

HUMANITIES INSTITUTE

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THE STRANGER / YABANCI / CHOOCHUN KISHI (1988)

Zuura Sooronbaeva (1924-2012)

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OVERVIEW

Author

Early Life and Journalism Zuura Sooronbaeva was born on August 15, 1924, in the village of Jolgot in the Ak-Suu district of Kyrgyzstan. After graduating from secondary school in 1940, she began working as a secretary-typist at the newspaper *Ysyk-Kol Pravdasy* (*Issyk-Kul Truth*). Between 1959 and 1974, she worked as a correspondent for the regional newspaper *Kommunistik Emgek* (*Communist Labor*), later returning to *Ysyk-Kol Pravdasy*, where she continued her journalism career until 1979.

Poetry and Literary Beginnings Sooronbaeva entered literature as a poet. Her first poetry collection, *My Village (Menin Aiylym)*, was published in 1960. Her 1966 collection *Friendship (Dostuk)* included both poems and the narrative poems *Friendship (Dostuk)* and *Adopted Son (Asyrandy uul)*. Although critics initially doubted her transition from poetry to prose, she soon proved herself as a talented fiction writer.



Success as a Prose Writer Her first major prose work, the novella *The Aster Flowers (Astra Gülü)*, was published in 1971 and brought her widespread fame. During the 1970s, she produced several important works, including *Orphans (Jetimder)*, *Andrey (Andrei)*, and *The Gray-Haired Woman (Ak Chach Ayal)*. The 1980s were also highly productive years for her. During this period, she published the collection *The Mountains Know (Toolor Bilet)*, the children's book *Rest, Mother (Es Alchy, Apa)*, and the novella *Letter from Leningrad (Leningraddan Kelgen Kat)*. Her writings attracted readers through their realistic and emotionally rich portrayal of ordinary people and everyday life. One of her best-known works, the novel *The Stranger (Choochun Kishi)*, was published in 1988. Focusing on the painful emotional relationship between a husband and wife, the novel became highly popular and earned Sooronbaeva renewed literary acclaim. At readers' request, a sequel was published in 2002, and the novel remains relevant today.

Drama and Theatre Sooronbaeva also wrote several plays, including *The Groom (Erkek Kolukmu)*, *Broken Shrine (Singan Mazar)*, *Wealth and Love (Baylyk jana Mahabat)*, and *Fiery Dawn (Örttүү Tang)*. Her play *Broken Shrine (Singan Mazar)* was translated into Kazakh under the title *Illness (Ildet)* and staged at the Abai Zhambul Theatre. It was later performed in both Kazakhstan and Russia.

Honors and Legacy Sooronbaeva became a member of the Soviet Journalists' Union in 1953 and the Soviet Writers' Union in 1954. She received several state honors, including certificates of merit from the Supreme Soviet of the Kyrgyzstan, the medal For Valiant Labor during World War II, and the com-

memorative medal dedicated to Lenin's centenary. In 1995, she was awarded the title of People's Writer of Kyrgyzstan. Her name was later given to the school she attended in her native village and to a street in the city of Karakol.

Novel *The Stranger (Kyrgyz: Choochun Kishi)* was first published in 1988 in Frunze (now Bishkek) by Adabiyat publishing house. The novel is one of the most famous and most important works in Kyrgyz literature. The novel was adapted into a television series in 2024, available on YouTube, attracting a wide Kyrgyz audience online.

The Stranger consists of two books and was republished in 2014 by *Uluu Toolor* publishing house in Bishkek. The first part was written under strict Soviet censorship, which limited the discussion of sensitive social issues. The second part was written in the early years of independence, when literature became more open to previously restricted themes. The novel's main focus is motherhood, family bonds, and emotional responsibility, while polygamy appears only as a secondary social issue reflecting changing post-Soviet realities and public debate.

Background This novel belongs to the tradition of Soviet women's prose, a literary genre that gave voice to the inner emotional world of female characters. Unlike the heroic narratives of official Soviet literature, women's prose explored love, marriage, motherhood, betrayal, and the quiet strength of women navigating family life and society. The story of Jainagul and Tolkunbek reflects these themes through a Kyrgyz woman who builds her career as a doctor while carrying the emotional weight of marriage, motherhood, and betrayal. Set in Soviet Kyrgyzstan during the second half of the twentieth century, the novel portrays daily life in boarding schools, universities, hospitals, and construction sites, grounding its emotional drama in a realistic social setting. The novel also draws on Kyrgyz traditions, showing the values of family, respect for elders, and village customs that often stand in contrast to the temptations of modern city life.

The second part of the novel is set in the period after national independence, when social norms and family structures were undergoing rapid change. During the Soviet era, polygamy had been strictly forbidden under law, but with independence, older cultural practices and new interpretations of personal freedom began to reappear in society. Some men, previously constrained by strict state control, attempted to justify polygamous relationships by referring to legal uncertainty and cultural tradition. Even certain political figures raised the question of legalizing or reconsidering polygamy, but these proposals were consistently rejected by civil society, women's groups, and international organizations.

In later years, including discussions in 2025, the issue again appeared at parliamentary level, but it was ultimately rejected by the president as a violation of human rights, particularly those of women and children. Within this context, the author uses the personal story of Tolkunbek, Jainagul, and Zynat to reflect broader social tensions.

Polygamy is not presented as a legal solution, but as a symbol of emotional fragmentation and blended families, where children become the central link between separated adults.

Through this narrative, the novel explores how changing political systems reshape private lives, and how love, responsibility, and motherhood are tested in transitional societies.

MAIN CHARACTERS

Jainagul — Kyrgyz woman, medical student, later doctor at a maternity hospital, wife of Tolkunbek, mother of Jannat, Asan, and Uson

Tolkunbek — Jainagul's husband, former boarding school student, construction engineer in Osh, son of Mansur and Kyna

Zynat — Emil's sister, a painter, a woman who has loved Tolkunbek since childhood, and the mother of an abandoned child.

