



Hadji Murat (Vintage Classics)

By Leo Tolstoy

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Tolstoy's final work—a gripping novella about the struggle between the Muslim Chechens and their inept occupiers—is a powerful moral fable for our time.

Inspired by a historical figure Tolstoy heard about while serving in the Caucasus, this story brings to life the famed warrior Hadji Murat, a Chechen rebel who has fought fiercely and courageously against the Russian empire. After a feud with his commander he defects to the Russians, only to find that he is now trusted by neither side. He is first welcomed but then imprisoned by the Russians under suspicion of being a spy, and when he hears news of his wife and son held captive by the Chechens, Murat risks all to try to save his family. In the award-winning Pevear and Volokhonsky translation, *Hadji Murat* is a thrilling and provocative portrait of a tragic figure that has lost none of its relevance.

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Editorial Review

Review

"*Hadji Murat* is my personal touchstone for the sublime of prose fiction, to me the best story in the world."
—Harold Bloom

"Excellent. . . . The duo has managed to convey the rather simple elegance of Tolstoy's prose." —*The New Criterion*

"Pevear and Volokhonsky's new version is . . . flexible individuated, immediate." —*The Nation*

"Well translated. As a lover of Tolstoy's work, one couldn't ask for more, and I can't recommend it highly enough." —André Alexis, *The Globe and Mail* (Toronto)

About the Author

Count Leo Tolstoy (1828–1910) was born in central Russia. After serving in the Crimean War, he retired to his estate and devoted himself to writing, farming, and raising his large family. His novels and outspoken social polemics brought him world fame.

Richard Pevear has published translations of Alain, Yves Bonnefoy, Alberto Savinio, Pavel Florensky, and Henri Volokhonsky, as well as two books of poetry. He has received fellowships or grants for translation from the National Endowment for the Arts, the Ingram Merrill Foundation, the Guggenheim Foundation, the National Endowment for the Humanities, and the French Ministry of Culture. **Larissa Volokhonsky** was born in Leningrad. She has translated works by the prominent Orthodox theologians Alexander Schmemmann and John Meyendorff into Russian.

Together, Pevear and Volokhonsky have translated *Dead Souls* and *The Collected Tales* by Nikolai Gogol, *The Complete Short Novels of Chekhov*, and *The Brothers Karamazov*, *Crime and Punishment*, *Notes from Underground*, *Demons*, *The Idiot*, and *The Adolescent* by Fyodor Dostoevsky. They were twice awarded the PEN Book-of-the-Month Club Translation Prize (for their version of Dostoevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov* and for Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina*), and their translation of Dostoevsky's *Demons* was one of three nominees for the same prize. They are married and live in France.

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Hadji Murat

I was returning home through the fields. It was the very middle of summer. The meadows had been mowed, and they were just about to reap the rye.

There is a delightful assortment of flowers at that time of year: red, white, pink, fragrant, fluffy clover; impudent marguerites; milk-white "love-me-love-me-nots" with bright yellow centers and a fusty, spicy stink; yellow wild rape with its honey smell; tall-standing, tulip-shaped campanulas, lilac and white; creeping vetch; neat scabious, yellow, red, pink, and lilac; plantain with its faintly pink down and faintly perceptible, pleasant smell; cornflowers, bright blue in the sun and in youth, and pale blue and reddish in the evening and when old; and the tender, almond-scented, instantly wilting flowers of the bindweed.

I had gathered a big bouquet of various flowers and was walking home, when I noticed in a ditch, in full

bloom, a wonderful crimson thistle of the kind which is known among us as a “Tartar” and is carefully mowed around, and, when accidentally mowed down, is removed from the hay by the mowers, so that it will not prick their hands. I took it into my head to pick this thistle and put it in the center of the bouquet. I got down into the ditch and, having chased away a hairy bumblebee that had stuck itself into the center of the flower and sweetly and lazily fallen asleep there, I set about picking the flower. But it was very difficult: not only was the stem prickly on all sides, even through the handkerchief I had wrapped around my hand, but it was so terribly tough that I struggled with it for some five minutes, tearing the fibers one by one. When I finally tore off the flower, the stem was all ragged, and the flower no longer seemed so fresh and beautiful. Besides, in its coarseness and gaudiness it did not fit in with the delicate flowers of the bouquet. I was sorry that I had vainly destroyed and thrown away a flower that had been beautiful in its place. “But what energy and life force,” I thought, remembering the effort it had cost me to tear off the flower. “How staunchly it defended itself, and how dearly it sold its life.”

