

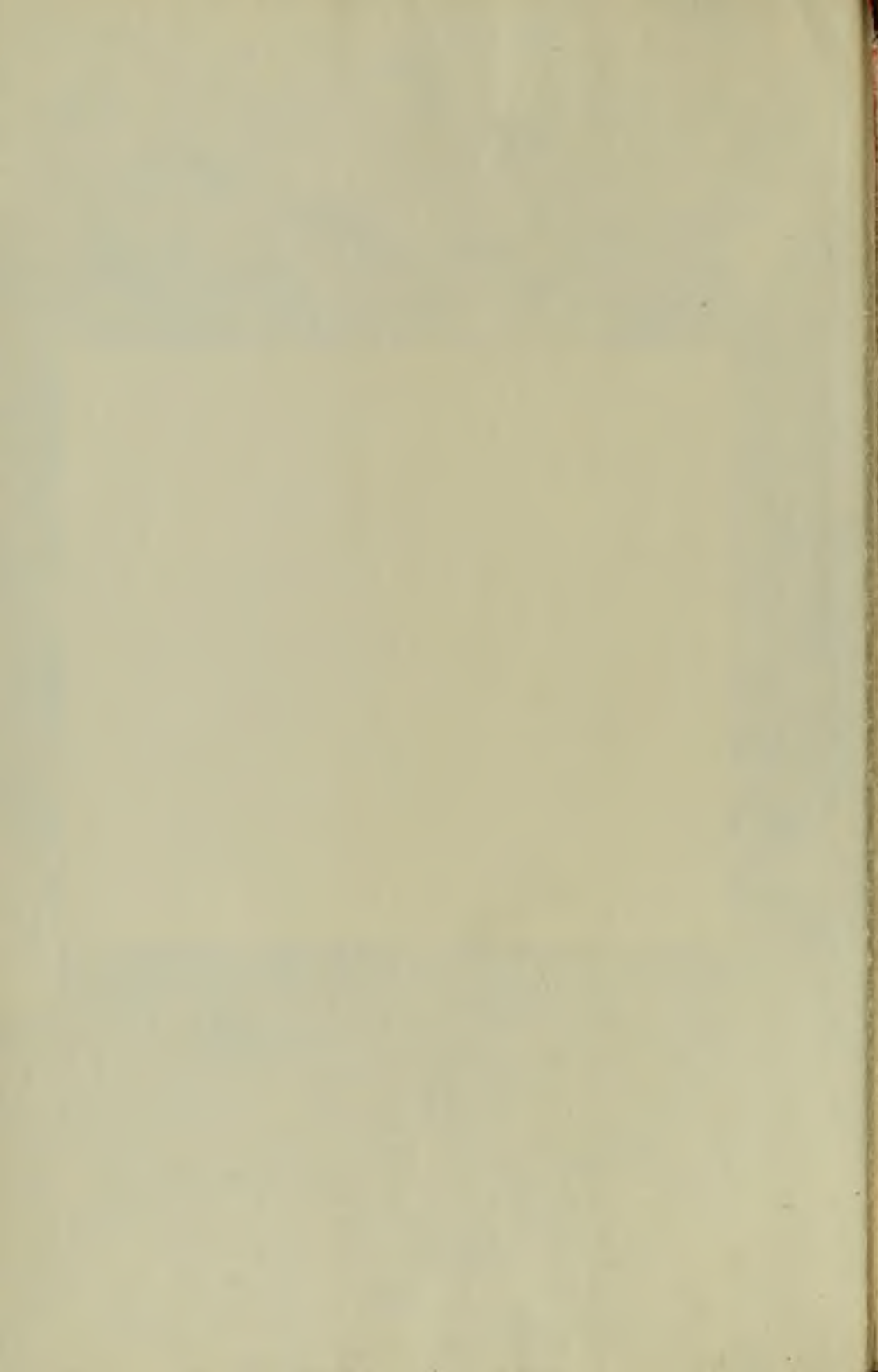
Ivo Andrić
The
Pasha's
Concubine
and
other tales

A COLLECTION OF STORIES
BY THE WINNER OF THE 1961 NOBEL PRIZE
FOR LITERATURE, TRANSLATED FROM
THE SERBO-CROATIAN BY JOSEPH HITREC