Emil — Zynat's brother, former friend of Tolkunbek, gambler and thief, later a soldier
Akkyz — mother of Emil and Zynat, widow, dies after learning about her son's crimes
Mansur — Tolkunbek's father, war veteran, villager in the Ysyk-Kol region
Kyna — Tolkunbek's mother, caretaker of grandchildren
Sady — Jainagul's older brother, head of a construction site, member of parliament
Gulaiym — Sady's wife, sister-in-law of Jainagul
Tumar — Jainagul's mother
Jannat — daughter of Jainagul and Tolkunbek
Asan and Uson — twin boys raised by Jainagul, one of them secretly Zynat's son
Ergeshbaev — construction foreman in Osh, corrupt colleague of Tolkunbek
Kermekash — neighbor in Osh, known for spreading gossip
Zhakan — Tolkunbek's friend and boss in Almaty
Sherkan Musurepov — writer
Saliya — Zynat's neighbor

SYNOPSIS

In the first part of the novel Jainagul and Tolkunbek first meet as children at a Kyrgyz boarding school, where the older and talented Tolkunbek becomes a protective figure to Jainagul. Years later, after failing his university exams and falling into poverty, Tolkunbek robs Jainagul on the street. Filled with regret, he later returns her stolen belongings with a heartfelt apology. Though Jainagul initially rejects him, fate brings them back together and they eventually marry.

Their early years are happy, but Tolkunbek's career as a construction engineer takes him far away to Osh, a city in southern Kyrgyzstan, where he grows distant from his family. There he reconnects with Zynat, the sister of his old friend Emil, in whose family home Tolkunbek had once lived during his difficult years in Frunze. Zynat had always loved him quietly and deeply, and the two begin a secret affair. Zynat becomes pregnant and abandons her baby near Tolkunbek's family home. Unknown to everyone, Jainagul quietly adopts the child, believing it a tragic coincidence.

When Jainagul discovers the truth about the affair, she is devastated and throws Tolkunbek out of their home. He leaves with Zynat to Almaty, where he finds professional success but remains deeply unhappy. Jainagul raises their children alone while building her career as a doctor. Eventually Zynat writes Jainagul a letter confessing everything, including the secret of the abandoned child, and urges her to forgive Tolkunbek.

In the second part of the novel, years later, overwhelmed by guilt and longing, he returned to Osh with his daughter Jannat and begged Jainagul for forgiveness. Although she was humiliated and angry, she allowed him to stay for the sake of their children. The household slowly reunited, but peace did not last because emotional wounds remained open.

The main tension grew around their son Uson, who was raised by Jainagul but later revealed to be the biological son of Zynat. This discovery created confusion and emotional conflict between the two women, both of whom loved him deeply. Uson struggled between two mothers and expressed his feelings through drawings, constantly missing both families.

Meanwhile, Zynat built a successful artistic career, moved between cities, and even adopted a daughter, Aygerim, while still suffering emotionally from losing Uson. Tolkunbek remained torn between Zynat and Jainagul, unable to fully restore trust with either woman. Gossip, dreams, illness, and family pressures intensified the situation. In the end, despite separation and pain, the characters remained connected through their children, as forgiveness and emotional responsibility shaped their fragile and unresolved lives.

SCENES

FIRST PART OF THE NOVEL

Memories of Boarding School Years

Memory of the Past Jainagul remembered how she had met Tolkunbek. They studied together at a boarding school; Tolkunbek was one year older and the best student in his class, talented at playing the komuz, a traditional string instrument. He finished school and Jainagul did not know where he was later. During the school years, Tolkunbek had treated Jainagul like a sister.

Education and University Life After school, Jainagul entered a medical university in Frunze (modern Bishkek) . One day she was returning from school in the evening, some boys robbed her; they took her bag, a gold ring, a watch and other belongings. Afraid of them, she gave everything. Among the robbers, she recognized Tolkunbek, and he recognized her too. He felt very ashamed and walked her home. He apologized, but Jainagul still hated him. He asked if she lived at a student dormitory, and she told him that she lived with her brother and sister-in-law. Tolkunbek asked her address and promised to bring back her stolen belongings.

Jainagul's Brother Becomes Suspicious Jainagul's brother worried about why she had returned home late. Jainagul explained that she had missed the address and that a boy from the boarding school had walked her home. Her brother asked where the boy worked or studied. Jainagul answered that he had failed to enter university and was currently idle. Her brother replied that this was not good. Jainagul defended Tolkunbek, saying that he had been the best student at the boarding school. Her brother answered again that if he neither studied nor worked, then he was probably involved in robbery.

The Robbery and Broken Trust

Tolkunbek's Letter The next day Jainagul stayed home the whole day, waiting for Tolkunbek to return her stolen belongings. However, he never appeared.

When Jainagul completed her first year at the university, she received a letter from Tolkunbek. In his letter, Tolkunbek apologizes for his actions and explains the difficulties he faced after failing the university entrance exams. Unable to find stable work in the city because he lacked official residence registration, he gradually became lost and directionless. In the same letter, he also confesses that Jainagul had been his first love since their boarding school years.

Meeting Emil One day Tolkunbek met Emil in the street. Emil was the son of a family who had once lived in their village and had friendly relations with Tolkunbek's parents. Emil explained that after his father's death, his mother had become sick. The family survived only on the eighty rubles of state support they received from the government. Emil himself did not work anywhere; instead, he spent time gambling and had already lost all his money. Emil asked Tolkunbek whether he had any money. Tolkunbek gave him one hundred rubles, and Emil invited him to their home. At home, Emil's mother Akkyz warmly greeted Tolkunbek and was happy to welcome him.

Life in Emil's Household Emil told his mother that he had received a salary of ninety-five rubles from his construction work, although in reality it was the money Tolkunbek had given him. The family happily prepared the table and shared a meal together. Tolkunbek stayed with them for some time and continued idling together with Emil. Emil's younger sister Zynat was an eighth-grade student who dreamed of entering a fine arts college.

Zynat and Educational Aspirations In the Soviet education system, secondary school lasted ten grades, and after the eighth grade students could continue their education in technical schools or specialized colleges. Zynat was talented and hardworking. She took care of her sick mother, and all the household chores rested on her shoulders. Meanwhile, Emil continued wasting time without working. Whenever

his mother asked him to bring home his salary, he invented excuses, saying that payment had not yet been given.

