# HOJI MUIN.

## THE OPPRESSED WIFE (DRAMA)

**Mazluma xotin (The Oppressed Wife) by Hoji Mu'in**

An excerpt translated from Uzbek by Carolyn Wei

Note: Translator's comments are in brackets.

**Characters**

1. Uzoqboy – a fat and wealthy butcher in his forties who has taken two wives.
2. Tansuqoy – his first wife, with a soft nature, 30 years old.
3. Bahoiddinqul – his son, his hair in braids, 14 years old.
4. Rustam – Tansuqoy's older brother, a bachelor, a showoff, 32 years old.
5. Karomatoy – Tansuqoy's mother, 60 years old.
6. Elmurod – Tansuqoy's father, a "grey-beard" dressed in white and handsome (dead); 70 years old.
7. Eshon bobo [Grandfather Ishan] – Uzoqboy's neighbor and stout friend, 7 times he has made the hajj [pilgrimage], shook hands with the ishan [a high religious leader], is dressed as a mullah, an ignorant person, 60 years old.
8. Suyaroy – The girl that becomes Tansuqoy's rival, 18 years old.
9. Muallim – A Jadid with new ideas and true words, 30 years old.

**First Act**

*The scene is in a guest room.*

…

Eshon bobo – How is your son's health? The poor child has become so pale, and his head was wrapped up. (*His lips tremble.*)

Uzoqboy – Yes, the boy had a fever 3 or 4 days ago.

Bahoiddinqul (*entering*) – What are you saying, papa?

Uzoqboy – Bring the serving tray and tablecloth. (*Passing the teapot.*) Here, brew some tea, my son!
Bahoiddinqul – OK! (*Leaves with the teapot.*)
Uzoqboy – Hey!... Eshon bobo! What news is in the city?

Eshon bobo – Thank goodness, it's pretty calm. Oh, yes!... Say, Roziqboy is getting divorced from his third wife. We don't know if the blame is with him or with his wife.

Uzoqboy – Eh, Roziqboy the locksmith?.. Yes, he is not really a good man. He is black on the inside; he seems sly.

Eshon bobo – I also heard it said that he is a great sinner. It seems he is a drunk. I've heard that he also customarily patronizes prostitutes and young ladies, and that he doesn't even go to the neighborhood mosque for prayers, (*catching his side*) regretfully. (The membership should know their prayers.) The wrongs of people like that will come to destroy the world, my child.
Uzoqboy – Yes, certainly, that's true.

(*The boy returns with the things that had been ordered.*)
Uzoqboy (*to his son*) – Sit by Eshon bobo's side. On 2 or 3 occasions, his breath has been constricted [an indication of being guided by Allah]. (*The child sits down.*) This person has made the hajj 7 times, shook the hands of the pir [religious elder]. He is a very revered person. His breaths are influential. (*They are busy setting things on the tablecloth.*)
…

Eshon bobo – Thanks be to God, you have property. If you also take up to 4 wives, you will have attained power. Taking many wives has many benefits, my child. One benefit is that a man's family and progeny will be produced in abundance. A second benefit is that the community following Muhammad's word will be bigger. The other benefits are very many. If you, for example, were to take 4 wives, each of the wives

will give birth at least to 4 or 5 children, and one day you will see, hey, you suddenly have a flock of children.

Uzoqboy (*pleased*) – Now, that's true, that's true, Eshon bobo! Some people take 5 wives. Is that proper by shari'at [religious law]?

Eshon bobo – Yes, proper. A sufi with 4 wives and men who take 5 wives are possible. Tilovboy made the hajj with five wives. Our revered ishan also has 5 wives. Our ishan qadi [religious judge] also has 5 wives, they say… (*thinks a little*) Yes!... Taking many wives has another benefit: people will never have need. Because the wives can be a team, even the worthless ones will have 1 or 2 skills. For instance, they can sew duppi caps or weave belts and other similar crafts. For men that become poor, the wives can take care of themselves and their husbands through their skills. (*With pride.*) Our little wife in one week can sew one or two to'n [quilted overcoats] and take them to the bazaar to sell. With this profit, she can comfortably care for the children. (*Smiling.*) The poor thing will sometimes say to us: "Here, this is money for tobacco!" and also gives us 3 or 4 coins. However, our big wife has no skills. Our oldest son cares for her. (*Smokes the tobacco. Uzoqboy takes from him a bit of tobacco to smoke.*)

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Eshon bobo – Will you marry a poor man's daughter? Will you marry a rich man's daughter? What kind would be suitable to you?

