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KOŠTANA

A dramatic Story

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DRAMATIS PERSONAE

HADŽI –TOMA (*ha:dzi touma:*)
 STOJAN, *his son*
 ARSA, *the Mayor of Vranje*
 MITKA, *Arsa's brother*
 MARKO, *Toma's miller*
 POLICAJA, *Chief of Police*
 POLICEMAN
 GYPSY CHIEF
 ALIL, *a singer*
 GRKLJAN, *Koštana's father*
 KURTA }
 AHMET } *Gypsies*
 KATA
 STANA, *her daughter*
 VASKA, *Arsa's daughter*
 MAGDA, *Marko's wife*
 SOFKA *Stana's gril-froemds*
 KOCA (*Koutsa:*)
 KOŠTANA (*ko:ɕta:na*), *a Gypsy singer*
 SALČE (*sa: ltɕa*), *her mother*
 ZADA, *a Gypsy woman*

People of Vranje, Gypsies, Gypsy women, policemen

Time: Present

ACT ONE

Place: Vranje.

A wall-furnished room. The floor is covered with rugs. Cushions are placed all around.

On the shelves are platters and, in front of them, metal vessels for coffee cups, and rows of apples. Suspended from the ceiling are dried grape clusters. There is a sandal wood chair in the corner with a tray on it, full of tobacco and paper. In the front are two wide trellised windows, one on the left, the other on the right. A garden is seen through the windows; also, a courtyard, the front gate, the wall facing the street and behind it, a row of houses on the other side of the street. By the door, arms are hanging on the wall. In the far corner there is a niche with an icon and oil lamp, other icons and pictures. The oil lamp's mild light radiates from the niche.

The day is drawing to its close. A weary sunbeam is dancing on the rug. Music and noises are coming from the street, now fading, now growing louder.

A crowd of young girls rushes into the room. Laughter, shrieking and giggling. Some have tambourines; they dance, shaking them. They all advance to the door at the far end, singing.

(shrieks and recoils. Holding her bitten cheek with one hand and her bosom with the other, she totters): Ouch, you're eating me!

VASKA

(enters after her).

SOFKA

(running from Vaska, in heat, still holding her cheek and her bosom with her hands, with reproach): Vaska, you're a – You don't know how it hurts!

VASKA

(close to her): Oh yeah? It hurts? What if HE kissed you instead?... *(Pointing to her cheek):*... If he kissed you, well...?

SOFKA

(shuts her mouth and looks around, frightened): Shut up, sweetest, somebody may overhear you...

(The other girls return with Stana.)

KOCA

(pulls Stana's arm): Come on, Stana! Let's dance. Why don't you want to? No one will see us. We'll dance in our garden... Come on!

STANA

(wrestling away): No, Koca, no! *(Tearfully):* We're alone at home. Father is so angry and short-tempered... Mother is alone. I won't.

KOCA

(drags her along): Come on, Stana! Don't be that way! come with us!

STANA

(with determination, tearfully): I won't I won't!

KOCA

(reproachfully): Pshaw!

VASKA

(returning, having lift the others): What?... Are you crying?

STANA

(in tears): How can I help crying, Vaska?.. You se, you're all singing and dancing *(turns and looks round frightened)* and I am so lonely! There's nobody home. Neither Father nor Mother. Father's always mad. Ad my brother never comes home at all. He's out all the time, with that creature Koštana. He never comes home.

VASKA

(ironically): Why? are you scared?

STANA

I'm scare.

(Shouting and singing in the street. Stan motions to Vaska): You see... Brother's with them, too.

VASKA

(caustically): oh, him! Don't you worry. He'll be all right.

STANA

Rubbish. *(Rifle shots.)* What d'you mean all right, don't you hear them shooting?

VASKA

Who cares about their shooting! Just let Koštana sing – they'll throw away their rifles and lose their heads too. Particularly our brother, our precious brother!

STANA

(defending him): But Vaska, he's not the only one. They're all with her there.

VASKA

They are, are they? Then why him? *(Ironically)*: If it wasn't for him, who'd let her have three sets of clothes made at a time, covering her not with ducats but with doubloons?

STANA

(afraid somebody might overhear them): Hush, Vaska, hush! You know well what Father's like – if he finds out about that too...

VASKA

You don't really think he hasn't heard it all already?

STANA

(frightened): You mean about those silk dresses that people say he gave her? *(Ardently)*: But it isn't so, Vaska! Where could our brother get all that money, you know Father always carries his money-bag with him? They're liars, all liars! It's cause they know how mad Father can get, so they took the first opportunity to tell on our brother.

VASKA

(impatiently): Oh, shut up! Everybody's lying except Stojan. *(With malice)*: Well, we're his sisters, you're his sister german, so what does he give us as a present on this holiday? Nothing. Not a straw.

STANA

(thoughtfully): Oh that, a gift!... If only he was here, at home, I wouldn't mind... Who cares about a gift?

VASKA

Sure. So he can lavish it all on Koštana, cover her with doubloons and Turkish ducats!

STANA

Don't start that again, Vaska... It's not true!

VASKA

For Christ's sake! What do you mean, not true? Even my father says so. He's told me himself. Each time he went there to drive them away he found him there too, so he turned back. He wouldn't tear him away from her by force by getting the police, drive him away, disgrace him and us too, the whole family. Many a time did Father rise at night and go there, with policemen accompanying him. And yet they say nobody dares to even pass by there now. All that singing and dancing in a ring and shooting. They often draw blood, you know.

STANA

(frightened): Oh, Vaska, how awful! So that's why Mother will sit all night through. Never sighing or crying. Just sitting and waiting. Sitting up all night. Afraid to hear them bring him home bleeding. *(Tearfully)*: And my brother never comes...

(Hard footsteps and coughing on the staircase. Stana runs up to the window, looks out and recoils in fear.)

STANA

Father is coming!

(Exeunt in haste.)

TOMA

(angry, irascible. Takes off his shoes by pushing the heels. Tears his rosary beads with fury, the beads scattering about the room and hitting the window panes. Throwing back his dolman, he walks about

the room gasping): Me?!... Me?... He too? Like the rest of them! Youthful folly indeed! Wasn't I young once too? Was I blind and crippled, or something, so no girl would look at me and drive me crazy? Why couldn't I?... I was a Pilgrim already when I got married, so I didn't dare to enter an inn. I was afraid some older people, merchants, honest folks might see me... I don't grudge him the money he's spending or wasting. Let him wear sterling silver and silk. His thoroughbred is idle. The servants ride him so he shouldn't go blind with too much vigour. Why doesn't he ride him? Doesn't he have a place to ride? The country estates, the vineyards, fields and meadows... To ride – like a true beg! Make me happy too. The wealth I've been hoarding – for whom? For whom am I sitting, an old man, up there in the mountains, at the mill?... and see, if I descend here once a year, when I come to pray on this holy day, to aspire to my God, to see my friends, to talk to them, to rest... to see my family, my children, my home. (*Furiously*): Well?! Who do I see? Him, dragging himself with gypsy girls, going from inn to inn; and her, his mother, always weeping and wailing!... (*Wrathfully*): Ah! (*Shouting in the direction of the door*): Come here at once!

(Enter Stana, frightened.)

TOMA

Where is your mother?

STANA

(returning): She's coming, Daddy! (*Shouts*): Mummy!

(Enter Kata.)

TOMA

Where is your son? That son of y o u r s?

KATA

(hesitating): Well... you know...

TOMA

(approaching furiously): I don't know! I don't want to know! You are his mother, you gave him birth! And what do you know? What did you ever know? Never! Nothing! What sort of family did you come from? Who was your grandfather, who was your father? Were you fit for a Pilgrim's home, a wealthy family?

KATA

(with pain, reproachfully): Oh, husband...

TOMA

(rushes at her): Shut up or I'll cut your throat! You'd better swallow your tongue. You! What a son you have! It's your fault! You gave him birth! You're his mother! You... *(Towers above her with raised fists; trembling with rage, he is about to hit her on the head)*: You, you make a man want to...

KATA

(her knees shaking): Oh!

TOMA

(starts): Pshaw! *(Moves away)*: There's nothing to strike there. God himself has struck you down.

KATA

(leaving): dark is my lot!

TOMA

(shouts after her): Dark indeed! Have you ever been bright, a fountain of happiness wringing your hands? You've been like this ever since you were born. Old and dead, icy and tearful... never laughed, never jumped for joy! You were born that way! What do you drag yourself about the house for, crying all the

time? go over there! To Gypsy-town. Go see your son, watch him buying clothes for the gypsy girls, and food and drink for everyone.

(Enter Arsa.)

A VOICE

I want my sabre and my rifle: My horse, bring me my Dorča! Dorča, my dead son, tonight you an' gonna... aah!

(Clatter of hooves in the street, clinking of sabre and spurs.)

(Enter Policaja, rushing into the room.)

POLICAJA

(out of breath, throwing his staff at Arsa's feet): There, sir! There's your staff, authority, service, everything! I can't stand it any longer! I'm going too! *(Leaves.)*

ARSA

Where to?

