

LEV NIKOLAYEVICH TOLSTOY

1828 — 1910

At the edge of the road stood an oak: Probably ten times the age of
the birches that formed the forest it was ten times as thick and
twice as tall as they: It was as an enormous tree: Its girth twice as
great as a man could embrace and evidently long ago some of its
branches had been broken off and its bark scarred: With its huge
ungainly limbs sprawling unsymmetrically and its gnarled hands and
fingers it stood an aged stern and scornful monster among the
smiling birch trees: Only the dead-looking evergreen firs dotted about
in the forest and this oak refused to yield to the charm of spring
or notice either the spring or the sunshine: Spring: Love Happiness
this oak seemed to say: Are you not weary of that stupid meaning
less constantly repeated fraud: Always the same and always a fraud:
There is no spring no sun no happiness: Look at those cramped
dead firs ever the same and at me too sticking out my broken
and barked fingers just where they have grown whether
from my back or my sides: As they have grown so I stand
and I do not believe in your hopes and your
lies: As he passed through the forest
Prince Andrew turned several times
to look at that oak as if expecting
something from it: Under the oak
too were flowers and grass but
it stood among them scowling
rigid misshapen and grim as
ever: Yes the oak is right: A
thousand times right: Thought Prince
Andrew: Let others: The young: Yield afresh
to that fraud but we know life: Our life is
finished:

That night alone in new
surroundings he was long unable
to sleep: He read awhile and then put out his
candle but relit it: It was hot in the room the inside
shutters of which were closed: He was cross at the stupid old
man (as he called Rostov) who made him stay saying some necessary
documents had not yet arrived from town and he was vexed with himself
for having stayed: He got up and went to the window to open it: As soon as he
opened the shutters the moonlight as if it had long been watching for this burst into
the room: He opened the casement: The night was fresh bright and very still: Just before
the window was a row of pollard trees looking black on one side and with a silvery light on
the other: Beneath the trees grew some kind of lush wet bushy vegetation with silver lit leaves and
stems here and there: Farther back beyond the dark trees a roof glittered with dew to the right was a
leafy tree with brilliantly white trunk and branches and above it shone the moon nearly at its full in a
pale almost starless spring sky: Prince Andrew leaned his elbows on the window ledge and his eyes rested
on that sky: His room was on the first floor: Those in the rooms above were also awake: He heard female
voices over head: Just once more: Said a girlish voice above him which Prince Andrew recognized at once:
But when are you coming to bed? Replied another voice: I won't: I can't sleep: What's the use: Come now
for the last time: Two girlish voices sang a musical passage: The end of some song: Oh how lovely: Now
go to sleep and there's an end of it: You go to sleep but I can't: Said the first voice coming nearer to the
window: She was evidently leaning right out for the rustle of her dress and even her breathing could
be heard: Everything was stone still like the moon and its light and the shadows: Prince Andrew too
dared not stir for fear of betraying his unintentional presence: Sonya! Sonya! He again heard the
first speaker: Oh: How can you Sleep: Only look how glorious it is: Ah how glorious: Do wake
up Sonya: She said almost with tears in her voice: There never never was such a lovely night
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Oh how lovely: Come here: Darling sweet heart: Come here: There: You see:
I feel like sitting down on my heels: Putting my arms round my
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Take care: You'll fall out:

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already

It was the beginning of
June when on his return journey he
drove into the birch forest where the gnarled old oak
had made ^{so} strange and memorable an impression on him: In the forest the
harness bells sounded yet more muffled than they had done six weeks before for now all was thick
shady and dense and the young firs dotted about in the forest did not jar on the general beauty but,
lending themselves to the mood around were delicately green with fluffy young shoots:
The whole day had been hot: Somewhere a storm was gathering but only a small cloud had scattered
some raindrops lightly sprinkling the road and the sappy leaves: The left side of the forest was dark in
the shade: The right side glittered in the sunlight wet and shiny and scarcely swayed by the breeze: Every
thing was in blossom: The nightingales trilled, and their voices reverberated now near: Now far away:
Yes: Here in this forest was that oak with which I agreed: thought Prince Andrew:
But where is it? He again wondered gazing at the left side of the road and without
recognizing it he looked with admiration at the very oak he sought: The old oak
quite transfigured spreading out a canopy of sappy dark green foliage stood rapt
and slightly trembling in the rays of the evening sun: Neither gnarled fingers
nor old scars nor old doubts and sorrows were any of them in evidence
now: Through the hard century old bark even where there were no twigs
leaves had sprouted such as one could hardly believe the old veteran could
have produced: Yes: It is the same oak: Thought Prince Andrew and all at once he
was seized by an unreasoning springtime feeling of joy and renewal: All the best moments
of his life suddenly rose to his memory: Austerlitz with the lofty heavens: His wife's
dead reproachful face: Pierre at the ferry: That girl thrilled by the beauty of the
night and that night itself and the moon and all
this rushed suddenly to his mind: No: Life is not over
at thirty one: Prince Andrew suddenly decided finally
and decisively: It is not enough for me to know what I
have in me: Everyone must know it: Pierre and that
girl who wanted to fly away into the sky: Every one must
know me so that my life may not be lived for myself alone
while others live so apart from it but so that it may be
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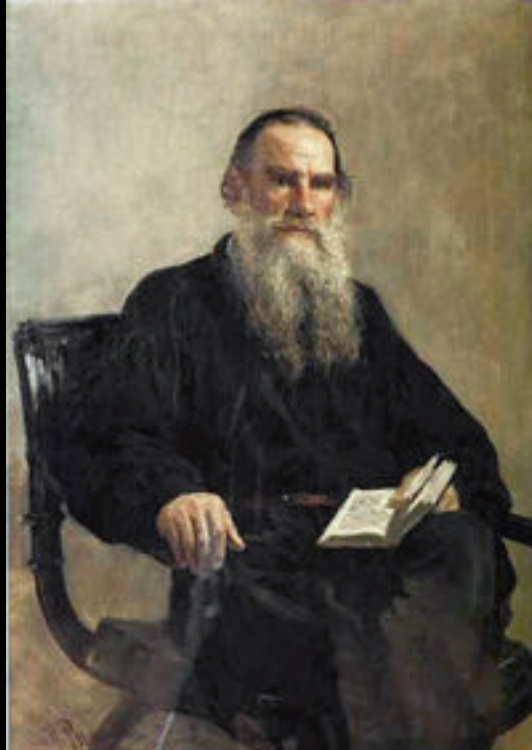
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http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Leo_Tolstoy