Uzoqboy – I won't marry a poor man's daughter. Eh, damn the poor. A poor girl will cause all the abundance of a home to fly away. Find us a rich girl. There is no loss to be incurred from a rich man's daughter. If her father were to suddenly die, some inheritance would come to us.

Eshon bobo – Certainly, these words of yours are true, but I would marry a poor girl, if you agree, because a smaller celebration would be possible. There, we will think about this before we drive away the poor girl.

…

(*At this very moment, from the back of the stage, a voice coming out says "Prayer time!"*)

Eshon bobo – Well, amen, Allah is great. The public can't stay away from its good deed. (*Stands up on his legs, and walks to the side of the door*.)

Uzoqboy (s*tanding up on his legs*) – Eh, is it still like that? Well, say the prayers, and return again soon, Eshon bobo! We still have not finished asking for advice.

Eshon bobo – Yes, yes. (*Exits.*)

Uzoqboy – You have given great advice, sir! (*Sitting*.)

Muallim – What was the advice?

Uzoqboy – Sir, we would like to take a second wife. The advice was for that.

Muallim – For what reason would you like to take a second wife?

Uzoqboy – Sir, there's no reason. My is wife is getting into her 30s, there's rather no enjoyment now. We are still young. Our heart wishes for a young wife.

Muallim – Pleasure is no excuse. There are no reasons other than loss for taking a second wife.

Uzoqboy – Sir, what reasons might those be?

Muallim – Some reasons are, for example, if your previous wife were not to have children, or if she were to become sick and her health did not return quickly. Then you are permitted to take a second wife. At the same time, it is necessary to conduct yourself with justice between your two wives. If you are afraid that you cannot be fair between your two wives, in that case, according to shari'at, taking two wives is never proper.

Uzoqboy (*becoming surprised*) – Sir, what justice? Is justice not possible only for the tsars? (*Drinks tea.*)

Muallim – No. Justice is not special only to the tsars. Men who are relating to their own wives also need justice, they say.

Uzoqboy – Sir, this is not possible. At no time can one man like two wives equally. Certainly, of the two, one could like the one that is younger and not wish for the older one. That is possible, but how could the poor man relate to his two wives equally!

…

**Second Act**

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Uzoqboy (*passing his khalat [robe]*) – There!... This evening 3 or 4 guests will come. I am leaving to get them some more small things. You should cook approximately 3 pots of palov.

Tansuqoy – Will we not need other kinds of food?

Uzoqboy – No, palov by itself will be enough. The guests are rather fond of ceremony and appearing worthy, but they are not really great people. (*Pulls off his to'n.*) There!... Bring me my duppi!

(*Tansuqoy takes the to'n, places it on the peg, and brings the duppi.*)

Uzoqboy – Can we have some tea while I am resting? I have become very thirsty (*Sitting.*) Ooooh, today the weather has become very hot, I am burning up. (*Fans himself.*)

Tansuqoy – Yes we can, father [referring to Uzoqboy as the father of her son, a standard honorific for husbands]. I drank a pot of tea myself while I was resting. OK, now we can eat together. (*Stands up to leave.*)

Uzoqboy (*straining tea*) – I got you one or two nice types of calico, take it from the bag!

Tansuqoy (*gladly opens up the calico that is wrapped in paper*) – Wow, what nice, good calico you have given me! That seems very nice, I can make myself a shirt. (*Takes out the other one.*) This one I can sew into a shirt or trousers for Bahoiddinqul or sew something for you, father?

Uzoqboy – No, I don’t need anything. Sew something for Bahoiddinqul. Just give me that old thing. (*Passes a cup of tea.*) There! Will you drink tea?

Tansuqoy – OK, give me some! (*Takes and drinks.*)

Uzoqboy (l*ooks at his clothes*) – All my clothes have become dirty. If possible, bring me a bundle of clean clothes!