POLICAJA

Just going. I can't. It's not just here. *(Spreading his arms in despair):* It's everywhere!

ARSA

Why, what are your arms for? To hit with! Where are your policemen?

POLICAJA

Why do you ask, master, you know very well. What policemen? You send one, and he turns his rifle upside down and sits down to drink with them. What can I do on my own? Look at Rista the dyer – it wasn't by force but after much coaxing that I barely managed to take him home. Drunk as a lord. He had taken a table from the inn and put it outside, and

then he sat down, drinking and swearing: at the chief, at every body. *(To Toma)*: And now, Pilgrim, your son's gone with Koštana to Sobina. *(With determination but frightened, to Arsa.)* What do you think is going to happen now?

ARSA

(to Toma): There you go, Pilgrim! Now what? What am I supposed to do?

(To Policaja, who is leaving): You wait. *(To Toma)*: Good-bye, Pilgrim!

(Exeunt.)

(The noise dies down, the din is heard at times, then fades. A clarinet starts playing in the distance and an Oro ring dance is heard.

Evening descends.)

TOMA

(shivers): Oh, my son! What a godly, sweet, holy day this is, what a way for me to greet it! *(With determination)*: You won't dance and sing it either! *(Shouts)*: My horse!

(Exit.)

(It is night. From the garden, moonlight floods the room. The noise subsides. At times, sounds of a clarinet, a band playing, an Oro dance are heard in the distance.)

(Enter Kata.)

KATA

What have you done to my home? Oh, my God, why have you adjudged and sent a writ of so much darkness to me?

(Enter Zada with bags and a bundle under her arm.)

KATA

(impatently): Where have you been?!

ZADA

I couldn't come sooner, lady! While she was playing in town I didn't dare to go in and steal a shirt, 'cause she'd come in every now and then, change shirts, change clothes... It's not that she has one set of clothes and no more!

KATA

May God grant they lie empty!

ZADA

When I heard she'd gone as far as Sobina, I found the opportunity to steal one, and here it is. (*Pulls Koštana's silk shirt ornamented with frills and lace from the bundle and unfolds it before Kata.*) Yes, my lady! Not even the Pasha's wife, wears such finery. And she is lovely too, damn her! If only you could see her body even you, old as you are and a woman, would kiss her! Our blood is not like that. I remember seeing the Pasha's first wife, Berk's daughter. She alone had such a body and such beauty before this girl now. Oh!

KATA

Oh, I know she's pretty. I saw her in the Turkish bath. Even there – the women go crazy about her. And now! (*Points to the shirt*): Tomorrow at dawn you must take it to Marko Kale, and there, at Stance, where the waters meet, drown it and leave it in the whirlpool by the long deserted mill. But be careful, no one must see you, nor the sun warm you or the shirt, so God help me it should never see her or warm her again. Go to Stana's now, she'll give you food and drink.

ZADA

I will, lady, I'll do everything.

(*Exit.*)

KATA

(continues): May God grant that the sun never shine upon her and warm her or her son... *(Cursing)*: O my son, my son, may my tear never reach you. O cursed gypsy! O my son, why did you give up your home for her, why did you disgrace your mother? Why did she cast an eye on you – may she lose her eyesight! Why did she cast a spell on you, - may her mouth shrivel up!... O Lord, how did I deserve your wrath, O Lord? ... Who did I defame, who gossip about, or wish ill to make you send me so much grief, dark grief, O Lord? – Did your mother give you birth and cherish you, and is your mother no good to you now, while she, the gypsy, is good to you? You leave your mother and stare at her, at Koštana – may her bones fall from her! *(With determination)*: I will curse him, oh yes. I'll curse him! *(Taking off her headcloth, she advances toward the ikon, kneels and casts her curse)*: My son, may God grant... You abandoned me, disgraced me, you made me cry on our Lord's day, may God make you... *(Trembles)*: Oh, no! Wait, let me cast the beans for him to see what fate has in store for him.

(Leaves, then returns quickly with a sieve. Turns it upside down and places it in the centre of the room. Kneels and, bending over it, begins to cast bean seeds and tell fortunes. The moonlight becomes brighter
Suddenly she turns her back to the moonlight:)

Oh, this moonlight! (again she bends over the beans in the sieve, scrutinising them): "Empty his bed, long his journey and... (Pushes the sieve away and leaps up, aghast): No, Lord! Not b l o o d! Hear my prayer, O Lord! Let him come to no harm, wreak vengeance on my head alone! He is my son, my baby! May what I said be undone! May my mouth wither, my mouth which...

ACT TWO

(Sobina. Hadži-Toma's water mill. Night. The courtyard is surrounded by a tall wall behind which a dark brown chestnut forest can be seen.)

In the back, a tall two-storeyed house with a balcony is seen; the water is heard rushing underneath, splashing and breaking against the mill-wheel. The entrance is a large double gate, very old, made of stone, with big door knockers. In the middle of the courtyard there is the wooden block of an old fountain, now dry, pushed aside; in front of it, a half-buried broken marble trough.

Moonlight. All objects are seen clearly. The dark brown to black chestnut trees stand out against the background.

In front of the house, Magda is sitting at the foot of the stairs, listening. Suddenly, from the road below, there is tempestuous music, singing and shouting.)

MAGDA

(turning and looking above, toward the house, shouts): Marko!

(Marko runs out of the house.)

(Marko runs to the gate. The singing and shouting is closer and closer.)

MARKO

(returning): the master, the master!

MAGDA

Which one?

MARKO

The young master!

MAGDA

(going out to meet him): My sweet baby! He hasn't forgotten his nanny!

(The singing and shouting is quite close now. A song is heard:

I don't feel sorry for my body, darling!
 I don't feel sorry for my body,
 I'm sorry for my silver jacket!
 I'm sorry for my silver jacket –
 Alas, alas, my silver jacket!

(Enter Koštana with the belly dancers, Salče, Asan, Grkljan and the rest, ahead of Stojan, dancing and singing.)

STOJAN

(at the door): Happy Easter to you, nanny! *(He starts):* But maybe you're angry with me for coming like this...?

MAGDA

(embracing him): O my baby! You're our master, my son, why should we be angry?

(Marko comes up to him and humbly kisses his hand.)

MARKO

Happy Easter, master.

STOJAN

(to Koštana and the rest, pointing to the house): There! In there! To nanny! It's Easter for her too! *(Embraces Magda):* This is my second mother! Hers was my mother's milk. *(They go up into the house.)*

MAGDA

(accompanying them, overjoyed): My sweet baby, he knows everything. *(To Koštana):* Sing, my daughter, nanny has a few coins too.

SLAČE

(to Koštana, who looks about, turns round and stares at the trees, at the forest): Your hair is tangled. *(Puts her hair and dress in order.)*

KOŠTANA

(throwing back her hair): Let it be tangled! *(To Magda):* Tell me, auntie... *(Points to the forest.)* What is there up there? The woods?

MAGDA

The woods, my daughter!

KOŠTANA

(starts for the wall happily): Are these the vast, the desolate, the dark woods?

MAGDA

Yes, my daughter.

KOŠTANA

(stands on tiptoe the better to see the forest. Smells it.) How the woods smell! *(To Magda):* Are these the woods, auntie, where the outlaw lived with his men, and made many a mother weep and wail and wear black, and Jovan's mother most of all? He

cut Jovan's throat - her only son's. And... he forced his mother, father, sisters, every single one, to dance and sing: His father danced and wept:

Jovan, O Jovan, my son,
You are my first-born, my son!

And his mother wept:

Jovan, O Jovan, my son,
You're my St. George's Day lamb!

And his sister wept:

Jovan, O Jovan, my brother,
You're the spring flowers to me!

(Agitated): Are these the desolate and vast woods auntie?!

MAGDA

(wiping her tears): No, my daughter, not these! Not these woods!
– don't sing that song now. Sing some other song, a merry one.

STOJAN

(from the balcony): Košta, let's have a song!

KOŠTANA

Which one?

STOJAN

A song like your face, your throat, your russet hair...

KOŠTANA

(pleased): Oh, is it russet hair really?

STOJAN

Russet and soft, untangled yet!

KOŠTANA

(sings, starting toward the balcony):

Mirjana, O Mirjana,
 You have russet hair, Mirjana!
 Let me tangle your hair,
 Give me your russet hair, Mirjana,
 Let me tangle your hair.
 O Mirjana, you're burning me!

(Enter Mitka, leading his horse by the reins; the horse's head is seen.)

MITKA

(to Marko, who descends with a pitcher to bring wine): Hey, you, is Hadži-Toma in there?

MARKO

No, master Mitka, it's the young master.

MITKA

(throwing the rein over the horse's neck): Big brother'll be back right away. Won't leave you alone for long. Jus' to 'ave a look. *(To himself)*: An' I'm not gonna last long either! Four or three or two years – half a year, no more. In autumn, when the sun begins to fail, tha's when I'm gonna die too. Together we'll go, the sun and I! *(Sound of horse's hooves and neighing.)* Yeah! Are you sorry for me, uh? There, Dorča. Want some sugar? Big

brother's got some for ya. (*Get some sugar out of his belt and gives it to the horse.*) Have some, Dorča! There, sonny boy!

