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Ivan The Terrible and his terrible goldfish

(Composed sometime between 1997 and early 2003)

I've never seen a fish laugh,
At least not very loudly,
said Ivan the Terrible to himself,
as he gazed in the mirror proudly.

I've never seen a goldfish smile
Hey diddle diddle for the Oprichnina,
Maybe that's just not their style,
Hey diddle diddle for the Oprichnina.

My little fish must be a priest,
It likes to sing in chant.
But that terrible fish always sings off key --
which is why it must stay in the tank.

Bash them, smash them, and give them the lash,
Hey diddle diddle for the Oprichnina,
All of my enemies gonna crash,
Hey diddle diddle for the Oprichnina.

Fyodor The Bell-Ringer

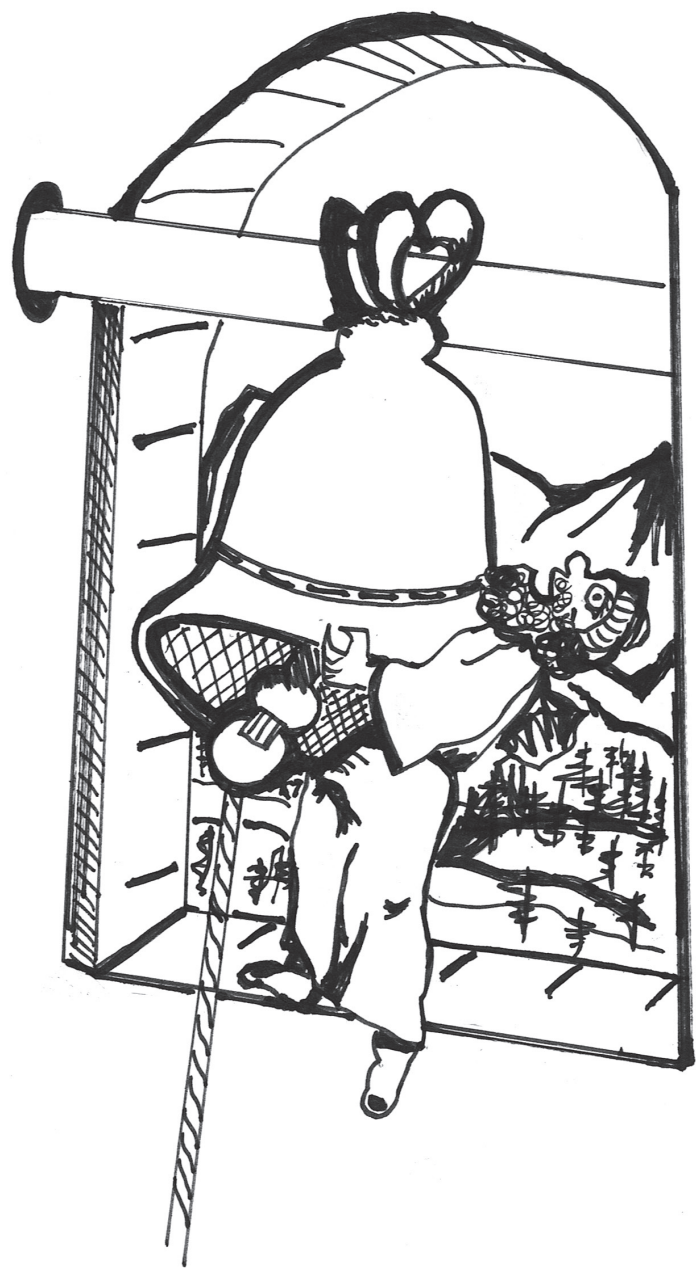
(Composed on 12 April 2014, between 1:50 and 2:18 a.m., during a short break from my slumber)

Fyodor Ivanovich, he was tsar,
he heard bells from near and far –
big bells, small bells, tiny little tinkle bells,
listened to bells in his boudoir.
With a ring-a-ding ding, and a ring-a-ding dong,
ring-a-ding, ring-a-dong all day long.

Policy-making was a bore:
he told his ministers to attend to that chore,
big bells, small bells, tiny little tinkle bells,
that was the sound he could adore.
With a ring-a-ding ding, and a ring-a-ding dong,
he liked to hear bells all day long.

Off to the chapel he would spring,
they had bells that he could ring:
big bells, small bells, tiny little tinkle bells,
did as he liked 'cause he was king.
With a ring-a-ding ding, and a ring-a-ding dong,
he could ring bells all day long.

Sometimes he would like to kneel,
his courtiers played the glockenspiel,
big bells, small bells, tiny little tinkle bells,
and back to bells with renewed zeal.
With a ring-a-ding ding, and a ring-a-ding dong,
ring-a-ding, ring-a-dong all day long.



Ekaterina, you're so great!

(Composed to the tune of "Der Trommelmann" on 6 April 2014, between 4:30 and 4:41 a.m. I had trouble sleeping.)