These thirteen tales by a Nobel Prize-winning author are set in Andrić's native Yugoslavia and cover a span of some three centuries: from the period when his country lay under the domination of the Ottoman Empire through the harrowing years of the Nazi occupation during World War II. The tales reflect his country's turbulent past, the conflict of cultures, religions, and traditions that took place within its constantly vulnerable borders, but beneath this conflict lies the darker one in the hearts of individuals buffeted by history and torn by anguish, lust, and love, or tormented by divided loyalties. For Andrić is mainly preoccupied with the mysterious forces at work in the innermost beings of people, those forces that link the blood-stained bandit to the fastidious professor, the flighty schoolgirl to the saintly mystic. This collection of stories displays the pageantry of life in its brightest and darkest hues and offers the reader a representative selection of some of the best writing of one of the foremost storytellers of our time.

No _____











BY IVO ANDRIĆ

The Pasha's Concubine and Other Tales
(1968)

The Woman from Sarajevo
(1965)

Bosnian Chronicle
(1963)

THESE ARE BORZOI BOOKS

PUBLISHED IN NEW YORK BY ALFRED A. KNOPF

THE PASHA'S CONCUBINE

AND OTHER TALES

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

PHILOSOPHY DEPARTMENT

PHILOSOPHY 101

LECTURE NOTES

1998

101

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T H E
P A S H A ' S
C O N C U B I N E
A N D
O T H E R T A L E S

by

Ivo Andrić

Translated from the Serbo-Croatian by Joseph Hitrec



NEW YORK: ALFRED · A · KNOFF

1 9 6 8



THIS IS A BORZOI BOOK
PUBLISHED BY ALFRED A. KNOPF, INC.

Library of Congress Catalog Card Number: 67-11137

First American Edition

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by Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., New York, and simultaneously
in Canada by Random House of Canada Limited,
Toronto. Distributed by Random House, Inc., New
York.

Manufactured in the United States of America

"The Scythe" was first published in *Esquire Magazine*.
Originally published in Serbo-Croatian as
part of the twelve-volume *Sabrana djela Ivo Andrića*
(*The Collected Works of Ivo Andrić*), Mladost, Zagreb, 1963.

PG 1418
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*Note on the Pronunciation
of South Slavic Names*

Phonetic English transliteration of Slavic names—serviceable in the case of the Russians—does not work quite as well with South Slavic names, which are often built in groupings of velars, rolled r's, sibilants of varying hardness, and fixed vowel sounds. Applied with any consistency, this method would yield gargoyles such as Cherkhlintse and Kowkdzhich, for Čerklince and Kaukdžić. It seemed better, therefore, to leave them as they are in the original and to trust the visual memory of the reader to keep them in context as he goes along—as doubtless he often does with French, German, and Scandinavian names.

For those, however, who would not be fobbed off, here are a few rules of thumb: the Serbo-Croatian *a* is sounded as in *father* (never as in *fare, fall, fan*). *E* as in *there* (not *here, or herd*). *I* as in *seek* (not *ice, or bird*). *O* as in *more* (not *move, mode, or Mom*). *U* as in *true* (not *tune, or thumb*). *C* is always *ts*, as in *bats*. *Č* is always the hard *ch*, as in *chin*. *Ć* is a softer *ch*, as in Italian *ciao*. *Dj* is the English *j*, as in *jar*. *Dž* is similar but harder, as in *budge*. *J* is always soft, the

NOTE ON THE PRONUNCIATION

English y, as in boy. *R* is rolled, often vowelized, as in Serbo-Croatian *mrk*, gloomy (similar to English murky). *Š* is always sh, as in *shine*. *Ž* is always zh, as in *seizure*.

A few Turkisms—impossible of translation—have been retained in the text, and the reader, hopefully, will take them in his stride. Most are Bosnian usage of Turkish titles of rank, profession, landowning status, and traditional honorifics—as follows:

Aga: military title, used loosely of any higher rank. *Beg*: meaning one of the landed gentry. *Divan*: council or council chamber, also an audience or reception. *Effendi*: learned sir, your honor, sir. *Hodja*: muezzin. *Kavass*: Syce, groom, attendant. *Rayah*: subject Christian populace of Bosnia; sometimes meaning poor country folk, or town riff-raff.