KOŠTANA

(sing on the balcony):

Mirjana, O Mirjana,
 You have dark eyes, Mirjana!
 Let me drink up your eyes,
 Give me your dark eyes, Mirjana,
 Let me drink up your eyes.

STOJAN

Nanny, I'm dying, dear!

MITKA

(lowering his fez hat over his eyes, he start toward them, swaying heavily): Oh, Koštana, my dear! My wound that won't heal!
(Tearfully): Cry, Mitka, cry! *(Starts.)* Oh, no! Not on this day not a dark thought may be dropped, let alone a tear. The woods and the waters rejoice. Only me – no one's sad but me. Comin' from the graveyard. Lit a candle for my blood brother! Made me mighty sad. There's only half a man left in me now. And when I hear her too, her song and her throat – "there, even my navel aches"!

(He goes upstairs. Gets on the balcony. Song and music are heard there. Marko keeps running downstairs and upstairs carrying pitchers of wine.)

KOŠTANA

(sings):

Mirjana, O Mirjana!
You have a white throat, Mirjana,
Let me bite in –

MITKA

(furiously): Salče, you old rogue! See this? See? Remember our times? When we used to be just as young and handsome? – Play, damn you, and sing, for I'm gonna kill you! I'll slit your throat, jus' 'cause I can't bear to see you so old and wrinkled. Hey, let's have our old tavern song, about the heart that keeps burnin' and burns out for youth and beauty's sake...

STOJAN

(staggering, descends from the balcony and rubs his mouth): My mouth is burning! ... Oh!

KOŠTANA

(descends with him; with solicitude): Are you unwell? Would you like us to stop playing and singing? What do you say?

STOJAN

(grabbing her shoulder): I want to kill you!

KOŠTANA

Why?

STOJAN

Because... because I love you, and I mustn't.

KOŠTANA

(happy, surprised, gasping): No, Stojan! Don't –

STOJAN

Liar! Oh, I'm not lying to you, Košta! I'd give you everything. Here and now, I'll give you everything! (*Takes out his watch, his money-bag, his amber cigarette holder and put them in her tambourine*): There!

KOŠTANA

(*refusing*): Oh, no! I won't take these from you! (*Frightened*): I don't want your money. (*Unties a string of ducats from her neck and gives them to him.*) Here... I'll give money to you.

STOJANA

(*sobbing*): Give me your mouth! (*Draws her to him and kisses her.*)

KOŠTANA

(*starts, shakes her head, but offers him her lips*): Oh, no, no!

STOJAN

(*touches her breast with his hand*): Your breasts!

KOŠTANA

(*leaps away*): Please, don't!

MITKA

(*from the balcony*): Asan, where's Koštana? Call her with your clarinet! Play to her and call her to come and sing, 'cause if she don't I'll kill you all! Come on, play and call her!

(*A clarinet is heard from the balcony with a dolorous sound.*)

KOŠTANA

(*frightened by the clarinet, stares about her*): Out, into the green fields! I won't stay here. Everything smells old here, of moth-eaten clothes! Out into the green...

(*Mitka and the others descend, followed by Marko and Magda who carry a table with food and drinks.*)

KOŠTANA

(to cover things up, stands at the bottom of the stairs and meets Mitka singing):

Katinka's throat was very sore,
 Katinka's throat was very sore;
 She went to pick some healing herbs,
 To pick some herbs and dig up roots.
 She found no herbs, she found no roots,
 But found a spring of water clear –

MITKA

(throwing money to her): There! *(To himself):* May my brother never know any happiness for makin' me marry, turning me into a slave... Was I ever fit to marry? *(Looks at Koštana):* This was the thing... Oh, brother, you made me marry, you made me into a slave, may the Lord give you... Do I deserve to be like this?! *(Scrutinises himself):* Look at me! Both my pants and my belt are sipping from me. *(Moves. Stumbles accidentally. Straightens himself up defiantly.)* Me?! *(Stretches out his leg; steadies it defiantly and stamps his foot.)* What, my bone, shakin' already? Have you grown old? *(Turns toward the gypsies. Furiously):* Grkljan! Salče! Come here at once! No, not yet –

(Threatens them with his dagger. Sits down at the table, pushes back his fez, bares his breast and takes off his dolman.)

(Koštana, Salče and the rest sit down a little way away from him, humbly huddling together.)

MITKA

(gloomily): Play to me!

GRKLJAN

(frightened): What, master?

MITKA

(gloomily): Play somethin' real sad. There's no sorrow like my sorrow – as far as a Turkish steed can run – nowhere at all!

STOJAN

(to Koštana): Košta, a song! Your voice! Nothing but your voice!
(To Marko): Marko, some wine! Give me wine to drink up my youth!
(Embraces Mitka): Oh, brother!

MITKA

(to himself): My time's up!

KOŠTANA

(sings):

Why so haughty,
 little Lena?
 As if you were
 a high-born maid!
 - If I'm not
 a high-born maid,
 Still I have
 my russet hair,
 My hairr is russet,
 my face is white,
 My face is white,
 my eyes are dark –

(Asking for coins, she comes up to Mitka.)

MITKA

(motions her away): Keep off! don't come near me! Oh, your tip? I'll give you.. 'cause – O may my brother never be happy for giving me a home, a wife, for binding me.. For not letting me go out into the world. No matter what others did, he kept repeating: "Mitka, look to your home, stay in, take care of your wife and family. Stop roaming, brother, give up fighting, or they'll kill you some day." ... Kill who? Me?

GRKLJAN

(respectfully): What, you, master? Such a man was never... born!

MITKA

(interrupts him): Nor will be. What, kill me? Me, whose habit it was, back in the Turkish days, in Serez, Salonika, Skoplje, wherever that brother of mine set me on my trade journeys, with all the Muslims I'd encounter on the Sultan's roads, to chase them before me... Even Pashas would get out of my way... "That's Mitka", they shouted, "master Arsa's brother!" ... Who could ever kill me? *(Pauses.)* Well, what if they did? What sort of life is this? Do you call this life? Waiting for the end! That's all! Is that life? *(Presses his fez down, heavyhearted and bitter.)* Hey-ho, Redžep of Istanbul's wife! Old Redžep went a journey, and I went to see her. A gypsy woman was my guide. She stopped at the gate keep watch, and I went straight up to her room. Like a real haiduk! Not a step could be heard. Night had fallen and the moon was out, while she, Redžep's wife, was waiting for me. In the large room, living on her eiderdowns, naked, young, a dewdrop... What a body! To kiss and start crying over! She'd throw her arms above her head, let her hair, black as ebony, spread about her and – wait for me! Watching the door, watching so she could make my head reel and devour

me with those dark eyes of hers the moment I crossed her threshold... Watching, waiting for me and singing:

Rafistinde on alma,
Besh i al, besh i alma!

(Ten apples on the shelf, five for me and five for you.) Rises. *(To Koštana.)* That song, Koštana! That song and no other. Sing it to me! Take off your *mintan* jacket; raise your arms above your head...

STOJAN

(interrupts him and pulls him closer to make him sit down): Not so, brother! For shame! Her mother's here, her father, all of us...

MITKA

(sitting down): I don't mean any harm, my boy. I could be her father. It just gives me – that sweet feeling! My soul still asks for it. *(Sadly, to Salče):* You know me, Salče! Do you remember? Out if no one can. That I should come to this!... What do you say, Salče? *(Watches her.)* And your times were quite somethingd too. But now you are old and withered. *(Pushes her away with his hand.)* Move over, I can't bear to look at you, 'cause when I do, I think a lot about myself. *(Turns to Koštana.)* Koštana! C'me on sing! A tip? My money-bag? Here you are!... *(Takes out money and throws it to her.)*

SALČE

(to Mitka): She'll do it some other time, Mitka, some other time!

KOŠTANA

(bashfully): Only dressed like this. Without taking my jacket off.

MITKA

(furiously, bitterly): No! You can only keep your sleeveless jacket on, to let your breasts heave. Raise your arms and dishevel your hair and be like her, like Redžep's wife! But turn round, don't look at me, or I'll be sick at heart. Redžep's wife is gonna soak my brain, make me ill. I'll be a sick man. Sick and dying for a week for her sake. Didn't they betray me, inform on me? I fell a slumbering in her arms, and old Redžep came out from behind the waterwheel where he'd been hidin' – rushed at me with his dagger. She saw and screamed, and took off her silk shirt at once, and grabbed the dagger. A knife won't cut silk, so I got away with it... As for her, they tied her in a sack and threw her alive in the Morava river. *(Rises, draws his dagger, furious.)* Play it to me and sing, 'cause now... *(To Salče)*: Oh, it's you, you old witch, who won't let her! Come here! Come at once! I want you to dance and to tell charms! Or else I'll cut you in small pieces this very moment! *(In a trance.)* Oh, you're gonna dance, old hag, on my dagger's edge and tell charms, like witches dance on unholy days in the snow, in the moonlight! So will you. Advance, Here, old witch, come, let me shake up your old bones. *(Bends over his dagger, turns it, brandishes it.)*

(Enter Marko running.)

