

About Pushkin's Belkin Tale

The Postmaster – *also known as The Stationmaster*

Learning Russian can be quite challenging for the English speaker. Postmaster was quite a challenge to read in Russian, for I have only intermediate proficiency in Russian. I offer a brief synopsis of the story with some commentary.

The story took place in the early 1800's. It was a totally different way of life from what I know and from a country that I lack knowledge of. The term stationmaster as used in the story is unfamiliar to me. Stationmaster profession is obsolete. The dictionary defines it as principle supervisor of a railway station. Rail stations did not come to be until the late 19th century. In Pushkin's story – more like a emulation of Belkin, this stationmaster is a low ranked civil servant in charge of changing horses and arranging accommodations for travelers on long routes. The story starts with narrative, debunking the stationmaster profession. The story chronicles the life of petty stationmaster that not even a general would thank. The Stationmaster tells a story to the narrator about how he lost his daughter to Captain Minsky named Dunya. The Stationmaster gave his permission to allow Dunya to go with Minsky. But Dunya was kidnapped by him; she was made his wife and she lived lavishly with him. The Stationmaster never hears from Dunya again. He tries to track her down but is not successful. He goes on his way and drinks heavily, until he dies. The narrator comes back another time to learn about the Stationmaster's fate, wondering if it was worthwhile.

Reading this story made me empathic to the plight of this poor stationmaster and his daughter. He lived a hard life and suffered from depression. I think trauma like this makes people drink. The poor Russian people suffer quite a bit from the hard life. They have a reputation for heavy drinking. I hope things will get better so there can be happy stories, where they can live a better life.

1800-

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