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Hasan Aga's Wife

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What gleams white in the green forest?
Is it snow, or is it a swans?
If it were snow it would have melted by now;
And swans would have already taken to flight.
No, it is neither snow nor is it swans,
But the tent of Aga Hasan Aga.
He is suffering from terrible wounds.
His mother visits him, and his sister;
But his wife could not, because of modesty.
When his wounds began to heal
He sent word to his faithful wife:
"Don't wait for me in the white manor,
Neither in the manor nor amidst my family."
When the lady understood these words
The poor one was still pondering them
When hoofbeats resounded near the manor:
Hasan Aga's wife started to run
At breakneck speed beneath the windows of the tower;
After her ran her two maiden daughters:
"Come back, dear mother of ours;
That isn't daddy Hasan Aga,
It's Uncle Pintorović Beg."
And Hasan Aga's wife came back.
Then she hung her arms around her brother's neck.
"Yes, my brother, it's a great disgrace
For him to send me away from my children!"
The beg is silent, he says nothing.
And he takes out a certificate of annulment for her,
Requesting full payment of the divorce penalty
And stating that she is going with him, back to her mother.
When the lady examined the document
She kissed her two sons on the forehead
And her two daughters on their rosy faces;
But with her tiny little son in the cradle
She could not part in any way.

Instead her brother had to take her by the arms,
 And he barely separated her from her little son.
 Then he set her in front of him on his horse
 And he went with her to the white manor.
 She stayed only a short time with her family,
 A short time, not a full week.
 A good lady and from a good family
 She was sought after from all sides,
 And especially by the Imoski judge.
 The lady implored her brother:
 "Oh, dear brother, for the sake of our mother,
 Don't give me in marriage to anyone,
 Lest my poor heart should break
 At the sight of my orphans."
 But the beg didn't mind at all
 And he gave her to the Imoski judge.
 The lady implored her brother a second time,
 To write a letter for her, on a white sheet of paper,
 And to send it to the Imoski judge.
 "The bride sends you her greetings
 And in her letter she kindly asks
 That when you assemble the wedding party,
 You bring a long veil for the bride;
 So that when she will be opposite the aga's manor
 She won't be able to see her orphans."
 When the white letter reached the judge
 He assembled the wedding party.
 He assembled the wedding party and he went for the bride.
 The party arrived at the bride's place in fine fettle
 And they started their return trip in good spirits.
 But when they were opposite the aga's manor
 Her two daughters were watching her from a window,
 And her two sons came out to her.
 And they said to their mother:
 "Come visit us, dear mother of ours,
 So we can give you something to eat."
 When Hasan Aga's wife heard this
 She said to the leader of the wedding party:
 "Brother in God, leader of the wedding party,
 Stop my horses by the manor
 So that I may give gifts to my orphans."
 They stopped her horses by the manor.
 She gave fine gifts to her children.
 To each little son gilded knives,
 To each daughter a homespun dress to the ground;
 But to the little son in the cradle,
 To him she sends clothes wrapped in a bundle.
 Now the hero Hasan Aga sees all this

And he calls to his two sons:
“Come here, my orphans,
Since she won’t have pity on you,
Your mother of the stone heart.”
When Hasan Aga’s wife heard that
Her white face struck the ground;
At that moment she parted with her soul
for the sorrow of looking at her orphans.
Translated by Thomas Butler

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