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Sex & Submission

20 Erotic Stories

Cathryn Cooper

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Please note that this extract contains scenes of an adult nature

Extract

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A Master And A Slave
by Mark Steinhardt

When I was in my mid teens I felt a sudden urge to do some reading and give myself an education. For want of a personal guide, I took the advice of the wise people at Penguin. If the book had a black spine (classics) or a grey spine (modern classics) then it must at least be worthy of my consideration. Orange spines were risky. They might be second-rate, frivolous even, and I wanted *serious* reading.

After Kafka, Flaubert and Plato I felt obliged to wade into the Russians. I don't think I ever finished one and after all these years I only remember how long it took carriages to get our aristocratic hero from the gates of his estate to the front door of the house. But I do remember reading an introductory essay on Ivan Turgenev that told me that at fifteen (my age) a kitchen maid was sent by his mother to his room to initiate him in the ways of love. I found this a transfixing thought. I was profoundly envious back then; now I am merely delighted by the imaginative possibilities, and no amount of hard-headed knowledge about the plight of the Russian poor and the abuse of power can spoil it.

As Turgenev remembered it decades later, the girl came up behind him and took handfuls of his hair and said 'Come.' That's all. Now, the future novelist was a tall lad, later to run to fat and be known as the 'gentle barbarian', so we may suppose he was seated, reading a slim volume of poetry, soft-bound in chamois leather, perhaps in the conservatory after dinner before the long summer twilight. He was engrossed in the romantic visions of Pushkin and did not hear Anna slip into the room.

She pulls back his head by his clean, black hair and they look at each other upside down. He must be very confused. He has noticed Anna and been disturbed by her but she has never touched him and no one, least of all a servant, has ever stood over him in this way. But he senses something new and closes his book and remains as she has placed him, looking up into her strange inverted eyes, the cane chair creaking and the low reddening light blushing her throat. A coil of blond hair escapes from her cap and bounces gently. Anna holds this moment of reversed roles for as long as she dare, looking into his soft, smooth face, the healthy teeth in the half-opened mouth, then down to the large, clean, unbroken hands on the book.

She speaks her single word. It is enough. He is used to unexplained orders from his mother and supposes that by some roundabout means this is one of them. When the girl lets fall his hair and leaves the room, he follows.

It is 1833 and Anna is a serf. She may be sold, flogged, separated from her family, branded or banished to Siberia. Without permission of her masters she may not leave the estate, rent land, borrow money, earn wages, own property or marry. She has not chosen to work in the kitchen of the great house but she considers herself fortunate. While Ivan's mother is a fearsome, half-mad sadist who beats her children and servants daily for the most trivial offences and often for the pleasure of it, Anna enjoys the constant proximity of food, a clean, dry room and existence on the periphery of gracious living. And better the exhausting heat of the ovens than the annual struggle to endure the interminable Russian winter down in the village.

Anna leads on upstairs, very slowly, trying to glide within her skirts, making a soft rustling sound in the quiet of the evening, bathing as much in the pleasure of being excused her normal duties as in the prospect of her new and special role. Her hand on

the balustrade is white from baking, where normally by now it would be red from pot-scrubbing.

It may be an order and she may have no choice, but this is a private matter and she glances along the landing before slipping into Ivan's room and closing the door. Though she has seen it many times when helping the chambermaids, on this occasion it is utterly new. Where she was an outsider, hurrying a task, fearful of displeasing her mistress, now she belongs, is here for a purpose of her own, to share this room, command this room, even if only for a while. She looks at the brass bed with its rich mountain of white linen and smiles. That evil bitch; what can she know of this?

Ivan follows Anna into his room and for him too it is quite changed. What was merely a place of retreat from the capricious tyranny of his mother is now alive with the intensity of…something. He is not sure what. Oh, the mechanics, yes – gentleman or serf, they are all country people – but something more than that and he doesn't want to know, not articulate it, pin it down with words in his usual way. He senses that he should say nothing, think nothing; just experience.

Anna turns to him, steps close and looks up and their eyes meet again, but this time the right way round. They are both startled to bridge so suddenly the chasm of their social distance. She links her hands behind his neck and draws him down. It is her first kiss without revulsion, without holding her breath against the stench of an old man's rotten mouth. For Ivan it is simply his first kiss and the shock unbalances him. He reaches for the cool brass rail of his bed as Anna steps back.

'Undress,' she says, softly, the word stretched and savoured, but unmistakably an order. It thrills her to give it. This once only, she will have the knowledge and the power. She has observed her young master at the miracles of writing and reading, and so comfortable in the alien melodies of French and felt ashamed of her ignorance, but not here and not now.

Ivan struggles out of his boots, still holding on to the bed. He shrugs his jacket to the floor and pushes his braces off his shoulders. He treads down his breeches and stands for a moment before Anna in a long, loose shirt. It is the primitive, collarless, square-cut undergarment everyone wears, and Anna sees before her a youth like those who might be within her reach – were she but given the choice. She smiles and nods to give him the confidence and Ivan takes the neck of the shirt and pulls it over his head.

Anna is the same age as Ivan but had to give up her virginity a year ago. She is betrothed to a man from the village, a widower friend of her father. He has demanded and been granted the right to prove his virility and the girl's fertility before marrying her, so twice a week the old goat opens his breeches and forces her legs apart on a heap of rags on top of the stove in his hut. The encounters are mercifully brief but Anna never feels free from the stench of him or from his ugly, poxy face above her in her dreams. Her father considers the village postman a good catch for his daughter and actively sought permission for the union from Old Turgenev, who himself likes to catch Anna unawares at her duties and grab her breasts to bruising. 'You like a bit of that, don't you, Anna?' he laughs, and she wonders how he could possibly imagine that she would. He gropes under her skirts and there is nothing she can do. If she complains, the Mistress will certainly blame her and she will be beaten and dismissed.