Tansuqoy – No, there are no clean ones. Your clothes are all dirty, father. Today I cooked two tandoors-worth of bread and got tired so I could not wash the dirty clothes. Tomorrow is Sunday, and it would not be proper to wash dirty clothes then. So I will wash your clothes on Monday. (*Gives the teacup.*)

…

Bahoiddinqul – Even now I will do that. My father said so himself outside. (*Comes closer.*) Mother, my father said, “Tomorrow, you will go to your previous school.” Why did he say that? My teacher now is very good!

Tansuqoy (*becoming surprised*) – Eh, did a jinn strike your father [has he gone mad]? Why do you think he would say that. Well, you go to your work, I will talk to your father myself.

Bahoiddinqul – Even if he is just talking, I will kill my father myself: I will not go to the old school. The teacher there is bad, he whips. (*Leaving.*)

Tansuqoy (*to herself*) – Regretfully. Bahoiddinqul’s father is such a strange person. He knows himself that the years that Bahoiddinqul studied at the old school he knew nothing. He did not even learn his prayers. Now, thank God, that since going to this new school, he also knows his prayers. He is also learning reading and writing. There, he is also becoming very courteous.

…

Uzoqboy (*standing up on his legs, around his waist an excessively long belt [?]*) – Hey, look at me! In my heart, I consider this matter to be suitable. What do you say about that?

Tansuqoy – What matter is that? Speak!

Uzoqboy – How would that be if you were served by some widow that I marry? What advice would you give on that matter? (*Sitting.*)

Tansuqoy (*her happiness flying away, the duppi in her hand falls to the ground*) – Still talking about that? Oh, let me die!

Uzoqboy (*ashamed, with a smile*) – Don't be afraid, don't be afraid! I am only marrying her for doing chores, I say! I don't need her, only her service.

Tansuqoy – Nooo, I don't need a slave or a servant! I will be your slave as well as your wife. Oh, my face is black, am I now to have a rival? (*Oh, grinding.*) Yes, now do you see what evil deed taking a wife is? (*Takes the duppi and wraps it up in a cloth.*)

Uzoqboy – I don't see any evil deed from you. I really love you, you know that. You do not suspect the truth about me. After I marry her, you will be like a princess, sitting on top of 7 layers of cushions. Your hand will never touch cold water. She will personally give you such service. Is that good?

Tansuqoy (*with a higher pitched voice*) – No, nooo, I find this rival to be disgusting. Oh, oh God, damn her… If you really love me, talk like that would never come from your mouth. If I am separated from you for even a breath, I will die. Do you know that?

…

Tansuqoy (*rubbing her eyes, looking*) – Praise be to God, I am a Muslim.

Uzoqboy – Yes, bravo! Praise be to God, we are all Muslims. You know yourself, every Muslim man can properly take up to 4 wives. Today I intend to take a second wife. If you are a Muslim, today you will yield to your fate and give consent. (*Walks to the side of the door.*)

Tansuqoy (*standing up on her legs*) – Have pity on my dear head, father! If you take a wife, I will die. (*Crying.*)

Uzoqboy – Stop crying uselessly. There's no benefit to it. (*Leaving.*)

Tansuqoy (*As her husband takes 1 or 2 steps away, looking at the people, with a crying voice*) – O, God, give my husband a conscience! Or quickly curse my rival's face, take my soul! Oh God, take my soul now! Now I can die well! O, ohhh!

*Curtain falls.*

**Third Act**

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Tansuqoy (*hurriedly*) – Oh, is father coming? (*Looking at the sun and also the shadow.*) Yes, the shadow is going down on this place. It will be dinner time. I will have to quickly slice the carrots.

(*Takes carrots from a bag, peeling the skin with a knife while standing up. Coughing while Uzoqboy enters. Tansuqoy stands up on her legs, says hello, sits down again, and becomes busy with her work.*)

Uzoqboy (*not showing concern, puts down a pumpkin*) Yes, are you slicing the carrots now? When will dinner be ready?

Tansuqoy – After evening prayers it will be prepared. (*Coughing.*)

Uzoqboy – Ehhh, that seems like it will be late. Work faster, work faster. Could you end the uncertainty earlier?

Tansuqoy – What can I do, father, my health is bad. There is only I to carry out this work. (*Pointing to her rival's side.*) Tell her to work now. In all this time she has not moved at all and is always lying down. Seeing a husband's enjoyment at being served by people! In all of my life, I have never seen such a lazy woman.