Tolkunbek Visits His Parents Seeing the sadness and exhaustion of Emil's mother, Tolkunbek finally decided to visit his own parents in the village. His parents felt deeply sorry for Akkyz and her children, who were struggling without support. They sold one of their cows, filled several bags with food, and gave Tolkunbek money to deliver to Akkyz. They also provided him with some money for himself. Before returning to Bishkek, Tolkunbek cancelled his home registration in the passport office because he planned to stay in the city and work there until September. He then left the village and returned to the city.

Tolkunbek's Downfall

Gambling and the Loss of Money After returning to Bishkek, Tolkunbek gave all the food and money to Akkyz. She was deeply grateful to Tolkunbek's parents for their kindness and support during such difficult times. One day Emil confessed that he regretted losing his own money through gambling and wanted to win it back. He convinced Tolkunbek to join him and taught him how to gamble. Zynat saw them preparing to leave and begged Emil not to involve Tolkunbek, but Emil ignored her warning. At the gambling house, Tolkunbek lost all the money his parents had given him, yet he still wanted to continue playing.

The Night Job Emil later told Tolkunbek that he also had a "night job." He explained how they could earn quick money by robbing people during the cold Frunze winters. Emil taught Tolkunbek how to steal expensive fur hats from strangers and sell them in the black market. Afterwards, they returned home with money and pretended that it was honest income. Akkyz believed they were earning wages from normal work and accepted the money without suspicion.

Akkyz's Death

Akkyz Learns the Truth One day a woman from the black market came to Emil's house looking for Emil and Tolkunbek. She demanded several fur hats that the young men supposedly owed her. Akkyz became confused and insisted that the woman must be mistaken because Emil worked in construction. However, the woman openly declared that Emil and Tolkunbek were thieves who sold stolen goods in the black market. After hearing those words, Akkyz became even weaker from shock and shame. When Emil and Tolkunbek returned home, they found her lying down and crying. She cursed Emil for earning dishonest money and told Tolkunbek, "Shame on you too."

Akkyz's Last Words and Death Akkyz was already seriously ill, but after learning the truth about the robberies, her condition rapidly worsened. She cried bitterly and regretted the path her son had chosen in life. Looking at Tolkunbek, she begged him to protect and care for Zynat after her death. Those became her final words. Soon afterwards, Akkyz passed away, leaving the household in grief and confusion. The family had no money for the funeral, and one neighbor explained that at least one thousand rubles would be needed for the burial. Desperate for money, Tolkunbek and several other boys went out again for another night robbery.

The Funeral During one of those robberies, Tolkunbek and other boys unknowingly attacked Jainagul and stole her belongings, adding another burden to Tolkunbek's growing guilt and shame. The town hall organized most of Akkyz's funeral services, and Zynat's college also offered financial help. Akkyz was buried with dignity, even though her children could contribute very little themselves. After the funeral, the younger children were sent to an orphanage because there was no one able to properly care for them. Tolkunbek, Zynat, and Emil remained at home. Akkyz's death became a painful lesson for the young men, and they finally abandoned both robbery and gambling forever.

Repentance and the Letter to Jainagul After Akkyz's death, Emil left to serve in the Army, hoping to begin a different life. Tolkunbek again failed his entrance examinations and could not continue his education. Instead, he worked at different temporary jobs and slowly earned honest money. He could not forget that he had once robbed Jainagul and taken her valuable belongings. Feeling ashamed and guilty, he saved enough money to replace her stolen watch and ring. Tolkunbek sent the money to Jainagul by post

together with a long letter explaining everything that had happened. After receiving the money, Jainagul bought herself a new watch and a gold ring.

Jainagul Reads Tolkunbek's Letter Jainagul told her brother Sady and her sister-in-law about Tolkunbek's letter. After reading it carefully, Sady decided that he wanted to meet Tolkunbek personally and speak with him. One day, when Tolkunbek visited their home, Jainagul noticed how much he had changed. He had become a handsome and confident young man, and for the first time he attracted her attention deeply. Sady spoke kindly with Tolkunbek and later helped him get a job at a construction site. He also arranged a place for him in the workers' dormitory. Gradually, Tolkunbek earned Sady's trust and became one of the best workers there.

Tolkunbek's Changed Life

Sady Helps Tolkunbek Change His Life Sady was the head of the construction site and had an excellent reputation among the workers and local people. He had received the title of Hero of Socialist Labor and was also a member of the parliament of the Kyrgyz Soviet Socialist Republic. Because of his authority and respect, many people trusted his judgment. With Sady's help and guidance, Tolkunbek slowly managed to change his difficult life and become an honest worker. One day Jainagul found a letter written to Tolkunbek by Zynat, Emil's sister. In the letter, Zynat asked why Tolkunbek no longer visited her and wrote warmly about missing him like a brother.

Jainagul's Jealousy In her letter, Zynat also wrote that Tolkunbek often spoke about Jainagul and hoped to meet her one day. Although Jainagul tried to remain calm while reading the letter, she realized that she deeply loved Tolkunbek herself. One evening Jainagul went to the theatre together with Sady and his wife Gulaiym. There she unexpectedly saw Tolkunbek sitting with another young man and a girl. Jainagul immediately became jealous and believed that the girl must be Zynat. Earlier, Tolkunbek had proposed marriage to her, and she had been considering accepting him. However, after seeing him with another girl, Jainagul became upset and decided to reject his proposal.

Tolkunbek's Accident After returning home from the theatre, Jainagul wrote a letter to Tolkunbek rejecting his marriage proposal. In the letter she coldly informed him that she had already chosen another groom for herself. When Tolkunbek received the letter, he became deeply shocked and heartbroken. Distracted and confused, he hurried into the street and got into a car accident. The vehicle struck him badly and left him severely injured. When Jainagul later heard the news, she immediately went to the hospital to visit him. The doctor told her that while unconscious and suffering from pain, Tolkunbek repeatedly called out Jainagul's name many times, showing how deeply he truly loved her.

