined vowel signifies the stressed syllable of a word.

Transcription and analogous translation: Kai Kracht

Comments:

1. Mikhail Lermontov (1814-1841) is, together with Pushkin, the most popular romantic poet of Russia. In his poem "Caucasian Lullaby", which soon became a popular folksong under the name of "Cossack Lullaby" and is sung in various versions now, he movingly composes the dear affection and the alarming presentiments of the mother - like Nikolai Gogol had described them in narrative proze in his tale "Taras Bulba" which had been published just before.

2. The wonderful, simple melody which the people found to sing his poem divides Lermontov's verses into two halves. So, to understand the original structure of his poem, you have to reunite every two verses of the song to one poetical verse: Then each verse ends with the line "bayushki bayu".

3. "bayushki bayu" is what Russian mothers sing when they rock their babies to sleep - just a lovely soft sound, no words that could be translated. When the children get older this is abbreviated to "bai bai!" - "Sleep well!"

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