MARKO

(Frightened): The master, the old Pilgrim's here!

STOJAN

(leaps up, scared): Father! What does he want me for? *(Starts for the gate to close it.)*

SALČE

(stops him): No, my son, he's your father after all!

STOJAN

What does he want me for now? What... Why is he after me?

KOŠTANA

(she too stops him in her fear): Don't, Stojan! I beg you too!

STOJAN

It's for your sake I won't let him in. I won't let him. I know he's going to blame it on you.

KOŠTANA

(trying to dissuade him): Don't do it, please. As for me, you'll see. *(Clatter of hooves, neighing, jingling reins.)*

TOMA

(shouts): Marko!

(Marko runs out. Dismounting. Enter Toma, with Marko humbly straightening his breeches and jacket crumpled with riding.)

TOMA

(bewildered, unable to collect himself): Well? Er? This?! *(Suddenly turns to Mitka):* Well done, Mitka! Though you are an older man, you could be their father and teach them manners, keep them out of mischief instead of being the first among them!... Bravo! *(Turns on Magda):* What about you? Is that how you respect your old master?

MAGDA

(humbly, to Toma): Oh, master!

TOMA

So that's the way you eat my bread?... I know what you think: "The old master's old, he'll die, we'd better take care of the young master".

MAGDA

(prostrates herself before him): Oh, master, how could I? I, your own Magda...

TOMA

“My own Magda, my own water mill”... Well, if it’s all mine, what are these doing here? *(To Marko):* Get me my rifle! *(Starts to fetch his rifle himself.)*

MAGDA

(kneels before him): Master, master...

TOMA

My rifle! I’ll shoot you all! I’ll burn the place! I don’t want to see anybody or look at any of you! You’ll all –

MAGDA

(cringing before him): Don’t, master, don’t!...

TOMA

...Nobody! My son?! May lightning strike you dead! *(To Stojan):* Go home, you! Out of my sight!

(Exit Stojan.)

MAGDA

(ardently but humbly to Toma): Don’t be that way, master! Don’t be so mad!

TOMA

(furiously): How? Not be mad? How can I not be mad? Who do you think I am.

MAGDA

Master! Master! My dear sweet old master! *(Kisses his hand.)* Don’t master! *(Points to the food and drink.)* Please sit down.

TOMA

(taken by surprise): I sit down, after this?!

MAGDA

(implores him, begs him): Happiness, may happiness sit down with you in my house! May a rich harvest and every profit sit down in my house with you! O sit and taste... just bread and salt! *(With determination)*: Better kill me, master than come on this holiday, God's day, like this without sitting down and tasting my bread and salt, just leaving me like this. *(Tearfully)*: May wealth and happiness sit down in my house.

MITKA

(to Toma): Oh, sit down, will you? Don't you know it's bad, an ill omen on such a holy day, a great day, to come and not to sit down to taste bread and salt... Do I have to tell you? What sort of Pilgrim are you?

MAGDA

(submissively): May a rich harvest and profit from the cattle sit down with you, master, and multiply, in my house.

TOMA

(changing his mind): Well, you can thank God because it's his holy day, God's own day. *(Approaches piously and sits down at the table; sternly)*: All right, serve me, but quick!

MAGDA

(joyous, slip sa cushion behind his back, offers him food and wine): Help yourself, master, taste what god has given us! Don't ... on this holy day God's own day! *(Offers him a glass of wine.)* Please, taste it, master!

TOMA

(crosses himself, then takes the glass): Oh, Magda! *(Drinks.)* Well then! Happy Ester to you!

MAGDA

(kisses his hand happily): Thank you, sweet master!

(Koštana, Salče and the rest are about to leave.)

MITKA

(stop them): Stop! Where d'you think yer goin'?

KOŠTANA

(pointing to Toma): He's angry...

MITKA

You come here! Look at *me!* I'm the one here... Sing!"

KOŠTANA

Oh, please don't master Mitka, or the Pilgrim will... *(Points to Toma afraid.)*

TOMA

(scornfully): What is that about the Pilgrim? I bear you no grudge. It's your trade. You have my permission. Sing... At least you'll earn your tip. *(Takes out his money-bag.)*

MITKA

(to Koštana): Just go on and sing!~ Who would dare to harm you? I'm here remember?

KOŠTANA

(sings):

Hadži Gajka, hey Hadži Gajka
Gave his daughter away,
Hey, he gave her, he gave her,
Hey he didn't give her away!

MITKA

(Interrupts her): No old and d e a d songs for me! Something different! White Lenče!

KOŠTANA

(frightened, points to Hadži-Toma, Sings):

Open the door, white Lenče.
 open your little door to me,
 Let me see, white Lenče,
 your little mouth let me see.
 - No, I cannot, sweet baby,
 rise to your caress,
 My mother has sat down, baby,
 on my long, long dress.

MITKA

The mother, damn her! Won't let her! Never did, never let her open to me, let me see her, kiss her... Never!... More, Koštana, I want more! Sing me the one about beauty which has no kin, no age... About the year of the plague in Kumanovo! When the beautiful Stamenka set fire to three cities! When her cousin, the wild and flaming Stojan fell in love with her – said he would either burn down the city or get Stamenka. The market-place and all shops were closed for three days, for three days the churches were deserted. Stamenka wept, and begged and implored... Yes, Sir! *(Sings in himself):*

Stojan, O my Stojan,
 aren't we relations, alas.
 Who ever heard this could be?
 First cousins do not marry.
 - Stamenka, O my Stamenka,

Stamena, bunch of spring flowers,
 Stamena, grain of pearl,
 Sure you have heard this is so:
 A field that's wide is pathless,
 Deep waters are not forded,
 Small pebbles are not numbered,
 A fair maid has no kin.
 You, Koštana, you sing it!

TOMA

(greatly affected, rubs his forehead): I, I... I... Yes! It's true. (Coughs. Unbuttons himself. Throws back his dolman with a dignified gesture. To Koštana): Sing this song:

A painted fountain in the village, square,
 Its waters ran, O Aga, waters ran,
 Two or three maidens at the fountain
 Stood, O Aga, there they stood –

MITKA

(leaps up. Takes out a ducat, puts it halfway in his mouth, offering the other half to Koštana) Koštana! My child!

(Koštana comes up to him and takes the ducat from his mouth with her lips.)

TOMA

(He too gives her money; sternly, but in a milder tone): Here... that's enough!

KOŠTANA

(throws the ducat to Salče and sings):

Give, oh give me that turbid water,
Let me drink, oh, drink it all –

TOMA

(giving her more money; still sternly, but softening): Here.... enough of that!

KOŠTANA

(sings):

There's a painted room waiting for you,
Let me drink, oh, drink it all ‘

TOMA

(overwhelmed, slaps himself on the forehead): No more for me, my daughter, no more! *(Straightens himself up.)* I wonder if you could also sing the one – But you don't know it! It's an old song. I my time, when I was young, it was very popular. Your mother, Salče, she used to sing it to me. *(To Salče)*: Eh, Salče?

SALČE

(pleased): Which one, master?

TOMA

(abstractedly, more to himself): That song: about the young wife, just married, who lies down and dies. The next morning the sun is already up high and yet she still does not come out of her room. Her mother comes, still she is not awake. Her mother-in-law stands at the door waiting for her to wake up, she is up

already and waiting, but the young wife is not there. The mother-in-law waits, then goes to wake her and sings sadly:

Oiansana, an'n jeldi,
Oian, oian maz!

(Your mother's come, Arise, my dear!)

(To Salče, pointing at Koštana): Does she know the song? Did you teach it to her?

SALČE

(happily): She does, Pilgrim, she does! *(Remembering):* But it's a difficult one, an old song!

TOMA

(pleased): I wish she would sing that one! For a tip worthy of a PILGRIM! Not the whole song. Just the ending. It's so eloquent. She is dead, but her mother-in-law thinks she can't come round from the first night's caresses and so doesn't come out of the room... Her father arrives. Too. The mother-in-law wakes her and sings sadly, very sadly:

Utansana bada jeldi,
Oian, oian may!

(Your father's come too, / Shame, shame on you!)

And she's dead and pure. A man's hand never touched her, his lips never kissed her. Dead and pure!

(Koštana rises and moves toward the balcony with the others singing the song. Then she turns round and dances and sings impetuously, accompanied by the band, with the other belly dancers:

Vanka went to fetch water –
 The boys went after her
 Oh, the pitchers, with the pitchers.
 - Stay awhile, O Vanka, stay,
 Let me say a word or two,
 Let me say a word or two;
 I am burning after you,
 I am burning after you,
 For the ring upon your finger,
 For the ring upon your finger,
 With a dozen precious stones –
 Oh, the pitchers, with the pitchers./

(She start swirling round them, peering in their faces, her head moving close past theirs... Salče accompanies her and sings too. Alil winds solos, breaks in, cuts across on his clarinet.)

(The night fades into dawn. The lanterns go out. The leaves rustle more audibly in the forest.)

MITKA

(as in a trance, to Alil): Alil, break into, cut through the song!
(Leaps up.) Hey, what's this rustle, like something kissed me?