The Truth Revealed at Court During the court hearing, the driver explained that Tolkunbek had suddenly thrown himself under the car because he was heartbroken after his fiancée rejected his marriage proposal. Jainagul's letter was submitted as evidence because the driver had found it after the accident. After the hearing, Tolkunbek and Jainagul finally spoke honestly with each other. Tolkunbek asked why she had rejected him. Jainagul admitted that she had seen him with another girl at the theatre. Tolkunbek explained that the girl was actually engaged to Emir, Zynat's brother. At that moment, Tolkunbek finally understood that Jainagul truly loved him as deeply as he loved her.

Five Years Later Five years passed after the accident. Jainagul was already studying in the fifth year of medical university and still needed one more year to complete the degree equivalent to a medical doctor. After graduation, she would also have to complete two more years of residency training. Meanwhile, Tolkunbek studied at the evening department of the technical university while continuing his construction work. One day Mansur, Tolkunbek's father, came to Sady according to Kyrgyz tradition to officially ask for Jainagul's hand in marriage for his son. Mansur worried that after graduation many other men might seek Jainagul as a bride. However, Sady insisted they should first complete their studies.

Tolkunbek Marries Jainagul

Jainagul Thinks about Zynat Although Jainagul and Tolkunbek had confessed their feelings to each other, Jainagul still often thought about Zynat, the girl who had once loved Tolkunbek deeply. She wondered whether Zynat still waited for him or continued writing letters. However, Tolkunbek no longer spoke about Zynat at all, which slowly reassured Jainagul. One evening Tolkunbek asked Sady for permission to take Jainagul to the cinema. Sady agreed without objection. When they stepped outside the house, a Soviet *Zhiguli* car was already waiting nearby. Two men and a woman came out of the vehicle. Tolkunbek introduced Jainagul to his friends Kulush and Turat, who were married, and also to Emil.

Emil Returns from the Army Tolkunbek introduced Emil as Zynat's brother and his old friend who had recently returned from military service. Jainagul immediately remembered Emil from Tolkunbek's painful stories about gambling, robbery, and Akkyz's death. Long ago, Emil had taught Tolkunbek dishonest ways of earning money and had led him into many dangerous situations. Although several years had passed since those events, Emil still appeared rough, rude, and impudent in his behavior. When Emil greeted Jainagul, he held her hand for an uncomfortably long time before releasing it. His loud voice, careless manners, and sharp looks toward Tolkunbek made Jainagul feel that Emil was secretly jealous of him.

The Elopement Conversation When the Soviet *Zhiguli* car suddenly turned in another direction, Jainagul became alarmed and asked where they were going. Emil laughed and told her that they were taking her for an elopement marriage according to old custom. Shocked and confused, Jainagul immediately asked them to stop the car and let her leave. Inside the car, Tolkunbek and Jainagul began seriously discussing their future. Jainagul insisted that she first needed to complete her medical studies. Tolkunbek replied that his elderly parents were waiting to see their son married. Emil mockingly said they could easily find another girl if Jainagul refused. Turat calmly added that if they truly loved each other, there was no reason to postpone the marriage. Jainagul answered that they loved each other and should decide their future together. Finally, Tolkunbek gently promised her, "I will love and protect you all my life."

Welcome to Tolkunbek's Family Jainagul and Tolkunbek were warmly welcomed by Tolkunbek's parents and the local villagers after their marriage. Jainagul quickly became deeply loved by both her father-in-law Mansur and her mother-in-law Kyna because of her respectful and caring character. She tried her best to make the household peaceful and happy. Later, the young couple moved to the city and rented a small one-room apartment. Jainagul attended her medical classes in the mornings, while Tolkunbek worked during the day and studied in the evenings. Soon Jainagul became pregnant and happily waited for her husband every evening. Tolkunbek loved her deeply, and Jainagul loved him just as much.

The Birth of Jannat Jainagul later gave birth to a daughter whom they named Jannat. The young parents were very happy, but Jainagul still needed to continue her education. She left little Jannat in the care of her grandparents and returned to Frunze to continue studying medicine. Eventually, Jainagul successfully completed her six years of university education and then began a one-year residency in the Cholpon-Ata city. During that period, Tolkunbek continued his own studies and often visited Sady's house and Jainagul's relatives in the city. Jainagul worked at the maternity hospital during her residency, and her parents-in-law became extremely proud of her achievements and dedication.

Jannat and the Happy Household As time passed, little Jannat began speaking and became the beloved child of her grandparents. Kyna and Mansur cared for her with great love while Jainagul completed her residency and later returned to work at the same maternity hospital in the Cholpon Ata city in the Ysyk-Kol region. Tolkunbek visited them whenever he had vacation from work and felt happy seeing that everything in his household was peaceful and successful. One day Kyna asked her son when he would finally graduate from university. Tolkunbek answered that he still needed two more years. Kyna replied that Jainagul missed him greatly and should live beside her husband permanently.

"She Is the Apple of Our House" After hearing his mother's words, Tolkunbek jokingly asked Kyna whether she loved Jainagul more than her own son. Kyna smiled warmly and answered, "Yes, she is the apple of our house." Her words showed how deeply Jainagul had become part of the family. During Soviet times, families often celebrated the successful completion of university studies with large gatherings. Therefore, Mansur and Kyna organized a celebration for Jainagul and invited many relatives and guests,

including Jainagul's mother Tumar and other family members. During the gathering, Tumar asked what kind of daughter-in-law Jainagul had become. Both Kyna and Mansur praised her kindness, hard work, intelligence, and respectfulness.

Jainagul at the Maternity Hospital During the dinner celebration, a message suddenly arrived from the maternity hospital asking Jainagul to come urgently because doctors needed help with a difficult childbirth. Although she was still surrounded by guests and relatives, Jainagul immediately left the celebration and hurried to the hospital. There she joined the medical team caring for a woman whose delivery had become dangerous and complicated. Jainagul assisted in performing a Caesarean section operation in order to save both the mother and the baby. Her quick response and professional work impressed everyone around her. That evening, her family felt even prouder seeing that Jainagul had truly become a devoted and responsible doctor.

Tolkunbek's Life in Osh

Tolkunbek Is Sent to Osh Jainagul had always dreamed of living in the southern part of Kyrgyzstan, especially in the city of Osh. However, after graduating from medical university, she was assigned to work at the maternity hospital in Cholpon-Ata city, in the Ysyk-Kol region, because during Soviet times graduates were usually sent to different regions by the state. Later, when Tolkunbek graduated from technical university and became an engineer, he unexpectedly received a work assignment in Osh. Jainagul became very happy and encouraged him to accept the position. Tolkunbek moved to Osh and received a room in a dormitory for construction workers. As a young and promising engineer, he quickly began building a successful career there.