Ekaterina – ja,
pa-rampa-pa-pa
she was the ruler – da,
pa-rampa-pa-pa
she had some lovers – si,
pa-rampa-pa-pa
she left them happy – yes,
pa-rampa-pa-pa, rampa-pa-pa, rampa-pa-pa.

She, the Empress – oui,
pa-rampa-pa-pa
she annexed Poland – po
pa-rampa-pa-pa,
but no, not all of it,
pa-rampa-pa-pa
she shared it with some friends
pa-rampa-pa-pa, rampa-pa-pa, rampa-pa-pa.

Now the whole world says,
pa-rampa-pa-pa
that she was really great
pa-rampa-pa-pa
and surely you agree
pa-rampa-pa-pa
and surely you agree,
pa-rampa-pa-pa, rampa-pa-pa, rampa-pa-pa,
Rampa-pa-pa!!



Lenin's cat

(Composed in April 2006)

Lenin wasn't born a communist
And nor was his cat.
He wasn't born a leader
And nor was his cat.

He spent some time in Switzerland
Planning revolution.
He knew that seizing power was
The optimal solution.

He liked to stroke his little pet
And comb its pretty fur
He liked to smoke a cigarette
And hear his kitty purr.

He liked to ride on well-sealed trains
And organized a party.
Everyone's invited but
To join you should be hearty.



Diga diga doo, Bolsheviki

(Composed on 15—16 April 2014)

Stalin thought that jazz was bad,
thought it was a bourgeois fad
diga diga doo Bolsheviki, diga diga doo Bolshevik!
Voroshilov disagreed,
liked to dance and liked to lead
diga diga doo Bolsheviki, diga diga doo Bolshevik!

I'm so really very Bolshevik by nature,
if you don't shout "Down with Trotsky's legions!",
you're gonna lose your pop!
So, let those funny Mensheviks
and Trotskyites go play with sticks,
diga diga doo Bolsheviki, diga diga doo Bolshevik!



Perestroika (dance version)

(Inspired by the song "Collegiana", first recorded by Waring's Pennsylvanians in 1928; later revived by the Nitty Gritty Dirt Band. A few phrases here have been taken over directly from "Collegiana". Composed in April 2014.)

In the Kremlin they tried to stop him
from anything new or out of their view.
All of Russia was now in coma,
zastoj too was pretty near through.
Gorby'd found a new reformist hop,
reform 'til we drop,
we'll never stop.
If you wanna see, what is getting me
I'll show you how to do
perestroika, see how it's done,
make reforms, it's a lot of fun.
You add a bit of glasnost
and then you speed it up.

Comrade Ligachev never was glad
because of the migraine that he had,
but then came perestroika –
it never was a flop!

All good comrades and every communist
all hate the ominous – and how!
Two step new step, it's like a dance, you see –
but there will always be dead beats.
There was a coup, but it fell apart,
seems that the plotters weren't so smart.
Boris Yeltsin save the day – perestroika won!



*Boris Yeltsin, you know it's
Boris Yeltsin!*

(Composed on 5 April 2014, on the couch, with the cat lying on my stomach. May be sung to the tune of "The Hunters of Kentucky", a top hit in the 18th century.)

Who is it whom the Russian people constantly are thanking?
Who is it who reformed the Russian mode of banking?
Who was it who gave oligarchs a little pow'r to veto
policies they didn't like? Don't you think that's neat?

Boris Yeltsin, you know it's Boris Yeltsin!
Boris Yeltsin, yes it was Boris Yeltsin!

And when he ran for president, he did some fancy dancing,
and when around the ladies, he could be so romancing,
and when it comes to alcohol, he knew he had no limit,
he belted out his campaign songs, he was never timid.

Boris Yeltsin, you know it's Boris Yeltsin!
Boris Yeltsin, yes it was Boris Yeltsin!

Putin on the moon

(Composed sometime between June 2007 and June 2010)

The US thinks they've won the race –
the first man on the moon –
but Putin knows that outer space
can play to Moscow's tune.

No head of state has gone to Mars
or through the Milky Way
but Putin plans to see the stars
and put on a display.

The public has a gnawing thirst
for something new and more;
so Putin plans to be the first
as head of state to soar

To distant stars and planets
and circle 'round the sun,
intent to show the world below
that Russia's number one.

But Putin's ship is thrown off course
because it launched too soon,
and Russia's leader finds he's forced
to settle for the moon.

He finds the stars and stripes are there
and hurls it to the ground,
and plants a Russian flag instead,
then starts to look around.

Putin now comes on the air,
the Russians ought to know:
Aside from him the moon is bare,
there's no place here to go.

"So if you want a party,
you're better off at home,"
he tells his people honestly,
"cause here you're all alone."

But weightlessness is kinda cool,
so Putin leaps and skips,
before he packs his bag and leaves
to fly back on his ship.