TOMA

(to Marko): Marko! Saddle a horse, ride into the town. Call Hadži-Rista, Sekula, Zafir, call everybody, man, to come and have fun.

ACT THREE

The same room in Hadži-Toma's house as in Act One. At the far end, Stojan lies in bed with the quilt thrown back. Above him, by his head, on the sandal wood chair, platters full of grapes and pickled pears; a bowl full of fresh water from which the tip of a moistened napkin protrudes. In the candlestick, a candle is burning out, spluttering. Dawn. The blue breaks the faded candle light. The cocks are crowing. The voice of the seller of salep is heard: "Salep! Hot salep!" Sighs and low whispers from the kitchen; Stana peeps in every now and then.

Enter Stana (she approaches Stojan gingerly, listens to him breathing, touches his forehead and covers it with the napkin from the bowl. Kisses his forehead slowly): May sweet brother! (Exit as if afraid of waking him.)

STOJAN

(awakes with a start): Daybreak! Ur is it day? (Frightened): I don't want it to be day! I want her, her lips! ... Oh, why did I wake? It was her! Koštana, so sweet and so hot! She kneeled and pressed my cheeks with her little hands so hard my lips got pursed, sinking her lips on mine... ah!

STANA

(re-enters): Brother, did you call?

STOJAN

(notices her and sinks back): You?

STANA

(bursts into tears): Brother, why are you angry with me?

STOJAN

Go away.

STANA

(cries): Please don't be angry with me. What can I...? I'm frightened to death. All night you...And mother too. She is not angry with you now but with Father. They say he's painting the town red at Sobina. Father, as if he wasn't our old Father!

STOJAN

Who's playing to him?

STANA

(hesitantly): Then there is that girl...

STOJAN

(wrathfully): Go away!

STARA

Brother!

STOJAN

Go!

(Exit Stana crying.)

STOJAN

(leaps up): Gypsy! I loved her so, and what did she...? Gypsy! To the highest bidder...

KATA

(enters and comes up to him, worried): Are you ill, my son? What is it?

STOJAN

(with an uneasy evasive gesture): Nothing, I'm all right!

KATA

What would you like your mother to bring you? *(Approaches and wants to touch his forehead.)* Give me your forehead!

STOJAN

(pushes her away with his hand): Don't touch me!

KATA

(unable to control her tears, cries): Why, my son? Why do you treat your mother so? What did I do to you?

KATA

But I gave you birth for happiness, son. To have someone to gaze at, someone to swear by. Your mother bore you, and brought you up, and would now like to see you married, to get a daughter-in-law to take over her chores. So she could go to church like her lady-friends who have daughters-in-law, move among people, go visiting; receive guests and see them off; know how to receive them... to keep an open house with you, my son. Your mother bore you for happiness. To live her life with y o u since she couldn't with your father. He – my life with him has been wrapped in darkness. I never heard a godlike, gentle word from him, he's always shouting. *(Presses her head with her hands.)* I'm so afraid, all the Tim, son, my wits are gone.

(Clamour from afar, with music and singing, the words becoming discernible:

Hey, my sweet darling, little maid,
 if you pity me,
 Come, my sweet darling, little maid
 and see me off,
 See me off, my sweet darling, little maid,
 to the village's end,
 Hey, to the village's end, my sweet little maid,
 into the meadows...)

STOJAN

(pointing to where the music comes from, amorously): It's she,
 mother, yes, she....

KATA

(exit): Aw, she's a gypsy, my son! *(Stojan approaches the window, opens it and listens to the singing and music which are getting nearer and nearer. Now the jingling of the shakers and the striking of the tambourines are already discernible. Zada appears on the staircase; hiding, she approaches the window and throws in a withered leaf bound with a silk thread for Stojan.)*

STOJAN

(delighted, picks up the leaf): She?

ZADA

Sends it to you. This is just to say: After you'd gone, I put this leaf on my heart, and here it is. It's green, green as my grief 'cause I can't set eyes on you."

STOJAN

(throws money to her): Tell her to sing less and to save her throat.
(The singing and music grow louder.)

ZADA

(leaves, only to return soon. Throws in a dove's feather): This is just to say: "My throat was made for singing, and it sings for you alone."

STOJAN

(picks up the feather): Oh, tell her I am ailing.

ZADA

(leaves, only to return soon. Throws in a fading flower): And this: "If you are ailing, so am I. But my pain is sweet because I know you are ailing for my sake only."

(Clamour, singing hard by; they are entering the courtyard.)

ZADA

(starts): Oh dear, here they are!

(Exit.)

MARKO

(comes in running, out of breath; starts removing the bedclothes): The old Pilgrim!... Quick! Oh my! *(Collects the bedclothes. Exit. Stojan leaves after him.)*

(Music and singing; enter Toma, Mitka, Koštana and the rest.)

TOMA

(as he enters, to Koštana): When we used to come to my house, there was this song:

Ho, turn your horse round, Abdul Kerim-
-aga,

Ho, turn your horse round, or you'll be
sorry.

- No, I won't turn it, my dear young
Stamena,

My sorrow, I wouldn't turn it if I knew
I'd die.

I will die too. That's what I want you to sing. I'll die, I will... My son is on his sickbed – I want him dead.

KOŠTANA

(frightened, poignantly): Don't say that, master!

TOMA

(not listening to her): ...A wife? I have no wife. Never had one. I had a mother. A mother's no good for a young man. *(Turns round. Looks about the room. Shouts)*: Marko! *(Enter Marko.)* Lay the table, where's the wine? Serve your master now; hereafter, death may... *(To Koštana)*: Oh, Koštana, sweet daughter! Note the words, just your voice! Music, the music about – the one who was married to an old and unloved one! The wedding-guests in front, the groom behind, the gypsies following. Singing and dancing to him to cheer him up, their music sharp and piercing, piercing his heart! Such was my music and song when I was getting married: never to see the moonlight, never to wait for and then caress my darling, to bury my youth! I did bury it, too. Never saw it again! And now? Old wood. Oh! *(To Koštana)*: Come, sweet daughter, sing me the one about – "a painted fountain in the village, square, clear water..." Oh where is it now, clear and fresh and dewy, a drop on this old, old... *(Holds his forehead, sobs.)* come, my daughter!

KOŠTANA

(sings):

A painted fountain in the village square,
Its waters ran, O Aga, waters ran,

(breaks the other strings and showers ducats on her): Mitka! Die, Mitka! Breathe your last! *(To Marko):* Mugs and wine jugs! Raise the glasses! Bottoms up!

STOJAN

(appears in the door; jealously to Koštana): Gypsy! To the highest bidder!

TOMA

(shocked, furiously approaches the wall where the arms are): Who's there? Who's the other master here? He? Does he dare to speak still? My rifle! *(Takes a rifle and approaches the window. Shoots.)*

(A scream.)

STANA

(wailing in the kitchen): Don't Father! Sweet Father! Oh!

TOMA

(shooting): Him, yes. It's him I want to kill.

(Koštana, unseen, throws the strings and the loose ducats back into the kitchen.)

(Enter Arsa, running.)

ARSA

O Pilgrim! Don't!

TOMA

Him, yes, him...

ARSA

(wrings him from the window): Pilgrim, O Pilgrim...

TOMA

(blinded with fury, barely recognizes Arsa): What? You?

ARSA

(flabberghasted): It's me, Pilgrim... Brother! *(Sees Mitka and rushes at him)*: You at least! Go home! You!

MITKA

(throwing out his chest): Hey, what are you shoutin' at me for?

ARSA

Go home!

MITKA

Who do you think I am? A dog? How can you be so soulless, so heartless? Once in a lifetime I have fun, and look at you!

ARSA

Go home! What about your wife and children?

MITKA

I have no wife! You made me marry, made me a bondslave! You had your will with me. And now, take my wife and children!... I... have nothing. I have nobody. There!

ARSA

(furiously): Go home!

MITKA

(crestfallen, leaves): Oh, come on, don't...

ARSA

(after him): Straight home! *(To the gypsies)*: What about you? are you still here? *(Brandishes his staff.)*

(Salče, Grkljan, Alil and the others leave humbly; Koštana follows.)

TOMA

(to Arsa; stepping in front of Koštana): Everybody! Everybody but her!

ARSA

(shocked): Pilgrim!

TOMA

(pointing to Koštana): I'll shed blood for her. You are my in-law, my cousin, my kin – touch her, and you are my mortal enemy!

ARSA

(desperately, pointing to Toma's gray hair): Look at yourself, Pilgrim!

TOMA

(pointing his rifle at him): Will you?...

ARSA

(desperately, retreating towards the door): Cousin! *(To Koštana aside, so Toma cannot hear him)*: Pretend you're not well. *(Exit.)*

TOMA

(won't let Koštana go): Not you, sing to me!

KOŠTANA

Some other time! Now I must go too. I'm not well.

TOMA

(surprised): Oh, no... don't, my daughter! If your throat is sore, take some sherbet, apply dew... I'll melt pears for you, anything to cure your sore throat.

KOŠTANA

(pointing to her chest): Here, I've got a pain here! I must go!