Separation between Osh and Cholpon-Ata During the first year in Osh, Tolkunbek visited his family in the Ysyk-Kol region almost every month, and both he and Jainagul missed each other deeply during their separation. Jainagul continued working at the maternity hospital while raising little Jannat together with Tolkunbek's parents. However, Tolkunbek's parents disliked his work in Osh because the family remained far away in the Ysyk-Kol region. His father Mansur, a veteran of the Second World War, suffered from many injuries and needed support at home. Kyna also worried about leaving Jainagul alone with work and responsibilities. Jainagul's mother and her brother Sady were also unhappy that Tolkunbek worked far away from his family.

The Growing Distance During one of Tolkunbek's visits to Cholpon-Ata, Jainagul informed him that she was pregnant again. Earlier she had hoped that they could leave little Jannat with her grandparents while she moved to Osh to live beside her husband. However, because of the second pregnancy, she could no longer travel so easily or leave her work at the maternity hospital. Tolkunbek also did not want to leave Osh because his engineering career was gradually improving there. Jainagul encouraged him to save money for the household because the family had already bought some cattle and needed financial stability. Tolkunbek answered that his salary was still too small to save much money, and gradually his visits became less frequent. His last visit had been during the New Year holidays in January, and then he returned again only at the beginning of May.

Birth of Twins and Abandoned Child

The Difficult Winter Night That winter was especially difficult for Jainagul and her family. Jainagul was already in the final month of pregnancy and had carefully prepared the birth kit bag, showing it to her mother-in-law Kyna. Meanwhile, Tolkunbek still remained far away in Osh. During the quiet winter night, Jainagul's labor slowly began and gradually became stronger and more painful. Kyna became frightened and secretly cried because Jainagul had once said that she feared she might die during childbirth. Kyna had also heard rumors from relatives that Tolkunbek supposedly had another woman in Osh who was pregnant from him. Although Kyna fully believed such gossip, the painful thoughts still troubled her deeply that night.

The Baby at the Gate Late that same night, the family dog suddenly began barking loudly without stopping. Jainagul believed her labor would continue until morning and planned to call the ambulance only

when the birth became closer. However, the dog continued barking anxiously near the gate. Worried, Kyna and Jainagul stepped outside and noticed something wrapped in cloth lying beside the entrance. They called Mansur to check what it was. To their complete shock, Mansur discovered a newborn baby boy abandoned at the gate. The entire family became speechless and frightened. They wondered whether someone knew Jainagul was about to give birth. Finally, they carried the baby inside the house and quietly decided to adopt him as their own child.

The Secret of the Twin Boys Mansur worried what would happen if the real mother someday returned to reclaim the abandoned child. However, Kyna told him to bury one of little Jannat's dolls in the cemetery early the next morning to hide the truth from the villagers. Jainagul then decided to remain at home instead of immediately going to the hospital. By morning she delivered another baby boy herself. The family named the boys Asan and Uson, traditional Kyrgyz names often given to twins. While washing the babies, Kyna noticed that their own grandson Asan carried the same birthmark on his back. Soon afterwards an ambulance and doctor arrived and took Jainagul together with both newborn boys to the maternity hospital in Cholpon-Ata.

The Story Spreads through the Village Early in the morning Mansur secretly buried Jannat's doll in the cemetery as Kyna had instructed. However, one of the village men noticed him and asked anxiously what had happened. Mansur quickly replied that while Jainagul had been giving birth during the night, someone had abandoned a baby near their gate, and because they had not discovered him in time, the child had died. Soon the entire village learned the story. Later Jainagul's mother Tumar also heard about the strange incident. She promised to keep the truth hidden and support the family's decision. Together, the relatives agreed that Tolkunbek should never learn that one of the twin boys had actually been found abandoned outside the gate.

Kyna Gives the Family Heritage As the twin boys grew older, Uson, the left boy, remained thinner and physically weaker than his brother Asan. Jainagul worried that the unknown mother may have hidden her pregnancy and suffered greatly before childbirth. She carefully bathed Uson, massaged him often, and watched over his health constantly. By the fifth month, both boys finally became equal in weight and strength. Around that time Kyna fell ill and feared that she might die. One day she opened her traditional wooden chest and removed old fur coats, fur hats, and precious Kyrgyz jewelry. She lovingly gave these family heirlooms to Jainagul, who happily accepted the rare traditional clothes and treasures. Several days later Kyna slowly recovered from her illness and became stronger again.

The Resemblance to Tolkunbek As the boys continued growing, Jainagul became increasingly surprised by their appearance. Both children looked remarkably similar to Tolkunbek with their thick black hair, eyes, nose, and facial features. Sometimes Jainagul would quietly sit between the two cradles, singing lullabies while secretly wondering who the unknown woman could be that had delivered a child from Tolkunbek. She imagined that perhaps the abandoned baby belonged to a woman who had once worked together with him in Osh. Kyna also noticed how strongly little Uson resembled Tolkunbek and became worried herself. One day she carefully told Jainagul that sometimes unrelated people could naturally resemble one another, hoping to calm her suspicions.

Hidden Suspicion before the Journey Both Jainagul and Kyna felt that there was some hidden secret behind Tolkunbek's behavior. He had repeatedly promised that he would come and visit the family, yet each time the visit was postponed. Nearly two years passed without him returning home. Finally, Mansur said that if Tolkunbek could not come to visit them, then they themselves should travel to Osh. He suggested that Jainagul, Kyna, and the children go there together. Tolkunbek always gave different excuses for not visiting. Sometimes he said that his boss would not allow him to leave work; at other times he mentioned different problems and obligations. Despite this, he continued calling the family every two days.