The way home went across a fallow, just-plowed field of black earth. I walked up a gentle slope along a dusty, black-earth road. The plowed field was a landowner’s, a very large one, so that to both sides of the road and up the hill ahead nothing could be seen except the black, evenly furrowed, not yet scarified soil. The plowing had been well done; nowhere on the field was there a single plant or blade of grass to be seen—it was all black. “What a destructive, cruel being man is, how many living beings and plants he annihilates to maintain his own life,” I thought, involuntarily looking for something alive amidst this dead, black field. Ahead of me, to the right of the road, I spied a little bush. When I came closer, I recognized in this bush that same “Tartar” whose flower I had vainly picked and thrown away.

The “Tartar” bush consisted of three shoots. One had been broken off, and the remainder of the branch stuck out like a cut-off arm. On each of the other two there was a flower. These flowers had once been red, but now they were black. One stem was broken and half of it hung down, with the dirty flower at the end; the other, though all covered with black dirt, still stuck up. It was clear that the whole bush had been run over by a wheel, and afterwards had straightened up and therefore stood tilted, but stood all the same. As if a piece of its flesh had been ripped away, its guts turned inside out, an arm torn off, an eye blinded. But it still stands and does not surrender to man, who has annihilated all its brothers around it.

“What energy!” I thought. “Man has conquered everything, destroyed millions of plants, but this one still does not surrender.”

And I remembered an old story from the Caucasus, part of which I saw, part of which I heard from witnesses, and part of which I imagined to myself. The story, as it shaped itself in my memory and imagination, goes like this.

I

It was the end of 1851.

On a cold November evening Hadji Murat rode into the hostile Chechen aoul of Makhket, filled with the fragrant smoke of kizyak.*

The strained chanting of the muezzin had just died down, and in the clear mountain air, saturated with the smell of kizyak smoke, one could hear distinctly, through the lowing of cows and the bleating of sheep dispersing among the saklyas, stuck tightly together like a honeycomb, the guttural sounds of arguing male voices and women’s and children’s voices coming from the spring below.

This Hadji Murat was Shamil's [1] naib, famous for his exploits, who never rode out otherwise than with his guidon and an escort of dozens of murids caracolng around him. Now, wrapped in a bashlyk and a burka, from under which a rifle stuck out, he rode with one murid, trying to be as little noticed as possible, warily peering with his quick, black eyes into the faces of the villagers he met on the way.

Coming to the center of the aoul, Hadji Murat did not ride along the street that led to the square, but turned to the left, into a narrow lane. Riding up to the second saklya in the lane, dug into the hillside, he stopped and looked around. There was no one on the porch in front of the saklya, but on the roof, behind the freshly whitewashed clay chimney, a man lay covered with a sheepskin coat. Hadji Murat touched the man lying on the roof lightly with the handle of his whip and clucked his tongue. An old man rose from under the sheepskin coat, in a nightcap and a shiny, tattered beshmet. The old man's lashless eyes were red and moist, and he blinked in order to unstick them. Hadji Murat spoke the usual "*Salaam aleikum*," and uncovered his face.

"*Aleikum salaam*," said the old man, smiling with his toothless mouth, recognizing Hadji Murat, and, getting up on his skinny legs, he started putting his feet into the wooden-heeled shoes that stood by the chimney. Once shod, he unhurriedly put his arms into the sleeves of the wrinkled, raw sheepskin coat and climbed backwards down the ladder that leaned against the roof. While dressing and climbing down, the old man kept shaking his head on its thin, wrinkled, sunburned neck and constantly munched his toothless gums. Having reached the ground, he hospitably took hold of the bridle and right stirrup of Hadji Murat's horse. But Hadji Murat's nimble, strong murid quickly got off his horse and, moving the old man aside, replaced him.

Hadji Murat got off his horse and, limping slightly, went up to the porch. He was met by a boy of about fifteen, who quickly came out of the door and fixed his shining eyes, black as ripe currants, on the arrivals.

"Run to the mosque, call your father," the old man ordered him, and, going ahead of Hadji Murat, he opened for him the light, creaking door of the saklya. As Hadji Murat went in, a slight, thin, middle-aged woman in a red beshmet over a yellow shirt and blue sharovary came from an inner door carrying pillows.

"Your coming bodes good fortune," she said and, bending double, she began to arrange the pillows by the front wall for the guest to sit on.

"May your sons live long," replied Hadji Murat, taking off his burka, rifle, and saber, and handing them to the old man.

The old man carefully hung the rifle and saber on nails next to the hung-up weapons of the master, between two large basins shining on the smoothly plastered and clean whitewashed wall.