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THE PASHA'S CONCUBINE

AND OTHER TALES



THE BRIDGE ON THE ŽEPA

In the fourth year of his term as Grand Vizier, Yusuf committed a political indiscretion and, falling victim to a dangerous intrigue, unexpectedly fell into disfavor. The struggle lasted a whole winter and spring. It was a wicked and cold spring, which refused to let the summer begin. But in May, Yusuf emerged from banishment as victor. And so life went on as before, glorious, peaceful, and undisturbed. But from those winter months, when the margin between life and death, glory and ruin, amounted to little more than the sharp edge of a knife, there remained in the victorious Vizier a sense of something fretful and subdued. It was something that could not be expressed, something that men of experience who have suffered harbor inside them like a hidden treasure, and which unconsciously, and only at times, is reflected in a look, a movement, or in speech.

While he had lived in confinement, in solitude and in disgrace, the Vizier's memories of his origins and of his old country had grown more vivid, for disappointment and pain

always turn the mind back to the past. He recalled his mother and his father. (They had both died while he was still a modest assistant to the Sultan's Master of the Horse; he had since ordered their graves to be edged with stone coping and marked by white tombstones.) He recalled Bosnia and the village of Žepa, from which he had been taken when he was nine.

It was pleasant in his unhappiness to think of that distant country and the scattered village, where tales of his success and glory in Istanbul were told in every house, and where nobody knew or even suspected the reverse side of the medal of glory, or the price at which success was to be attained.

That very summer he had had an opportunity to talk to people coming from Bosnia. He questioned them, and they told him what they knew. After many rebellions and wars, the country had been convulsed by riots, scarcity, starvation, and all kinds of epidemics. He ordered substantial help for all his relatives who were still at Žepa, and at the same time instructed the officials to find out what was most needed in the way of building work. He was told that the family Šetkić still had four houses and were the wealthiest in the village, but that both the village and the surrounding countryside had become impoverished, that the mosque had fallen into disrepair and become damaged by fire, and that the wells had gone dry; but their worst predicament was that there was no bridge over the river Žepa. The village stands on a hill right above the confluence of the Žepa and the Drina, and the only way of getting to Višegrad was over the Žepa, about fifty yards above the confluence. No matter what kind of plank bridge they threw across, it was always swept away by the waters; for either the Žepa would rise quickly and unexpectedly, as mountain streams are wont to do, and weaken the bridge and sweep away the logs, or else it was the Drina that swelled suddenly and rushed into the channel of the Žepa and backed its flow, so

that its level rose and bore the bridge away as if it had never been. Then again, in the winter the planks became iced and slippery, so that both men and beasts of burden came to grief. Thus, were anybody to build them a bridge, he would do them the greatest service.

The Vizier gave six rugs for the mosque and as much money as was needed to build a fountain with three spouts in front of it. At the same time he decided to build the villagers a bridge.

In Istanbul at that time there lived an Italian master builder who had put up several bridges near the city, and so had made a name for himself. He was now engaged by the Vizier's treasurer and sent to Bosnia with two men from the Court.

They arrived at Višegrad before the last snows of winter had melted. For several days afterwards the astonished people of Višegrad watched the master builder as, stooping and gray-haired but with a pink and youthful face, he inspected the great stone bridge there, knocking on it, crumbling the joints' mortar between his fingers and tasting it on his tongue, measuring the arches with his steps. Then he went to spend a few days at Bania, at the quarry from which the stone for the Višegrad bridge had come. He hired day laborers to clear out the quarry, which had become partially filled with earth and overgrown with bushes and hemlock saplings. They went on digging until they found a wide, deep vein of stone that was harder and whiter than that which had been used for the Višegrad bridge. Then the master builder walked down the bank of the Drina as far as the Žepa and determined the spot where the stone would be ferried across the river. Whereupon one of the Vizier's men went back to Istanbul with an estimate and plans.

The Italian remained behind to await their return, but he did not want to stay either at Višegrad or in any of the Chris-

tian houses overlooking the Žepa. He built himself a log cabin on a rise in the triangle between the Drina and the Žepa—the remaining Vizier's man and a Višegrad clerk acting as his interpreters—and there he lodged. He cooked for himself, buying eggs, cream, onions, and dried fruit from the peasants. He never once bought meat, it was said. All day long he dressed sample blocks of stone, made drawings, experimented with various kinds of rock, and studied the course and the currents of the Žepa.