Tolkunbek's Family in Osh

Arrival in Osh Jainagul, together with her mother-in-law Kyna, her twin sons Asan and Uson, and their daughter Jannat, flew from the northern Ysyk-Kol region to Osh city, Kyrgyzstan. At the airport, they wait-

ed for Tolkunbek, Jainagul's husband, to pick them up. However, he did not arrive, so they took a taxi to the dormitory-like residence where Tolkunbek stayed for construction workers. When they arrived, they learned that the building was under repair and that Tolkunbek had apparently moved to a hotel.

Tolkunbek Returns after Two Days When they reached the hotel, Tolkunbek was still away, and the receptionist settled them on the second floor. Tolkunbek Mansurov was a young and promising construction engineer. Exhausted from the journey, the family began drinking tea while waiting for him. Tolkunbek arrived only two days later together with a woman and appeared surprised by the family's unexpected visit. Kyna, his mother, felt that the woman looked familiar, as if she had seen her somewhere before, but in her heart she immediately disliked her appearance and manner.

The Unreceived Telegram Tolkunbek introduced the woman by saying that she was the wife of one of his local friends. The woman, however, quietly left without saying a single word. Jainagul had believed that Tolkunbek had received the telegram she had sent earlier, since telegrams were considered a fast form of communication. However, the receptionist explained that the telegram was still lying at the reception desk and that Tolkunbek had not yet seen it. Jainagul and Kyna, who had both been upset that he had failed to meet them at the airport, finally calmed down after realizing that he truly had not known about their arrival.

Apology Tolkunbek apologized for not picking them up and asked when they had arrived. Jainagul answered ironically that it had already been two days and he still had not stayed at his place. Tolkunbek justified himself by saying that he had been busy with work. Jainagul felt something uneasy in her heart when she saw Tolkunbek with another woman, but she was not sure what to think.

Small Talk and Family Meal Later, when Jainagul and Tolkunbek were alone, he apologized once more and told her that she should take care of herself, go for a manicure, and look beautiful. Jainagul replied that she lived with children and his parents in the village, had many household chores, a garden, and cattle, and therefore had no time to go to a beauty salon.

Jainagul's Suspicion Then Jainagul set the table, and the family gathered around it. Tolkunbek asked about his father, and his mother replied that he was fine but sometimes ill. The table was full of organic village food they had brought. After dinner, Jainagul kept thinking about the woman who had come with Tolkunbek. She wondered if she might be his secret girlfriend, especially since he had been away for two years, and she suspected he might have been unfaithful. Then she tried to convince herself otherwise, thinking that he was a good man and would not do such a thing.

Emotional Distance Tolkunbek missed his children deeply—his daughter Jannat and the twin boys Asan and Uson. When he returned home, Jainagul carefully searched his eyes for signs of warmth and longing, but instead she noticed guilt, exhaustion, and emotional distance. Tolkunbek looked cold and tired and quietly said that he only wanted to sleep. His words hurt Jainagul because he seemed completely different from the loving husband she once knew. While he lay silently beside her, Jainagul believed he had already fallen asleep. In reality, Tolkunbek remained awake, thinking about the growing confusion and pain in his life and wondering how he could possibly solve the terrible mess surrounding him.

Emil's Betrayal Lying awake in the darkness, Tolkunbek remembered painful events from the past involving Emil. Once, while Tolkunbek had been absent from the house in Frunze, Emil had come to visit Jainagul and attempted to assault her. Fortunately, the neighbors heard her cries and rushed to help before something terrible happened. Later Emil left behind a bitter letter accusing Tolkunbek of hypocrisy because he had once promised to marry Zinat but instead married Jainagul. Emil also confessed in the letter that he himself had fallen in love with Jainagul. After that shameful incident, Tolkunbek never met Emil again and felt deeply disappointed and disgusted by the actions of his former friend.

Memories of Zinat Tolkunbek thought about Zinat and remembered her pure and innocent love from childhood. He understood that she had sincerely loved him for many years, yet his own heart had always belonged to Jainagul. After Tolkunbek's marriage, Zinat cried greatly and suffered for a long time. Eventually she married a military officer from Osh and moved there with him. Since then, Tolkunbek had heard

almost nothing about either Zyinat or Emil. He only knew that Zyinat had graduated from the fine arts college and become an artist.

Zyinat's Presence: A New Chapter in Tolkunbek's Life

The Unexpected Phone Call One day, while working in the construction office in Osh, Tolkunbek received an unexpected phone call. A man politely addressed him as "Tolkunbek Mansurovich," following the formal Russian manner of using a person's first name together with the patronymic. The caller introduced himself as the husband of one of Tolkunbek's "sisters." In Kyrgyz custom, people from the same clan or village are often considered relatives and addressed as brothers or sisters. However, Tolkunbek could not remember any village girl from his area marrying and moving to Osh. Curious and confused, he accepted the invitation. That evening he arrived at a beautiful southern-style house with a large gate, flowers, and grapevines filling the yard.

Zyinat's House in Osh As soon as Tolkunbek entered the yard, he realized that the house belonged to Zyinat and her husband. He was greatly surprised that Zyinat herself had invited him. Her husband was preparing to leave abroad with a Soviet mission, so they had gathered relatives and friends for a farewell dinner. Zyinat came outside to greet Tolkunbek personally. She looked happy to see him, though some resentment still remained in her eyes. Nearby, a little girl around Jannat's age played in the garden. According to custom, Tolkunbek gave the child some money, but Zyinat explained that the girl was actually her husband's niece. Then, with sadness in her voice, Zyinat admitted that they still had no children.

Zyinat's Painful Words During their conversation, Tolkunbek warmly spoke about his family, Jainagul, and little Jannat. However, Zyinat only smiled bitterly. When Tolkunbek politely said that her husband seemed like a good man, Zyinat answered ironically, asking whether he had believed nobody else would ever marry her. Tolkunbek calmly replied that every person had a different destiny in life. He suggested that when Jainagul someday visited Osh, he would introduce the two women to each other. Zyinat immediately refused and said she had no desire to meet Jainagul. She then said that Tolkunbek had been her pure love and the best man she had ever known, but he had chosen another woman, and she still carried deep resentment and hatred toward Jainagul for taking him away.