Uzoqboy (*with an angry voice*) – OK, OK, stop crying! I tell you, in the future, she will do a little housework… Well now!!! Immediately you are doing work unselfishly. That's it, now you will work and not work equally.

Tansuqoy (*with a higher pitched voice*) - Yes, if I worked unselfishly, I would also be careful. (*Looking at her husband.*) Look at me! Before you got married, what promises did you make me? Do you remember? Act fairly, father! If you are not afraid of me, you should be afraid of God. (*Coughing.*)

Uzoqboy – Speak softly, there are guests outside. What would the neighbors say? I would be disgraced between my friends and enemies. My turban would fall to the ground.

Tansuqoy – I will not speak softly now. My entire being is worn out. What can I do? My soul is burning so unwillingly I must speak! You think of no one else. For your son Bahoiddinqul's sake, I have had the strength to stand up. I have endured from you much oppression and coercion. If it was because of me you took the other wife, she has long since gone outside. Did you know that? In 15 years, not once have you given me respect. Now this Suyaroy talks, and a fist comes down on my dear head! Oh, woe is me!

…

Uzoqboy (*showing concern on his open face*) – And peace be with you, yes! What are you looking for, my dear? (*Speaking, places his turban and jacket on a nail. Afterwards sits down, and pulls off his boots.*)
Suyaroy – The key to the little chest isn't anywhere. I have been looking for it. I hate this home. Also, I hate it with a passion. No one can find anything that has been set down.

Uzoqboy (*becoming surprised*) – Eh, who do you think took it? My money was in the little chest… Look for it, look for it! Where was it left?
Suyaroy – I had put it there under the carpet. No strange people have entered; only your son and his mother have been home. Who could I suspect?

Uzoqboy – Oh, my home is burning. It's not possible, for my money to be stolen, I say. (*Takes the chest in hand, and tries shaking it.*) No, there's no money, the chest is light. Oof, you are turning my house upside down, it was inside. What kind of idiot are you? You did not keep the key with care. If my money is not there, should I hurt you? (*Looking for it himself.*)

Suyaroy – I did not put it in that place, what can I do? Nobody has come into my room except for the people of this courtyard. My relatives have not come recently, if you are suspecting them.

Uzoqboy – If that is so, Bahoiddinqul or his mother is stealing then. Bahoiddinqul is still young. He is not sufficiently intelligent enough to something like this.

Suyaroy – I am not suspecting anyone. I am in the dark about who took the money and am not sure.

Uzoqboy – Don't rush off, I'm going to see off the guests. I will try to put pressure on your rival. Possible the stolen money will turn up. (*Leaving.*)
Suyaroy (*taking a key from her purse*) – There, the key is mine. The money is mine, too… while my rival is labeled a thief. If I cannot shorten her tongue, I will swindle her friends and enemies, or my name is not Suyaroy. I am going to deliver the money here. (*Leaves the house.*)
…

Uzoqboy – Who was the woman who recently left?

Tansuqoy (*afraid, trembling*) – It was my mother.
Uzoqboy (*coming closer*) – Yes, did you deliver the stolen money to your mother?
Tansuqoy (*becoming surprised*) – What money? Whose money, father?
Uzoqboy (*teeth grinding, eyes opening wide*) – Again you act like you don't know! The stolen money from the chest, I mean.
Tansuqoy – May God strike me, I did not take it, father. Have I ever stolen your money before? Are you testing me? (*To the people.*) Hey, Bahoiddinqul, heeey, what an insult this is!
Uzoqboy – You intentionally took from your rival. Is that correct, you took it? If you do not confess, I will immediately divorce you!

Tansuqoy (*crying*) – Oh, God strike me, I did not take it. My face is turned towards Mecca, I did not take it. You are wrongfully tormenting me, father!

