

17. Emmanuil Kazakevitch.

No. 34. The Korean Novella

On my straw mat
I lie at ease, with my sturdy limbs,
and you sit near me,
saying nothing and playing your guitar.
Beyond trusty little windows,
the reddish sun is dying.

Somehow everything is so bluish—
there's a bright lump in my heart.
You are a Korean girl
and I am silent, like Buddha.
It's a wonderment to me
that you can't speak Yiddish.

Your singing has the flavor of Asia,
often with the blessing of Jewish candles,
often with age-old gray stones
carved with little figures.
"Good morning, pretty girl—
I don't understand what you are saying."

Your hair like crow's feathers,
your thousand-voiced guitar,
your lips like swan's hearts,
your eyes like bits of diamond--
beyond the windows
lie the dark Amur mountains.

The sun is pouring its bright shine
onto my straw mat
like a beautiful, tender
Korean novella—
so peacefully, without complaints,
the way you give your lips.

Tomorrow you'll go to your school
to teach the youngest children.
I'll help fulfill the plans
throughout the broad land,
and the Korean novella
unfolds in the rapidly passing days.

The sunlight on my straw mat

gets paler and paler,
and the sun, terribly tired,
drowns in the waters of the Amur.

(Translation by Barnett Zumoff.)