DOCTOR ZHIVAGO

BORIS PASTERNAK

Collins English Library

Collins English Library

Series editors: K R Cripwell and Lewis Jones

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Collins English Library Level 6

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BORIS PASTERNAK

Abridged and simplified by Lewis Jones

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Main characters

Yury (Yura) Zhivago	
Uncle Kolya	
Misha Gordon	(Yury's friend)
Madame Guishar	
Lara	her daughter
Komarovsky	(a lawyer)
Pasha Antipov	
Tonya (Gromeko)	
Galiullin	(a soldier)
Yevgraf	(Yury's half-brother)
Vassya	(a forced labourer)
Samdevyatov	(a friend in Yuryatin)
Mikulitsin	(manager of the Varykino estate)
Liberius Mikulitsin	(a partisan leader)
(Marina)	(Yury's third wife)

Part One

Chapter One

The five o'clock express

On they went, singing, and whenever they stopped, the sound of their feet and the horses and the wind seemed to carry on their singing.

"Who's being buried?"

"Zhivago's wife."

"May she rest in peace. It's a fine funeral."

The last moments flashed past, irrecoverable. Lumps of earth drummed on the wooden lid like rain as the grave was filled hurriedly by four spades.

A heap of soil grew up on it, and a ten-year-old boy climbed on top. He raised his head and stretched his neck. Then he covered his face with his hands and burst into sobs. The wind whipped his hands and face with cold rain.

A man in black came forward. This was Uncle Kolya, the dead woman's brother. Uncle Kolya went up to the boy and led him out of the graveyard.

2

The boy, Yura, did not know that his father had abandoned them long ago, and spent his time drinking and womanising in Siberia and abroad. Nor did he know that his father had blown the family millions to the four winds. Yura was always told that his father was away on business.

He could remember a time when a variety of objects were still known by the name he bore. There were Zhivago factories, a Zhivago bank, Zhivago buildings, even a Zhivago cake.

Suddenly it all disappeared. They became poor.

3

One day in summer 1903, two months after his mother's death, Yura was driving across the fields in a two-horse open carriage with his Uncle Kolya. The river blazed in the sun, hurting the eyes. It bent and unbent like sheet metal.

"Look, Yura, that's the express from Syzran," said Uncle Kolya. "It comes through here a few minutes after five."

Far out on the plain, crossing it from right to left, came a neat little yellow and blue train, made tiny by the distance. Suddenly they saw

that it had stopped. Little white clouds of steam hurried over the engine, and a moment later they heard its alarmed metal cry.

"That's strange," said Uncle Kolya. "Something's wrong. It has no business to stop in the middle of the fields out there. Something must have happened."

4

In a second-class carriage of the train which had stopped across the river sat Misha Gordon, who was travelling with his father, a lawyer. Misha was a boy of eleven with a thoughtful face and big dark eyes. Misha and his father had been travelling for three days. Russia, with its fields and villages and towns burnt by the sun, had flown past them in hot clouds of dust.

And then that madman had thrown himself head first through the open door out of the express. Now the train had been stuck for ages. The body of the dead man lay on the grass by the side of the bank. The dry blood on his forehead did not look like his blood, but like something apart from him – a mudstain or a wet leaf.

Knots of constantly changing onlookers and sympathisers surrounded him, while his travelling companion stood over him with an expressionless face – a thick-set lawyer with a superior manner, like a well-bred animal in a

sweaty shirt. He was dying of heat and fanning himself with his hat.

In answer to all questions he said in annoyance, without turning round, "He drank himself silly. What can you expect? A typical result of too much drink."

Misha had been deeply shaken by the event, and had at first cried with shock and pity. In the course of the long journey, the man had talked for hours with Misha's father. He had asked endless questions about fine points of law. Each time this nervous wreck of a man had calmed down, his travelling companion had come from their first-class carriage to find him, and dragged him off for a drink. This companion was the same thick-set, rude, clean-shaven and smartly-dressed lawyer who now stood over the body.

Misha's father told him that the dead man was a well-known millionaire called Zhivago, a good-natured waster, by then half out of his mind.

A doctor and two policemen arrived, questions were asked and notes were taken. Then the policemen dragged the corpse up the bank, and a woman started crying.

The passengers went back to their seats, the guard blew his whistle, and the train moved on.

Chapter Two

Ladykiller

The war with Japan was not yet finished, and waves of revolution were rolling across Russia, each greater than the last.

It was at this time that Madame Guishar, a widow, arrived in Moscow from the Urals with her two children. She bought a small dress-making business in one of the poorer districts. She did this on the advice of Komarovsky, a lawyer who had been a friend of her husband's. Komarovsky was a cold-blooded businessman who persuaded her to send her daughter to the school of his choice.

Mme Guishar was a well-built, fair-haired woman of about thirty-five. She was a dreadful coward and was terrified of men. Because of this, out of plain nervousness and confusion, she went from the arms of one lover to those of another.