Hadji Murat, straightening the pistol at his back, went to the pillows the woman had laid out and, wrapping the skirts of his cherkeska around him, sat down. The old man sat down on his bare heels facing him and, closing his eyes, raised his hands palms up. Hadji Murat did the same. Then the two of them, having recited a prayer, stroked their faces with their hands, bringing them together at the tip of the beard.

"*Ne khabar?*" Hadji Murat asked the old man—that is, "Any news?"

"*Khabar yok*"—"No news," the old man replied, looking not at the face but at the chest of Hadji Murat with his red, lifeless eyes. "I live at the apiary, I've just come today to see my son. He knows."

Hadji Murat understood that the old man did not want to tell what he knew and what Hadji Murat wanted to know, and nodding his head slightly, he asked nothing more.

“There’s no good news,” the old man began. “The only news is that the hares keep discussing how to drive away the eagles. And the eagles keep rending first one, then another. Last week the Russian dogs burned up the hay in Michitsky—tear their faces!” the old man croaked spitefully.

Hadji Murat’s murid came in and, stepping softly over the earthen floor with the big strides of his strong legs, he took off his burka, rifle, and saber, as Hadji Murat had done, and hung them on the same nails on which Hadji Murat’s weapons hung, leaving himself with only a dagger and a pistol.

“Who is he?” the old man asked Hadji Murat, pointing to the man who had come in.

“My murid. His name is Eldar,” said Hadji Murat.

“Very well,” said the old man, and he pointed Eldar to a place on the felt next to Hadji Murat.

Eldar sat down, crossing his legs, and silently fixed his beautiful sheep’s eyes on the face of the now talkative old man. The old man was telling how their brave lads had caught two Russian soldiers the week before: they had killed one and sent the other to Shamil in Veden. Hadji Murat listened distractedly, glancing at the door and giving ear to the sounds outside. Steps were heard on the porch in front of the saklya, the door creaked, and the master came in.

The master of the saklya, Sado, was a man of about forty, with a small beard, a long nose, and the same black eyes, though not as shining, as the fifteen-year-old boy, his son, who ran for him and together with his father came into the saklya and sat down by the door. Having taken off his wooden shoes by the door, the master pushed his old, shabby papakha to the back of his long-unshaven head, overgrowing with black hair, and at once squatted down facing Hadji Murat.

He closed his eyes just as the old man had, raised his hands palms up, recited a prayer, wiped his face with his hands, and only then began to talk. He said there was an order from Shamil to take Hadji Murat dead or alive, that Shamil’s envoys had left only yesterday, and that the people were afraid to disobey Shamil, and therefore he had to be careful.

“In my house,” said Sado, “no one will do anything to my kunak while I live. But what about in the field? We must think.”

Hadji Murat listened attentively and nodded his head approvingly. When Sado finished, he said:

“Very well. Now a man must be sent to the Russians with a letter. My murid will go, only he needs a guide.”

“I’ll send brother Bata,” said Sado. “Call Bata,” he turned to his son.

The boy, as if on springs, jumped up on his nimble legs and, swinging his arms, quickly left the saklya. Ten minutes later he came back with a deeply tanned, sinewy, short-legged Chechen man wearing a tattered yellow cherkeska with ragged cuffs and baggy black leggings. Hadji Murat greeted the new arrival and at once, also not wasting words, said briefly:

“Can you take my murid to the Russians?”

"It's possible," Bata said quickly, merrily. "Everything's possible. No Chechen could get through better than me. Another man would go, promise everything, and do nothing. But I can do it."

"Good," said Hadji Murat. "You'll get three for your trouble," he said, holding up three fingers.

Bata nodded his head to indicate that he understood, but added that he did not value money, but was ready to serve Hadji Murat for the honor of it. Everyone in the mountains knew Hadji Murat, how he had beaten the Russian swine . . .

"Very well," said Hadji Murat. "Rope is good when it's long, speech when it's short."

"Then I'll be silent," said Bata.

"Where the Argun bends, across from the steep bank, there is a clearing in the forest, two haystacks stand there. You know it?"

"I do."

"My three horsemen are waiting for me there," said Hadji Murat.

"Aya!" said Bata, nodding his head.

"Ask for Khan Mahoma. Khan Mahoma knows what to do and what to say. Take him to the Russian chief, to Vorontsov, the prince [2]. Can you do that?"

"I'll take him."

"Take him and bring him back. Can you do that?"

"I can."

"Take him, and return with him to the forest. I will be there, too."

"I will do it all," Bata said, stood up and, putting his hands to his chest, went out.

