

My sister—life and today in a flood
Threw sheets of rain over everything,
But people with watch chains and archèd eyebrows
Politely sting, like snakes in the oats.

The adults have their reasons for this.
But surely, surely your reasons are not serious.
That when it rains the eyes and the lawns are purple
And the horizon smells of damp jasmine.

That in May, when you sit in the train
Reading the Kamishinsky schedule,
Even though you have read it before
It is grander than the scripture.

That at sunset, the farmer girls are barely lit
Crowding the platform,
I hear that this is not my station
And the sun, setting, consoles me.

After three warnings, the whistle embarks,
Full of apologies: I am sorry, not here.
The burning night slips beneath the curtain
The steppe falls down its ladder to the stars.

Blinking, winking, but they sleep somewhere sweetly,
And my beloved sleeps like a fata-morgana
At the hour, when the heart, clattering faster,
Splashes the steppe from the doors of the train.

Boris Pasternak
(translated by Ruth Dubin)

* "My sister—life . . ." is the title poem of Pasternak's 1917 collection, *My Sister—Life*.