Leaving Zyinat's House Later that evening Tolkunbek entered the house and met many relatives and friends gathered for the farewell celebration. After dinner, Zyinat and her husband kindly offered to drive Tolkunbek back to his dormitory. Before he left, they presented him with an expensive suit as a gift. Tolkunbek felt embarrassed and uncomfortable accepting such generosity, but both Zyinat and her husband insisted warmly. During the ride back, Tolkunbek reflected on the evening and thought that Zyinat had become a strong, kind, and generous woman despite all the pain she once experienced. Yet her words remained in his mind. He could not forget that Zyinat still believed he had been the best man she ever loved.

Zyinat's Letter and Tolkunbek's Fear Early in the morning, Tolkunbek received a phone call from Zyinat. She said she had obtained his number from the city address office and told him that there was a letter for him in the pocket of the suit he had received. Tolkunbek carefully read the letter. Zyinat wrote that she still loved him deeply and asked him to show sympathy for her feelings. The message frightened Tolkunbek because he realized her emotions were still strong and unstable. Feeling uneasy and confused, he decided it was safer to keep distance from Zyinat and avoid any further contact.

Loneliness and Unexpected Invitation After that, Tolkunbek no longer contacted or met Zyinat. He missed his wife Jainagul and his daughter Jannat deeply. One day, after returning from a work trip, he tried calling his family, but the telephone connection between regions was poor and he could not speak with them. Feeling lonely and bored, he read newspapers, but nothing interested him. No friends called him that day. Suddenly, the telephone rang, and it was Zyinat. She invited him to meet her. At first he refused, but she called again and again until, without realizing it, he finally agreed to go.

The Dark House When Tolkunbek arrived at Zyinat's house, she led him inside. The house was dark, and no lamps were turned on. He immediately became suspicious of the situation. As they entered,

Zyinat explained that she was a married woman and had kept the lights off to avoid drawing attention. Inside, Tolkunbek saw a richly set table with wine and various drinks prepared. They began talking, and Zyinat suggested they drink a toast for their families. Tolkunbek noticed that she looked more beautiful and charming than before. For a moment, despite missing Jainagul only hours earlier, he felt emotionally confused and drawn toward Zyinat, unaware that she had carefully planned the evening as a trap for him, and he stayed there that night.

Zyinat and Tolkunbek's Secret Relationship Zyinat entered Tolkunbek's life again, and although he often missed Jainagul and their daughter Jannat, he also felt strongly attracted to Zyinat. He began making different excuses to avoid regular visits to his family and continued meeting her secretly. However, after some time, Tolkunbek realized that both of them already had families and tried to end their forbidden relationship. He asked Zyinat to stop, but she refused, saying she loved him deeply and could not let him go. Despite his attempts, Tolkunbek himself could not completely end the emotional bond between them, and the relationship continued in secrecy.

Pregnancy and Growing Conflict Zyinat eventually became pregnant, but she was afraid of abortion and did not want to risk never becoming pregnant again. She kept this secret from Tolkunbek for a long time. Tolkunbek, however, noticed changes in her appearance and suspected something was wrong. At the same time, he told her that Jainagul was also pregnant. Hearing this, Zyinat became emotionally unstable and angry. She said she did not want to raise the child and planned to give the baby to a woman who would adopt from an orphanage in Frunze. Tolkunbek suggested leaving the child near his own family gate so that Jainagul could raise him.

The Birth and Abandonment As the birth approached, Tolkunbek and Zyinat planned to travel toward the Ysyk-Kol region, where Tolkunbek knew a Russian acquaintance who could help them stay hidden in resort houses. However, Zyinat's labor started on the way, forcing them to stop at a nearby house. An elderly woman helped deliver the baby boy. When she asked for traditional "suiunchu," Tolkunbek felt unusually embarrassed and nervous, which frightened her. They hid their real names and village information. Later, Tolkunbek secretly took the newborn child and left him near his family's gate in his home village, hoping to avoid responsibility and discovery.

Consequences and Continuing Secrets The next morning, Tolkunbek returned to his village pretending it was an ordinary visit, but he saw his father burying a child in the cemetery. At the same time, he also learned that Jainagul had safely delivered twin boys, which relieved him emotionally. His mother became suspicious because he usually traveled by plane, not by car. After briefly visiting Jainagul, he returned to Frunze that same night. Later, he told Zyinat that their baby had died, and she cried in deep sorrow. Still, Zyinat insisted she wanted another child from Tolkunbek. Despite everything, their secret relationship continued even when Jainagul and Kyna later visited Osh with the children.

The Days After the Visit in Osh

Tolkunbek's Secret Meetings with Zyinat In the morning, Tolkunbek barely touched his breakfast and hurriedly left the hotel where he and his family were staying. Standing on the balcony, Jainagul watched him leave and once again felt the emotional distance growing between them. Tolkunbek immediately went to see Zyinat and told her that they should avoid meeting until his family returned to the Ysyk-Kol region. Zyinat answered that she wanted to see the twin boys because perhaps one of them was her own son. Tolkunbek was shocked and replied that the twins looked exactly alike and he insisted that both children belonged to him and Jainagul. Hearing this, Zyinat burst into tears.

Zyinat's Longing for Motherhood Zyinat was preparing to divorce her husband and deeply regretted abandoning her child in the past. After losing that child, motherhood became the center of her emotional life. She dreamed constantly about having another baby and devoted herself to painting images connected with mothers and children. Meanwhile, Tolkunbek went to work and later decided to return to the hotel for lunch with his family. Feeling excited, he abruptly stopped his car near the hotel. His daughter Jannat happily ran to greet him, and Tolkunbek warmly embraced her, speaking tender and affectionate words. At the same moment, Zyinat stood quietly in the corner watching the entire scene. Then she noticed Jainagul standing on the balcony and thought to herself how fortunate and happy Jainagul seemed beside her husband and children.

Kyna's Worries and the Family's Departure Kyna constantly worried whenever Tolkunbek arrived late for lunch or dinner. Jainagul also carried a heavy feeling inside because she had not told Tolkunbek about the abandoned child. At one moment she even wondered aloud whether the woman who had arrived with Tolkunbek on the first day might actually have been Uson's real mother. Kyna immediately reassured her, insisting that both boys were truly her children and that she should not torture herself with such thoughts.

