During the sixties of the past century a strong desire for knowledge, and the better life that education brings with it, penetrated even the most remote regions of Bosnia. Nothing, not even the mountain Romanija or the river Drina, could prevent this desire from reaching Dobrun and enlightening its parish priest, Father Kosta Porubović. And Father Kosta, a man already advanced in years, casting a glance at his only son, Vujadin, a pale and timid boy, came to the conclusion that at any price his son must get an education. Through some friends, merchants in Sarajevo, he managed to send him all the way to Sremski Karlovci "to catch at least a year or two of theology." He caught just about that much, for toward the end of his second year Father Kosta suddenly died.

Vujadin returned home, was married off, and settled into the priesthood in his father's parish. In the first year of marriage his wife gave birth; true enough it was only a girl, bur they had many years ahead of them, and it seemed certain that the Porubovićes would sustain the priesthood at Dobrun for many a generation to come.

However, all was not well with Father Vujadin. Nothing specific could be discovered, nor was anyone sure that there was something wrong, but everyone sensed a certain strain between the priest and his parishioners. This strain could be attributed neither to the youth nor to the awkwardness of Father Vujadin, since as time went on the tension grew rather than diminished. Vujadin was of fine stature and handsome, like all the Porubovićes, but lean, pale, and unusually subdued, and, in spite of his youth, there was an aged, gray quality in his voice and eyes.

Around 1875, only a few years before the Austrian occupation of Bosnia, Father Vujadin suffered a great loss: his wife died while giving birth to their second child. From

that time onward he grew ever more remote from the world. He sent his little girl to his wife's relatives at Višegrad, and he lived alone in a big house next to the Dobrun church with but a single servant. He performed the rites regularly, attended funerals, officiated at baptisms and weddings, read prayers when requested to do so, but he did not chat or drink with the peasants in the churchyard, or jest with the peasant women, or argue with debtors over their taxes. The townspeople, who were in any case suspicious of a silent, morose man and decidedly favored healthy, talkative priests, simply could not get used to Father Vujadin. They would have forgiven him any other failing more easily. The women, who in these villages determined a man's reputation, good or bad, said of Father Vujadin that there was a thundercloud over his forehead; they disliked going to church, and always brought up that "wild Father Kosta."

"Dull and lost, that's what he is," the peasants complained, forever comparing him to his father, the late Kosta Porubović, who had been fat, cheerful, but wise and eloquent,

on good terms with the peasants and the Turks, with the humble and the strong. Father Kosta's funeral had been a great common sorrow. Older people could even recall Vujadin's grandfather, Jakša, called Djakon, or Deacon. He, too, had been quite a different man: a *hajduk* in his youth and proud of it. When they asked him why he was called Deacon, he would reply cheerfully:

"Ah, my son, when I was only a deacon I joined the *hajduks*, and since every *hajduk* must have a nickname, they started calling me Hajduk Deacon. So that name stuck with me. But later on, as years went by and honors struck me as arrows strike a horse, it was embarrassing to be called a *hajduk*. So '*hajduk*' fell off me like a tail falls off a frog, and I remained simply Deacon."

He was an old man with thick hair and a big beard which grew sideways and did not go gray but remained reddish and unruly until his death. Wild, headstrong, and cunning, he had true friends and fierce enemies among Christians and Turks alike. He enjoyed drinking and had an eye for women until his old

age. Even so, he was much liked and respected.

And so it was that, hard as they tried, the peasants could not figure out why Vujadin was the way he was, and not like his father or grandfather. In his lonely life as a widower Father Vujadin was sinking lower and deteriorating further. His beard grew thinner, the hair on his temples white, his cheeks fell in and somehow turned gray so that his large green eyes and ashen brows no longer stood out on his face. Tall, straight, and stiff, he spoke only when absolutely necessary, in a deep voice without color or animation.

As the first priest with even a smattering of education in the more than one hundred years in which his family had served the Dobrun church, Father Vujadin realized full well the extent of his awkward nature and manner. He knew what people were looking for and what sort of priest they wanted, and understood that what they sought was the exact opposite of what he could provide. This knowledge tormented him, but it also stiffened him, and in contact with the paris-

hioners his conduct became all the more rigid. Little by little this rigidity transformed itself into a deep, uncontrollable disgust for these people.

The general weariness of a widower's life, as well as its many renunciations, rapidly widened the rift between Vujadin and his flock. Long before he lost his wife he had suffered because he could not approach them, warm up to them, mix with them. Now this suffering was intensified; he was forced into a position of deliberately concealing many things from them, and in the process grew increasingly distant. Even before, every look and every word had been a torture, a burden, and a painful combat. Now it had become a danger, too, and the fear that he would give himself away made him even more insecure and suspicious.

So his loathing for men grew, settled in him and, like a hidden spleen, poisoned him with a hatred both incomprehensible and unconscious, but real enough nevertheless. This was the secret life of Father Vujadin. He hated himself and his torment. There were