TOMA

(cast down): Well, if it's... Well then... *(Koštana is leaving.)* Koštana! *(She halts.)* Koštana, my daughter, my child... *(Comes up to her, sobbing.)* At least let me... *(Bands and smells her breasts.)* Aah!

(exit Koštana.)

(Mitka's house – A front garden. The façade of a fine two-storeyed house with ornamented ceilings, a balcony, a bed.)
(Enter Mitka, dragging along Salče, Grkljan, Koštana and the belly dancers.)

MITKA

(furious, his shirt unbuttoned, turns round and calls the other musicians from the street): Musicians! Drummers! Belly dancers! Come here, all of you! *(The others come too. he points in front of himself where they all sit down):* Come here, sweet brothers all! *(To Koštana):* You come here before me.

(Koštana comes out and sits before him.)

MITKA

(to the other belly dancers): You *(points to Koštana while addressing the belly dancers)* by her side, without your tambourines... without anything... next to one another.

(The belly dancers come out; they almost sit in Koštana's lap sweetly and humbly.)

MITKA

That's the way! My murderous brother, my henchman brother, my brother –may he never be happy! *(Moves his limbs frantically.)* "Home"... *(Points to the house.)* Well, I'm home! *(Sits down, takes out and places before him his dagger, fez, money-bag, cigarette holder.)* C'me on now... *(to Alil):* Play! Play about lonely me. I have no brother, no father, no mother! A wife? *(Points to the house.)* There she is. She's so deep in flour and dough you can't even see her eyes! Play that, play my song!

ALIL

(surprised): What's your song, master?

MITKA

My song!

ALIL

(puzzled, casting inquiring glances at the others): What song of yours, master? We don't know any song of yours!

MITKE

Neither do I. I only hear it at night, and see it in my dreams. My song's a great one: There was a mother who had a son, she cherished and fed him, an' saw no one but him night and day. Whatever the son's soul craved, she gave him but her son – he was sick! He grow to manhood, he did. Vigour come, youth came... The gardens and flowers and moonlight came. The girls' odour spread!... Her son got wings. What he desired, he got. Horses and rifles, sabres and women... Only if he never looked at a girl did he fail to tangle her hair and to kiss her mouth. Not a single one refused him or deceived him, while he deceived them all, made love to them and – was sick, sick to death. Sick ever since he was born. *(Rises.)* That's the way I am!... And it's that pain and misery – it is some sorrow, or a curse, I don't know – that has struck me in the leg. I go and drink and roam from inn to inn. To forget my grief, to sleep. The earth drinks me... Night drinks me... Moonlight drinks me... I'm sick. Sick of being alive. Ever since I first opened my eyes I've been sick. *(Sits down. Looks at Koštana, the belly dancers, the little girls. Sprawls out so as to see them better.)* Oh my children, my sweet children! Sing, children. Let your voices ring. Pure voices! I want to listen to your sweet pure voices, 'cause my heart is torn, my body's limp, grown old... Sing something sad and gloomy!

KOŠTANA

(pitying him): Which one, master Mitka?

MITKA

Which one? Oh, Koštana, is there one song only that's sad? Do you know what black love-sickness is? Grave, huge black love-sickness! That's my sickness. Still (points to himself) look, I've grown old, and yet I haven't lived enough, sung enough, loved enough.. My heart is still dying and yearning for women, for beauty and loveliness! Yes, sing, Koštana, about the place where the road leads from the Black Tower to Bilača, Preševo and Skoplje. Summer night. Mount Šara sticking up into the sky, with Kosovo Field deserted and dead below. The wide, straight, imperial road. Horses and inns, fountains and gardens all beside it. Warm moonlight... Martinka in my lap, my horse Dorča pacing slowly, the musicians I'd taken with me as far back as Bilača Inn following me, playing and singing: "How Asan Pasha Was Driven Out of Ratay"... The Turks couldn't listen, they were so piqued, and yet they dared not attack me. They just hid in the inn. And in the inn – where the garden was, where the young women and girls danced in a ring and sang songs round the fountain in the moonlight... there was a clarinet playing, tambourines could be heard and songs... Not a song with words, just a voice, soft and tuneful... a sweet voice, like a maiden's first caresses and kisses... That voice moved with the moonlight, sticking to it, quivering, comin' down and lyin' like balm on my heart. (*To Koštana*): That voice, Koštana, that song, those times... Those times are over, never to return. For those times' sake I'll die grieving, I'm gonna lie down in my grave with my eyes open. Those times, Koštana, I want you to sing about them – about my youth. Sing "Grief for Youth"... for my sweet youth which is gone and lift me. sing and call it back. Beg it to come again to me, just once. It's that song I'd like so much to feel again, smell again. Oh, sing, Koštana!

ALIL

I'll do it, master. (*Sings*):

If only you knew, my maid, if you knew
 How it is to grieve for youth,
 You'd wait for me at the gate,
 You'd take me down from my horse,
 You'd carry me into the room –
 - Oh, woe to me, my young maid,
 My heart is burning for you.

MITKA

More of this, Alil! Sing, man! Even though you have a gypsy face, your eye sare full of pain. Sing. Do it as if you was singin' to yersel', as if you was sorry for yersel'. Sing, buddy...

KOŠTANA

(*in the mood*): I'll do it, master Mitka. (*Sings*): In my garden...

MITKA

(*interrupts her, stops her*): Any song but that! Not that one! 'cause if you sing that one too, I can't live... No...

KOŠTANA

(*continues singing*):

In my garden a hyacinth is blooming;
 I won't pick it!
 On the hyacinth a nightingale is singing,
 I don't hear it.
 The loved one says to her lover:
 - come tonight!
 Her lover replies to her:

- Not in a year!
 The roads are deserted, closed
 from Rumelia,
 Skender-Beg closed them down,
 To go out robbing;

The plague is killing – Skender-Beg’s robbing – alas, merciful
 God!

MITKA

(takes out his dagger, turning in on himself): I want to kill myself.

ALL

(frightened): Don’t, master, don’t!

MITKA

Why not? Why shouldn’t I? For what reason? don’t I know
 what I’m in form, what I’m destined to? To die. That’s it. Dust,
 for the worms to eat. That’s it! Why shouldn’t I kill myself? I
 will!

(Arsa with Policaja and several policemen rush in.)

ARSA

(Unable to control himself): I will, yes, I’ll kill you. *(Beats the
 gypsies- They all run away. Arsa stops Grkljan and Salče. Koštana
 and the others leave. Salče and Grkljan cower by the wall, scared and
 trembling.)*

ARSA

(gasping with fury, he looks Mitka in the face): Well? Well now?
 Hey... What is this?

(Mitka turns away from him in silence.)

ARSA

Get up!

(Mitka does not rise.)

ARSA

(shaking him): Get up! Are you alive?

MITKA

(gloomily): Not to you. I'm dead.

ARSA

Mita, Mita! ... Listen, man! Either you do it yourself or I'll...
(Towers above him furiously.)

MITKA

(rises frightened): What?

ARSA

This! I've kept my silence and my temper long enough. *(Gives him a close look, grabs his coat.)* What's the matter with you? Why half undressed, why so ghastly, pale and wan?

MITKA

(looking at himself): The matter with me? Nothin'. I'm all right.

ARSA

Listen, Mita. Either I'll never see you again with these *(points to the gypsies)* and at the inn, or – I'll kill you!

MITKA

(rises frightened): Kill me? What for?

ARSA

Kill you. Yes! I'll kill you all right! I'll kill you the way Father was about to in those days, when we gave you all that money to trade with, and you – in less than three days – you squandered it away on drink and gypsy girls in the inns and

around. And then, as Father wanted to kill you... (*With self-reproach*): Oh, why did I stop him, why didn't I let him kill you?!

MITKA

(*gloomily*): He was just like you: surly.

ARSA

(*explodes*): Father surly? Me surly? and she, Mother, who shielded you against both Father and myself, defended you, cried for you, she was surly and wicked too, worst of all because she spoilt you so much, cherished and defended you...

MITKA

(*interrupts him excitedly*): Mother, don't speak her name in vain. Her only mistake was to give you birth before me, so I must be silent and obey you 'cause you're my elder brother! That was her only fault: to have you before me. – O Mother, that's what a mother is. (*Cries.*) My sweet Mother, if she was alive, would she ever let you do this to me...

ARSA

(*moved*): Mita!

MITKA

(*wiping his tears*): There, you see! She made me cry! My sweet Mother! (*Leaving*): It's been so long since I last lit a candle for her!

ARSA

(*Holding him back*) Where to?

MITKA

(*leaving*): to the cemetery. To light a candle for my sweet Mother.

(Exit.)

ARSA

(exit after him, holding him back): No you won't; not there. You're going home now.

GRKLJAN

(humbly to Policaja): Have mercy, master!

(elbowing him): Shut up!

ARSA

(returns. To Salče and Grkljan): What about you two? are you the only people on earth, so no one can hold you in check? What good was my talking to you, threatening you, arresting you?... It's no use! You don't give a damn about what I say, do you? Do you?

GRKLJAN

(comes forward, falls prostrate before him and points to Salče): - Me, master – no! She did it, she taught her how to sing and dance. Not me – if I did anything wrong, here, you can...