Mme Guishar lived in a small three-roomed flat next to the workshop. In this workshop the sewing-machines spun endlessly under the tired hands of the women. You had to raise your voice to make yourself heard over the constant

noise.

Komarovsky often came with his ugly little dog to see Mme Guishar. As he walked through the workshop on the way to the flat, the girls murmured, "Here comes his lordship", "Madame's heart-ache", "The old goat", "Lady-killer".

2

"Mama is his – what's the word?....'He's Mama's .... well.... lover.... Then why does he look at *me* like that? I'm her daughter after all."

Lara was only a little over sixteen, but her figure was completely formed. People thought she was eighteen or more. She was very good-looking, with grey eyes and fair hair, and her movements had an easy charm.

It was a Sunday in the middle of July, and Lara lay on her back in bed, thinking. She was remembering a party given by some friends of Komarovsky's. He had invited Mama, but Mama was not feeling well.

Mama had said, "Take Lara. You're always telling me to look after her. Well, now *you* look after her."

And look after her he did – that was a joke!

"Good heavens, Lara, what an idea! I just wanted to show you my flat – as we're so near."

It was all the dancing that had started it. What clever hands he had, what assurance as he gripped

her by the waist! And she could never have dreamed there could be so much boldness in anyone's lips when they pressed for such a long time against her own.

She must stop all this nonsense. She must stop thinking about dancing.

3

Pasha Antipov was a clean, tidy boy with regular features and red hair. He had a great sense of humour, and kept everyone in constant laughter by his clever imitations.

On October 17 there was a big revolutionary demonstration: there was to be a march from one end of Moscow to the other. Pasha's landlady had joined the demonstrations, and Pasha, gay and friendly as ever, went with her.

Down the street people came pouring in a flood – faces, faces, faces, winter coats and sheepskin hats, men and women students, old men, children, workers in uniform, girls and schoolboys.

For some time they sang revolutionary songs. It started to snow and the street was white. When the troops charged them on horseback, the marchers at the back at first thought nothing about it. A swelling noise rolled back to them like great crowds shouting, "Hurrah!"

Almost at the same moment there appeared the heads of riders and their horses and swinging

swords. The killing began.

A few minutes later the street was practically empty. The late sun pushed a finger round a corner and picked out everything red in the street – the soldiers' caps, a red flag on the ground, and the red spots and threads of blood on the snow.

Almost at the horses' feet, Pasha's landlady was screaming "Pasha! Pasha!" but he had disappeared suddenly in the confusion. A blow from a soldier's whip fell across her back, and she swore and screamed insults.

Then she saw the boy at the other side of the street. Pasha, too frightened to make a sound, rushed to the old woman. She complained all the way home.

"Dirty murderers! The people are happy to get their freedom, but these damned killers can't stand it. What do they want, the fools? They don't know themselves. They only want to spoil everything."

4

Uncle Kolya saw the running demonstrators from his window. He looked to see if Yura was among them, but none of his friends seemed to be there.

Uncle Kolya had recently returned from St Petersburg. He had no flat in Moscow, so he was staying with some distant relatives of his.

He had left Yura in Moscow with the professional family of the Gromekos. Their daughter Tonya was Yura's age, and Yura's school-friend Misha Gordon spent some of his time with them. Yes, thought Uncle Kolya, the atmosphere at the Gromekos is entirely suitable.

He turned away from the window.

5

Tap-tap-tap went the water drops on the metal of the drainpipes, as if it was spring. The snow was melting.

Lara walked all the way home as if in a dream, and only realised what had happened to her when she reached home. Everyone was asleep. If Mama heard of it, she would kill her, and then she would kill herself.

How could it possibly have happened? Now she was – what was it called? – a fallen woman. But tomorrow she would go to school and sit side by side with those other girls who were like babies compared with her.

Outside the window, the water drops continued to murmur. Lara sat with bent head and shaking shoulders, sobbing..

6

He kept opening and shutting drawers, turning things out all over the carpet, not realising what he needed. What he needed desperately was Lara, and there was no possible chance of seeing her that Sunday. He walked back and forwards in the room like a caged animal.

"Lara," he whispered, shutting his eyes. He had a vision of her head resting on his arm. She was asleep, unconscious that he watched her sleeplessly for hours on end.

Her hair was scattered on the pillow, and its beauty stung his eyes like smoke, and ate into his heart. Why couldn't he get her out of his mind? He must not give in to this compulsion.

His dog lifted its head and stared up at him. It hated the girl, showed its teeth at her and tore her stockings. It was jealous.

Komarovsky struck the dog with his stick and kicked it.

Days and weeks went by.

7

It was the time of the rising in the Presnaya district of Moscow. The Guishars' house was in the rebel area, and the next-door yard was used