But when this boy before her lifts the shirt up and over his head and drops it to the floor, it is her turn to be unbalanced by the glory of him, standing there, clean and smooth and perfect, and his root standing out in front, tall and strong. That dried-up bitch. She doesn't know how much I want this. Probably thinks it's a punishment. Thinks we're all like her, all skinny and burnt out with rage.

‘Go to bed,’ she whispers. Before they even touch, the heat in her belly makes sense of the love stories told by her bedfellows as they sit up round the sewing basket in those precious moments before sleep or wash each other’s hair in gatherings from the meadows.

Ivan flings back the great bag of goose feathers and throws himself into the centre of the mattress, turning in the air like a fish. Anna glimpses yellow and red marks on his back from old and fresh beatings. How that woman hates beauty. He falls back against the heap of pillows with a soft thud, sleek and dark in the failing light.

Anna lights a candle, closes the curtains and locks the door. Returning to the bed, she says, ‘Watch very carefully, and learn.’

Ivan puts his hands behind his head and raises one knee. His root sways heavily and his onions slip plump and shining between his thighs. The horsehair mattress mutters as he settles.

As instructed, Ivan studies each move of Anna’s undressing with the greatest care. She is wearing most of what she possesses. There are four skirts in all, each delayed by knotted tapes which must be swung to the front in a whisper of promise. He watches her soft, stubby fingers tease open the tie, fold the cloth and drop it over the bed-rail with a fluttering of the candle. After the fourth, there is only the hem of her shirt to mid-thigh, and Anna observes his root leap and she fears to spoil the moment.

‘Be still,’ she says, ‘don’t hold yourself tight.’

Ivan breathes deep and slow as Anna lifts each knee in turn towards his face and reaches to remove a canvas slipper. He peers into the dark between her legs but the fall of the shirt and the position of the candle allow him no more than possibility.

Anna straightens up and looks to the lacing of her tight-fitting bodice. Her bosom swells above it as she inhales. How full I am, like a tree in blossom. In a few years it will have passed, but this is my time and I must have it.

When she draws the lace from its rings, the restraint falls away and her body can relax into its natural shape inside the shirt. Unlike Ivan’s, hers is slit to the waist and closed with little bows of red ribbon. The area usually hidden by the bodice is decorated with patterns in coloured thread; the secret creativity of the servant-girls’ bed in the attic. No one else has seen it before. It is more private than her body. Almost as private is her hair. She pulls off her cap and the hidden treasure spills to her shoulders, dark gold in the candle-light.

Ivan watches Anna untie each bow in turn and Anna watches in case his cream should burst out and pool in his birth-scar. She knows that she might fall for a child with that cream and knows that she would be sent away and married off quickly – probably to someone lower than the postman. But a serf, particularly a girl, does not live by future hopes, but by whatever she has now. And what she has is right here. With or without orders she would not be elsewhere and is prepared to take her chance.

The last bow is undone and Anna pauses to observe the beautiful lines up the side of the boy’s chest and upraised arms, framing his head. Now she draws the shirt up and away and Ivan sees how her breasts bob solidly when she lowers her arms, how her ample flesh folds above her hips, how her belly is as rounded as a drunken puppy’s, how her face is as smooth and beautiful as a peach and how she smiles as she raises one knee and places it beside his hip and lifts the other up and over him. She leans forward to kiss him full and deep and Ivan takes a heavy breast in each hand and breathes the camomile in her hair. Anna pulls away from his mouth and sits up and lowers all her weight onto his root, so that it lies between her lilies and she slides on her juice, slowly back and forth.

She cannot wait, and nor can he. She raises herself and takes his root with both hands and guides it to the place. Ivan is holding the folds at her waist as she sinks onto him and she feels him burst into her immediately. She senses some similar explosion in her own body, just out of reach.

'That's just a beginning. There is much more.'

Ivan is unable to reply.

Anna runs her hands over his chest, keeping him inside. He is magnificent, and so is she, and what they have done feels like everything she needs. Ivan's hands on her back find her own recent wounds and she winces. That scrawny bitch. I wish she was watching. I'd love to show her what she's never had. Make her cry.

Anna lifts herself a little and Ivan's root falls wetly and heavily out of her. She slips to the side of him and places her head in the hollow of his shoulder. He begins to explore the sumptuous richness of her, from her hair to her throat to her breasts to…ah yes. Oh yes, how quickly he learns, this boy. She opens herself, arms and legs and mouth, and they roll in the crisp linen and she feels that fire rising again; a little nearer this time. She is full of rude ideas that excite and amaze her. She darts down and gives the end of his root a quick lick. It leaps to readiness and she throws herself back with a laugh which turns to a gasp as he enters her. As she reaches for that burning and feels it coming, coming, she has time to relish her triumph.

I will make him love me and she will send him away to school in the city and he will hate her for the rest of her life.

Later, as the evening cools, they pull up the goose-feather bag and stare into each other's eyes in the last of the candle. They have spoken very little. Language can only divide them. When Ivan falls asleep with his arms around her, Anna peers through half-closed eyes at the candle-stars on the brass rails and comes to a certainty.

She will fight her marriage, she will find herself a young man. She will shame her father and Old Turgenev with her youth and if they take no notice, which is very likely, she will *still* find herself a young man. She cannot live without this pleasure and this beauty. When all the rest of her life will be so hard, she must have this, and later the memory of this, to bear it.