(Points to his throat.)

ARSA

(to Salče): Speak, you witch! You are to blame for all this.

GRKLJAN

(briskly, frightened): It's she, master! She's to blame. Thank you for saying the right word. God grant you long life, and your children too! God bless you all! It's she! This one here. *(Points to Salče.)* Old and wrinkled – a witch, master. When Koštana was still a little girl, I tried to persuade the old hag to help me make horseshoe nails, to blow my bellows, but she wouldn't! Instead, she would take her, Koštana, and teach her, little thing that she

was, how to sing and play. She'd sing some of the old Turkish songs she knew to the child. And each time Koštana learned a song she (*swings out as if to his Salče on the head*), this witch, almost stifled her with joy... She's just crazy!... So she taught and taught and taught her... All night long, many nights... And now she knows! And now we're all going to get killed and she's to blame. (*Tries to hit Salče on the head again.*) It's her fault. She's a witch, master...

ARSA

I'll get you all, all of you... (*To Grkljan*): You are going to sweep the streets for the rest of your life, I promise you that. (*To Salče*): and you? I'll have you hanged, this very hour, this minute if within a week you don't get that creature of yours (*infuriated*): - I don't want to pronounce her name – married. The wedding, the money – I'll pay for it all. (*Enraged*): I don't want to see her around! Get out! Now!

SALČE

(*leaps, up, shocked, falls at Arsa's feet*): Don't do that, master...

ARSA

(*enraged*): Married at Banja, to Asan! (*To Policaja*): You to go to Banja at once, find Asan's father and tell him I said – I MASTER ARSA – said this: on Sunday, this Sunday, now – do you hear me? – he is to get his wedding-guests together and come here to get her, this Koštana, and get her married to his son Asan out there, at Banja... Did you hear me?

POLICAJA

(*humbly*): Yes, master...

SALČE

(*shrieks with fear*): Don't do it, master! Don', please, master!

ARSA

(to Policaja): You too, when they come to take her away, must be here with your policemen. And if she won't, take her by force! If she won't come alive – put her in the wagon dead and get her to the village!

SALČE

(shrieks, kisses Arsa's knees and hands): don't do it, master! let me kiss your hand, your foot! She's not ready for y husband yet! She's so young, a mere dewdrop, a child who has yust opened her eyes on this world... Oh, be merciful, master! She won't sing ever, ever again...

ARSA

Not while she lives – dead she may!

SALČE

(twisting helplessly): She won't, she'll never dance again, never sing again. She'll never see the world again. I'm going to hide her, under my skirts, behind my veil, that's how I'm going to keep her and take care of her – she'll never see *me*, let alone anybody else. Only please don't make her go to Banja, get married to Asan. Don't give her a husband, she's too young! Let me keep her, master! Give her to me! She's mine! My own baby! She comes from here, master! *(Plucks her breasts, her hair, her face.)* From here, master.

ARSA

(enraged, kicks her away): Shut up! *(Leaves.)*

SALČE

(won't give in, drags herself after him, hits her forehead against the ground): Don't, master! She's my child, my own baby!

ARSA

(pushes her away again. To Policaja): Put her in jail! And don't let her out until the wedding-guests take Koštana with them, then just let her say good-bye. Until then – no water and no bread for her, nothing! *(Exit.)*

SALČE

(screams, twisting and turning): No, master! What have you done? Alas, master!

GRKLJAN

(in tears): We're old, master! We're going to starve without her.

ACT FOUR

Gypsy town. Low ramshackle houses. No trees, old fireplaces, burnt coal, gypsy tents, anvils and whetstones all over the place. On the left, at the far end, Koštana's little house with a door and a small window, pasted with paper. On the right, town houses with trees and gardens; in front, in the distance, a forest from which a straight sandy road issues. In the distance, soft music comes from the road – a wedding song; a covered wagon ornamented with towels can be seen faintly. In front of the procession, a banner is fluttering. Round the wagon, gypsies in white turbans and long dolmans. They all approach quietly, darkly with a wedding song.

In front of the hovel, Kurta and Ahmet are standing with the Gypsy Chief. They all have cudgels; they are frightened now listening to the music from the road, now looking at the hovel.

KURA

(to Ahmet, cheering him up): They're coming, the wedding guests are coming.

GYPSY CHIEF

(frightened, hushing them up): Be quiet! *(To Kurta):* Kurta, get to the road and watch them. *(Exit Kurta.)* And you, Ahmet *(points to Koštana's door),* stay in front of her door and guard her well.

(Ahmet goes behind Koštana's little house.)

(The Gypsy Chief stops and peers every now and then. he looks at Koštana's hovel, then at the road, along which the wedding-guests are approaching.)

Policaja and his policemen are seen to have moved away from the other gypsies; they are heading the procession.)

GYPSY CHIEF

(cheering himself up): They're coming, the wedding-guests are coming! *(Frightened, he looks at Koštana's hovel):* How much longer do I have to wait for them to take her away? I'm so afraid she might get away!

(Koštana issues from the little house wearing a longsleeved robe and silk blouse, a cap of narrow gilded threads covering her head and face, in white stockings.)

KOŠTANA

Oh! *(She comes out with difficulty, holding the door for support.)* Must I go there? Marry Asan in that village, in Banja? There? Must I be his, Asan's *(Furiously):* He my husband? He? Agh! *(Bites her hands. Totters. Sees the Gypsy Chief. Advances toward him in rage.)* What do you want? Who are you waiting for? Waiting for them to come and take me away? Waiting so you can watch them taking me away?...

GYPSY CHIEF

(frightened): No, Koštana, I'm not waiting. I'm not going to watch. But I dare not – Master, the Mayor will kill me if you're not here. That's why I'm here. I've got to guard you. I mustn't leave...

KOŠTANA

(angrily): Guarding me? *(Shivers.)* You're afraid I may run away? *(Defiantly):* Well, I won't! I won't. Here, I'm not running away. *(Sits in front of him.)* Here, guard me. I am not going to try anything. I'll do anything. Where are they? Let them see me! Here *(pointing to herself):* the gilded threads, the long-seewed robe, the silk blouse, the tassels... everything is ready! My heart,

my eyes, my body – all to go to him, to Asan out there in the village! (*Defiantly but weakly*): That's where I'm going. (*Wrings her hands.*) Oh, that's where I'll pluck out my eyes, burn my skin, dry up my body. (*Tears her clothes, her face, her hair.*)

GYPSY CHIEF

(*recoils, aghast*): Don't do that, Koštana! Not so hard! I'm not guarding you! Look, I'm going. But the Mayor is going to kill me if you're not here!... I'm going. But don't rave like that! After all, Asan is all right – he's rich. (*Exit.*)

KOŠTANA

(*covers her face with her hands*): It's Arsan!

(*The music and wedding-guests draw closer. Suddenly, a rider is heard dismounting. Enter Stojan in haste, in riding boots, inflamed, with a rifle.*)

STOJAN

(*to Marko behind him, handing him the reins and the rifle*): Hold the horses and wait. (*Come up to Koštana. Lifts her. Staggers with joy.*) Košta, quick! Let's go!

KOŠTANA

(*starts*): You?!

STOJAN

Me? (*Horried*): Why are you looking at me that way? Come! Hurry!

KOŠTANA

Where to?

STOJAN

Into the wide world, where I can smell your hair, gaze into your eyes, listen to your voice, your songs... Only you!

KOŠTANA

(happily): Hey, do you really love me so much?

STOJAN

(ecstatically): I'll give everything up. Everything, Father, Mother, the house. Come on! The horses are waiting! One for me and one for you! Where we turn, there we'll go *(jealously)*: only you and me! No one else!

KOŠTANA

Stojan!

STOJAN

(jealously): Only you, no one but you! I'll listen to your voice alone, gaze into your eyes, your face, your body... Whoever dares to look at you, I'll drain his blood.

KOŠTANA

(distractedly, uneasily): Yes No one...

STOJAN

No one! Not even God himself! Neither Father, nor Mitka, nor the Mayor, let alone Policaja and his policemen... Should anyone dare to look at you, just catch a glimpse of you, speak a word to you – his mother must wind him in black cloth! *(Furiously)*: I'll him to pieces with my own teeth.

KOŠTANA

(curtly, cheerlessly): I won't.

STOJAN

(bewildered): What?

KOŠTANA

(curtly, moodily): I won't! Why should I run, what for?

STOJAN

(staggers toward her pulling out his knife): Don't you love me?!

KOŠTANA

(frightened, begging him): No, Stojan, no! Don't kill me! I love you and I beg you! Don't! I'm not well! I mustn't . I can't *(Wrings her hands.)* Oh, what can I do? *(Resentfully):* I, a gypsy, a mere gypsy! To Banja, to the village, that's my proper station! There to sit on the wet ground, on a bare stone, to dry up, to die, to wither!... And if I came to you? I can't, I mustn't.

STOJAN

(his mind wandering, in fragments): ..."On a bare stone... to sit, to wither, to die, she mustn't .. she won't She can't."