In the meantime, the other official returned from Istanbul with the Vizier's approval and one third of the necessary funds.

Work on the bridge started. The people's wonder at the unusual spectacle knew no bounds. What was happening before their eyes in no way resembled a bridge. The men sank massive pine trunks diagonally across the Žepa, and between them a double row of piling, plaited together with brushwood and reinforced with clay, so that the whole thing looked like a trench. In this way the river was diverted and one half of the river bed was drained. But one day, just when this work was completed, there was a cloudburst somewhere in the mountains and in no time at all the Žepa changed color and rose. That same night it broke the middle of the newly finished dam. By dawn the following morning the water had receded, but the wattle was broken through, the piles torn up, and the beams knocked askew. Among the workers and the people it was whispered that the Žepa did not want a bridge thrown over itself. But three days later the master builder ordered new piles to be driven in, this time deeper, and the remaining beams to be repaired and secured. Once more the rocky bottom of the river bed echoed to the din of the mallets and workmen's cries and rhythmical blows.

Only when everything had been set and made ready, and the stone from Bania delivered, did the stone cutters and

masons arrive—men from Herzegovina and Dalmatia. They built themselves wooden huts, in front of which they chipped away at the stone, coated with dust and as white as millers. The master builder went from one to another, bent down over them, constantly checking their work with a drafting triangle of yellow tin and a lead plumb bob on a green thread. When the steep and rocky banks had been cut through on both sides, the money suddenly ran out. The workmen began to grumble and rumor arose among the local people that nothing would come of this bridge. Some men who had just arrived from Istanbul reported having heard that the Vizier had had a change of heart. No one knew what was the matter with him, whether he was ill or beset by other troubles, but he was becoming more and more inaccessible and was neglecting or abandoning public works which he had begun in Istanbul itself. Yet a few days later one of the Vizier's men arrived with the remainder of the money, and the work went on.

A fortnight before St. Demetrius' Day, the people crossing the Žepa by the plank bridge a little distance above the new works noticed for the first time a white, smooth wall of hewn stone, decked with scaffolding like a spider's web, and jutting out of the dark-gray slate on both banks of the river. From then on it grew every day. Before long, however, the first frosts began, and work was suspended. The masons went home for the winter, while the master builder ensconced himself in his log cabin, from which he hardly ever emerged. All day long he pored over his plans and expense ledgers, and went out from time to time to inspect the bridge works. When, just before the spring, the river ice began to crack, he was often seen puttering around the scaffolding and the dams, a worried look on his face. Sometimes he would even do this at night, with a torch in his hand.

Just before St. George's Day, the masons returned and work was resumed. And exactly at midsummer the bridge was

finished. Gaily the workers took down the scaffolding, and from behind the maze of beams and boards there appeared a white and slender bridge, spanning the two rocky banks in a single soaring arch.

Few things would have been harder to imagine than such a wonderful structure in so ravaged and bleak a place. It seemed as if the two banks had each spurted a foaming jet of water toward one another, and these had collided, formed an arch, and remained thus for a moment, hovering above the chasm. Through the arch, at the farthest point of vision, one could see a small blue stretch of the Drina, and deep down beneath it was the gurgling Žepa, now tamed and froth-speckled. For a long time one's eyes could not get used to the slender and beautifully conceived line of that arch, which looked as if in its flight it had momentarily got caught on that prickly and harsh landscape full of bramble and hemlock, and that at the first opportunity it would take off again and disappear.

Country folk from the nearby villages flocked to see the bridge. Townspeople from Višegrad and Rogatica also came to admire it, regretting that it had been built in such a stony wilderness instead of in their own market town.

"The thing to do is to give birth to a Vizier," answered the people of Žepa as they passed their hands over the bridge parapet, which was straight and fine-edged as if carved from cheese, not hewn from stone.

Even as the first travelers, halting in wonder, were already crossing the bridge, the master builder paid off his men, packed and loaded his cases of tools and paper, and set off for Istanbul together with the Vizier's two men.

Tales about him now spread through town and village. Selim the Gypsy, who had carried the Italian's purchases on his horse from Višegrad, and was the only one ever to have entered the log cabin, now took his ease in the coffeehouses

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