"Another man must be sent to Gekhi," said Hadji Murat, when Bata had gone. "In Gekhi here is what must be done," he began, taking hold of one of the cartridge bands on his cherkeska, but he dropped his hand at once and fell silent, seeing two women come into the saklya.

One was Sado's wife, the same thin, middle-aged woman who had arranged the pillows. The other was a very young girl in red sharovary and a green beshmet, with a curtain of silver coins covering her whole breast. At the end of her black braid, not long but stiff, thick, which lay between the shoulder blades on her thin back, hung a silver rouble; the same black-currant eyes as her father and brother shone merrily on her young face, which was trying to look stern. She did not glance at the guests, but was obviously aware of their presence.

Sado's wife carried a low, round table on which there were tea, dumplings, pancakes with butter, cheese, churek—a thinly rolled-out bread—and honey. The girl carried a basin, a kumgan, and a towel.

Sado and Hadji Murat were silent all the while the women, moving quietly in their soleless red chuviaki, were setting what they had brought before the guests. Eldar, his sheep's eyes directed at his crossed legs, was immobile as a statue all the while the women were in the saklya. Only when they left and their soft steps had died away completely behind the door, did Eldar sigh with relief and Hadji Murat take out one of the cartridges of his cherkeska, remove the bullet that stopped it up, and, from under the bullet, a note rolled into a tube.

"To my son," he said, pointing to the note.

"Where to reply?" asked Sado.

"To you, and you deliver it to me."

"It will be done," said Sado, and he put the note into a cartridge of his cherkeska. Then, taking the kumgan, he moved the basin towards Hadji Murat. Hadji Murat rolled up the sleeves of his beshmet on his muscular arms, white above the hands, and held them under the stream of cold, transparent water that Sado was pouring from the kumgan. Having wiped his hands on a clean, rough towel, Hadji Murat turned to the food. Eldar did the same. While the guests were eating, Sado sat facing them and thanked them several times for coming. The boy, sitting by the door, not taking his shining black eyes from Hadji Murat, was smiling, as if to confirm his father's words by his smile.

Though Hadji Murat had eaten nothing for more than twenty-four hours, he ate only a little bread and cheese, and, taking a small knife from under his dagger, gathered up some honey and spread it on bread.

"Our honey is good. This year of all years the honey is both plentiful and good," said the old man, obviously pleased that Hadji Murat was eating his honey.

"Thank you," said Hadji Murat and drew back from the food.

Eldar would have liked to eat more, but, like his murshid, he moved away from the table and gave Hadji Murat the basin and the kumgan.

Sado knew that in receiving Hadji Murat he was risking his life, because after the quarrel between Shamil and Hadji Murat, it had been announced to all the inhabitants of Chechnya that, on pain of death, they were not to receive Hadji Murat. He knew that the inhabitants of the aoul might learn of Hadji Murat's presence at any moment and might demand that he be handed over. But that not only did not trouble Sado, it even gladdened him. Sado considered it his duty to defend his guest—his kunak—even if it cost him his life, and he was glad in himself and proud of himself that he was acting as one should.

"While you are in my house and my head is on my shoulders, no one will do anything to you," he repeated to Hadji Murat.

Hadji Murat looked attentively into his shining eyes and, understanding that this was true, said with a certain solemnity:

"May you be granted joy and life."

Sado silently pressed his hand to his chest in a sign of gratitude for the kind words.

Having closed the shutters of the saklya and kindled the wood in the fireplace, Sado, in a particularly merry and excited state, left the guest room and went to the part of the saklya where his whole family lived. The women were not asleep yet and were talking about the dangerous guests who were spending the night in their guest room.

* Kizyák: Fuel made from dung and straw

Notes

1. Shamil (1797–1871) was the third imam (military-religious leader) of Daghestan and Chechnya to lead his people against the Russians, who sought to annex their land. He finally surrendered in 1859.
2. Prince Semyon Mikhailovich Vorontsov (1823–82) was an imperial adjutant and commander of the Kurinsky regiment. His early service was under his father, who was vicegerent of the Caucasus. He was married to Princess Marya Vassilievna Trubetskoy.

Users Review

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Hadji Murat (Vintage Classics) can be one of your starter books that are good idea. We recommend that straight away because this e-book has good vocabulary that could increase your knowledge in language, easy to understand, bit entertaining however delivering the information. The writer giving his/her effort that will put every word into joy arrangement in writing Hadji Murat (Vintage Classics) nevertheless doesn't forget the main position, giving the reader the hottest and based confirm resource info that maybe you can be considered one of it. This great information could drawn you into brand-new stage of crucial imagining.

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