KOŠTANA

(to herself): I won't! I can't! With you! Only with you? and again only with you? to serve and humour only the Pilgrim, your father, and your mother? to kneel before them and to wash their feet? Never to leave the room, only to sit and serve, to suffer in silence? *(Beside herself):* Oh! And when night descends, and the moon comes out, and I'm sleepless, my eyes wide open, may body dancing wildly... then what? Am I to sit still, never to budge, never leave the room, just sitting there, suffering silently, watching the moon... And the night is so deep, moonlight spreads, warming, hitting my forehead, my head... burning... Then what? *(With determination):* Oh, I will not! Kill me! I won't! Here, kill me!

STOJAN

(pushes her away): Oh no! *(Stagers, grasps his forehead.)* Pshaw! My, my! haw I loved her!! I gave up my Mother and Father, my house, I only had eyes for her, thought of no one but her! ... And she – *(Broken, he shouts to Marko):* Marko! Go and break the

good news to my Mother: My l i f e i s o v e r. *(To Koštana):*
And you? Tell me if you ever loved me at all, I want to know
what I have to fade for.

STOJAN

(bends over Koštana): Tell me.

KOŠTANA

(leaps up furiously): Never! I never loved anybody! Nor will I,
ever!

STOJAN

(crestfallen): Ah! *(Exit.)*

(Enter Policaja.)

POLICAJA

(at the gate, to those behind him): Get the wagon! Quick!~ What
about her? If she so much as opens her mouth, I'll skin her alive
with my whip. *(Goes up to Koštana):* Oh, you're ready? Let's go!

KOŠTANA

(without looking at him): I'm ready.

POLICAJA

(brandishing his whip): Shut up! Or I'll skin you alive! *(Shouts):*
Get the wagon!

*(The wagon arrives; enter policemen, gypsies, wedding-guests and
musicians.)*

(Koštana shivers.)

POLICAJA

(To Koštana, pointing to the wagon with his whip): Come on! On to
the wagon!

POLICEMAN

(to Policaja): Wait, Policaja, they're getting Salče, her mother, to say good-bay to her.

KOŠTANA

(*trembling with fear and staggering, she starts for the hovel*). Wait, wait a minute, I must take my bundle, put on my slippers... Oh! (*She enters the hovel.*)

POLICAJA

(*follows her, then stops at the door*): Make it quick!

(*Wedding song and music continue. Then another song is heard.*)

(*Enter Mitka singing.*)

MITKA

(*sings*):

Innkeeper, hey, innkeeper,
Bring me some wine and rakija,
I want to drink, to get drunk,
To break my woes into pieces!

MITKA

(*on seeing the wagon, the wedding-guests and the musicians, motions to them to hush them, to stop them*): Stop there! Stop!

POLICAJA

(*frightened, to Mitka*): Don't, master! What are you trying to do?

MITKA

(*stops them*): Stop! Where are you goin'?

POLICAJA

(frightened, humbly): What do you want, master? Don't do that! You're drunk!

MITKA

(draws his dagger on Policaja): I'm not drunk, man! It's just that my heart has been plucked out. I'm not gonna try anything. *(Points to Koštana.)* I'm bringin' her gifts.

(Everybody: Policaja, the policemen, the wagon withdraw humbly before Mitka.)

POLICAJA

(horrified, to a policeman): Run and fetch the Mayor!

(Exit policeman.)

KOŠTANA

(comes out running, overjoyed and ecstatic, comes up to Mitka): You? thank you! God bless! Quick! *(Starts toward the hovel.)* Back in a minute! *(Enters. Returns. On the threshold, her whole body trembling, she appears with two bundles of clothes, hastily adding, pushing more sleeveless jackets, kerchiefs and dresses into the bundles.)* This too, and this! *(Throws away the rest.)* I don't want these! *(She tears up some pieces.)* What good are these? *(Holds the bundles under her arms, her slippers, just taken off, in her hands, she comes up to Mitka staggering with joy)*: Oh, master! Save me, sweet master! Give me your hand, your foot – *(Drops the bundles, kisses his hands, bends to kiss his feet and his knees too.)*

MITKA

(stops her): Don't!

KOŠTANA

(trying to kiss his feet): Let me! Just save me, and I'll kiss the ground you tread on with your feet. *(Desperately)*: Save me, sweet master! Take me there!

(Mitka watches her, depressed.)

KOŠTANA

(spreading her arms forward in desperation): There! There!

MITKA

(depressed as before): The earth is there, the earth is here!

KOŠTANA

(beside herself with despair, she spreads her arms upward in all directions): There! There!

MITKA

(pointing up, skyward): Up to the sky? It's high up there, and there below *(points to the ground):* so hard!

KOŠTANA

(clasping her head with her hands): Oh!

MITKA

(from the bottom of his chest): It is so, Koštana! So it is written! The weird sisters have spoken. *(Points to the wagons and the wedding-guests.)* Here, they've come to take you away, to get married. And you'll go. You'll be married, they're gonna play music to you, and sing songs to you, they'll all be rejoicin' over you the groom'll be rejoicin' and kissin' you, and you '- you'll be cryin'! Cryin' on your weddin' night, cryin' on your secon' night, cryin' all life long.

(Koštana sobs.)

MITKA

(continues): Your hands will be chopped with hard work, your face will turn black, your eyes will dry up!... And your heart will be torn to pieces.

KOŠTANA

(shivers): Enough! No more, master!

MITKA

(leaning back, bitterly): That's it! don't I know what's comin' to me! It's comin', Koštana – autumn, home, my brother, the fog, the graveyard... That's what's comin' along. That's where I'm goin' too! Oh Koštana, when you hear I'm Dead, don't you shed a tear, don't mourn for me. Nobody should mourn for me. I've mourned and bewailed myself in my lifetime.

(Koštana cries.)

MITKA

(moved, comes up to her): Don't cry. Tears are no good! *(Kneels by her side and lifts her tearful head.)* Listen to what big brother's gonna tell you. Brother's not a baby, many a sight has he seen, many a trouble has he gone through. *(Points to the ground.)* From here, Koštana, no road leads any farther! What the weird sisters decided on the third night – that's it! And all one's life, that's it Didn't I refuse to submit, didn't I bear it?! No use! My brother, had he cut me up in pieces, I wouldn't have yielded. But since he b e g g e d me and said: either I must kill him, or else stop disgracin' him by hanging about inns – well, with that plea of his he cut my throat! Koštana, I'd never harm a flea, how cold I attempt to harm my brother. A brother's a brother. We sucked the same milk – our sweet mother's. let it be me rather than him! No more inns! No more for me! No more songs! Home, by the fire! *(Fumbles in his belt looking for his money-bags.)* And now, Koštana, god bless you! Farewell! Go your journey! I must go too. Go home, home... And never leave it alive. They'll take me out dead... O-ho, come, let big brother hand you a gift. *(Takes money out of his bag.)*

(Policaja with his policemen and the wagons appear.)

POLICAJA

(humbly, frightened, to Mitka): Master, let's go!

MITKA

Wait a minute!

POLICAJA

It's getting dark.

MITKA

Tomorrow is another day for you, but not for me. Wait. *(Policaja and the others withdraw. Mitka lifts Koštana and brings her to her senses.)* C'me on, Koštana! rise and shake off your dreams! Come, the wedding-guests are waitin', the groom's waitin'. Get up! don't cry! Not a tear! Silence your heart and bear it! Be a man, an' a man's only made for grief an' pain! *(Lifts her while his tears are flowing, falling on his hands.)* C'me on! Go!

KOŠTANA

(rises in tears): Where to?

MITKA

(crying): Why d'you ask me where to go? Am I the one to tell you! Where to? Where I'm goin', you're goin'. I'm goin' to my home, you to yours. Cry, and so will I... For you, it's gonna be a hove, covered wagons, dogs, and beggin'; for me, the house, fireplace and ashes, a wife with her sleeves rolled up, all sticky with dough. *(Policaja and his policemen, the wagon and the wedding-guests are in sight again. Mitka Produces money and gives it to her, lays it out on her forehead, on her face.)* Here's gift from me, let me give you... Give you money to save for a rainy day. And sure enough, the rainy day's come. Here they come! *(Points to the wagon, the wedding-guests, the Gypsies.)* Here they are! Playin'! Rejoicin' for you! *(Furiously to the musicians):* Play, you devils! *(The musicians come out, playing loudly and approach*

him humbly. Mitka to Koštana): and now, farewell! Good-bye! Be still, don't grieve, don't cry.

POLICAJA

(humbly, frightened): Enough, master, enough.

MITKA

(bitterly, leaving Koštana): Go now! *(Exit.)*

(Policaja and his policemen close round Koštana trying to lift her to the wagon.)

POLICAJA

(to Koštana): Lets go!

KOŠTANA

(rises, wipes her tears, pushes away the policemen): I'll do it myself.

(She turns toward the wagon.)

(Enter Salče running, in rags; she tears herself away from the policemen, comes up to Koštana, kisses her, stops her): My baby, my baby...

KOŠTANA

(pushing her away, gets onto the wagon): Shut up, o l d w o m a n!

(exeunt.)

Translated into English by

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