Uzoqboy – Still you do not confess? (*Strikes her…Seizes her hair and drags her outside, again striking her. Tansuqoy's face becomes blood spattered. In that condition, she cries, "Oh, I am dying, oh, I am dying!" as she enters the house. She sits down and becomes unconscious……*)

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**Fourth Act**

*Same as the third scene. Tansuqoy is in a sad state, having become sick and is lying on a mattress. A teapot of water and a tufdon [?] are placed before her. Next to her head, Bahoiddinqul is sitting, fanning his mother. Suyaroy stands in her own room, dressed up and merry as the curtain rises.*

Tansuqoy (*coughing up phlegm*) – Oh, my chest, oh, I will die, oh, God, take me quickly. I cannot endure any more torture. My child, bring me a mouthful of water, damn my side. (*Drinks the tea from her son's teapot.*) Thank God, you are here. My child, now I will die. (*With a crying voice.*) You will be separated from your mother, my child. You will soon become an orphan, my child!

Bahoiddinqul (*crying*) – Oh God, don't die, dear mother! If you should die, my stepmother will see that I am alone and beat me every day…

Tansuqoy – No, with all my soul I will direct anyone who hurts my favorite child to God. God will punish them!

Uzoqboy (*Entering Suyaroy's room*) – Hey, what are you doing?

Suyaroy – Answer me, I am going to my mother's. My younger brother said to come, it seems it is ladies' prayer group Tuesday. (*Puts on her veil and headscarf.*)

Uzoqboy (*with reproach*) – Eh, are you so strange? Your rival is lying there dying. Your heart wishes for fresh air. Who will help me look after her?

Suyaroy – Ehhh, what's it to me? Let her mother care for her.

Uzoqboy – OK, OK, bye! Again the rivalry. (*Suyaroy put her scarf on her head and leaves. Uzoqboy talks to himself.*) Oof! I didn't take a second wife, I took on a disaster. This dirty business is keeping me from sleeping, my riches have flown away, and my wealth has been destroyed. My friends and enemies alike can see

through my curtains. Do I see my enjoyment and pleasure, I have said to myself. No, I have been deceived. Not for one day this year have I enjoyed myself. Maybe the happiness that I had before has also gone out the window. Now I know that the home that has the most quarreling in the world is the house that has two wives. The noisiest, unhappiest people are also people with 2 wives. I have apparently done something stupid by marrying a second wife… (*Leaving.*)

Tansuqoy (*coughing*) – Oh, my soul! Pity my soul. Stand up, my child, call for your father to come immediately… I don't know what I am feeling. After you run off, bring your grandmother! Come closer, my dear child. I will give you a kiss! (*Kisses.*) I am dying. (*Coughing.*) Oh, my child, you will soon be without a mother!

Bahoiddinqul (*crying and hugging his mother*) – Oh God, don't die, dear mother! If you die, I will have no one to call "mother." If you die, I will die, dear mother. (*Gets up and leaves.*)

Uzoqboy (*entering, sits before his wife*) – Yes, how are you today? Are you getting better? Why are you crying?

Tansuqoy (*coughing*) – Now I am dying, father! Oh.

Uzoqboy – Don't say that, God will save you!.. Another illness, another death. Do all people who become sick die?

Tansuqoy – No, father, I am dying. Today I am in a very bad state. OK, whatever it will be, you have your husbandly rights. If you were to use your rights tactfully, you would forgive me – agree with me, father!

Uzoqboy (*with a crying voice*) – Oh, I agree with you a thousand times… You agree with me now! I have much oppressed you and your rights. The second wife has brought much misfortune, believe my words, I have insulted you. Now forgive my sins! I am satisfied with you. If that is not so, I have to atone on judgment day.

Tansuqoy (*seizing her husband's hand*) – All right, now you have admitted that you were oppressing me. I am satisfied with you. God is also satisfied. Father, you have my last testament, I make a humble plea for my copy and signature, my dear child.

Always remain informed about his condition. Even if his stepmother shoves him around, do not torment my favorite child or else my spirit will worry.
Uzoqboy – Do not be grieved! Your son is my son! Certainly, I will take care of him with my soul.

Tansuqoy – OK, now I can rest... Leave for work, don't be late. (*Uzoqboy leaves. Tansuqoy's situation deteriorates, she becomes more distant.*) Oh, my child! oh, dear mother! Oh, my dear father, where are you! (*She glimpses the movement of her father's spirit. It suddenly passes.*) Dear father, dear father! I am done for!
(*The spirit vanishes from her eye. Tansuqoy passes away from her enduring torture. The movement of her mother and her child coming in , crying, and wailing.*)
*Curtain falls.*