The Mother's Warning When Tolkunbek returned, his mother warned him to protect and save his family instead of distancing himself from them. Tolkunbek tried to defend himself, but Kyna replied that his strange behavior was becoming obvious. Later Tolkunbek visited Zynat again. This time Zynat closed the door and demanded that he give her one of Jainagul's sons. Tolkunbek became furious at her words. Soon afterward, he gathered his entire family and left Osh together with them, returning to the Ysyk-Kol region.

Zynat's Illness and Art Exhibition Zynat became seriously ill and was taken to the hospital. She suffered emotionally because of Tolkunbek and felt deep sadness and loneliness. During this difficult period, several of her paintings were selected for an exhibition in Moscow, and she traveled there to participate. Later Tolkunbek read about her success in a newspaper and wondered whether she might already have found another man and forgotten him. Meanwhile, Tolkunbek and Jainagul moved permanently to Osh and received a new apartment for construction workers. Their life gradually improved, and their relationship became warmer again. Neighbors often admired the couple and their beautiful children.

Dinner Invitation and Growing Tension One evening neighbors invited Tolkunbek and Jainagul to dinner. During the gathering, the hosts mentioned that they had also invited Zynat. Jainagul immediately remembered that Zynat was the same woman who had once written letters to Tolkunbek, though she still did not know she had appeared with him at the hotel before. Tolkunbek became nervous because he knew Zynat could behave emotionally after drinking alcohol. Meanwhile, Jainagul casually asked whether he knew that Zynat also lived in Osh. Hearing this question, Tolkunbek turned pale. At that moment the twin boys started crying in the bedroom.

Zynat Meets the Twin Boys Jainagul went into the bedroom to calm the twins. Just then Zynat entered the house, and Tolkunbek became visibly embarrassed when he saw her. Soon Jainagul returned carrying the boys. Looking at them, Zynat thought that her abandoned son would now be the same age. While the neighbors continued praising Tolkunbek and Jainagul as a happy family, Zynat reacted sarcastically and asked them not to praise the couple so much. Later she suddenly began crying, thinking about the child she had abandoned years earlier. Jainagul quietly observed her and thought that she seemed like a kind but deeply unhappy woman.

Suspicion and Hidden Fear After returning home, Jainagul admitted that she had recognized Zynat as the same woman she had once seen with Tolkunbek at the hotel. Tolkunbek quickly answered that their meeting there had only been a coincidence. However, Jainagul secretly wondered whether Zynat might actually be Uson's real mother. She feared that if she ever divorced Tolkunbek, Zynat might try to take the boy away from her. Jainagul remembered how her own mother often said that forgiveness was important in family life. At the same time, Tolkunbek remained trapped in anxious thoughts, constantly worrying about what would happen if Jainagul ever discovered the entire truth.

Problems at the Construction Site Tolkunbek arrived at the construction site, where discipline among the workers had become weak. Some married couples often came to work drunk and neglected their duties. As the chief engineer, Tolkunbek decided to punish them by cutting their bonus salaries. These workers were relatives of Ergeshbaev, the construction foreman. Ergeshbaev himself secretly used construction materials for his personal benefit. The administration had already begun noticing signs of corruption, but Ergeshbaev denied everything. Instead, he started thinking about how to involve Tolkunbek in his dishonest dealings so that suspicion would not fall only on him.

Zynat's Invitation and Tolkunbek's Confusion People at the construction site already knew Zynat well. At first, many workers assumed that she was Tolkunbek's wife, but later they discovered the truth and began gossiping about her. That same day, Zynat came to invite Tolkunbek to dinner because she had received the Lenin Komsomol Award for several of her paintings. Tolkunbek noticed how beautiful

she looked and agreed to visit her that evening. On his way back, he remembered the final words of Ak-kyz, Zynat's late mother, who had once told him softly: "Take care of my Zynat." Those words continued troubling him deeply and made him feel emotionally responsible for her life and loneliness.

Jainagul at the Bazaar Meanwhile, Jainagul received a telegram saying that her brother Sady was coming to visit them. She happily went to the vegetable bazaar to buy food and prepare a good table for the guests. By coincidence, Zynat also saw Jainagul there and immediately felt jealous again while watching her. She looked at Jainagul carrying vegetables and thought about her stable family life. Zynat assumed that Tolkunbek would never come to her apartment that evening because his relatives were arriving. However, when Tolkunbek finally appeared, she became unexpectedly happy. She admitted that she had not expected him because Jainagul had been shopping at the bazaar. After a short visit, Tolkunbek hurriedly prepared to return home again.

Zynat Demands the Child Before Tolkunbek left, Zynat once again spoke emotionally about the abandoned child. She demanded that he give her one of the twin boys, insisting that one of them was truly hers. Tolkunbek became angry and told her to stop repeating such nonsense. However, Zynat continued crying and said that if Tolkunbek loved Jainagul, then she also loved him and could not separate herself from him emotionally. Tolkunbek felt exhausted and disturbed by her words. Without continuing the argument, he quickly left Zynat's apartment and returned home.

Family Gathering When Tolkunbek arrived home, he found many guests already there. Jainagul's brother Sady had arrived together with her mother Tumar and her sisters Jailoogul and Bairagul. Jainagul happily welcomed her husband and introduced everyone around the table. Tolkunbek thanked the family for visiting, but Jainagul suddenly mentioned that someone had seen his car parked near Zynat's house. She calmly asked whether Zynat had told him that she had seen Jainagul at the bazaar earlier that day. Tolkunbek immediately became nervous. At that exact moment, someone from outside delivered an anonymous letter addressed to Jainagul, creating an even heavier tension inside the crowded household that evening.

The Anonymous Letter Tumar, Jainagul's mother, opened the anonymous letter together with her daughters before giving it to Jainagul. The letter claimed that Tolkunbek had been secretly involved in a relationship with Zynat for a long time. The accusations shocked the women, and silence filled the room. Tumar quickly ordered her daughters not to show the letter to Jainagul, explaining that anonymous letters could contain lies and false gossip meant to destroy families. She feared that revealing it immediately might ruin Jainagul's happiness and create conflict inside the household.

Tumar Shares the Secret with Kyna After returning to Bishkek, Tumar, Jainagul's mother told Tolkunbek's mother Kyna about the anonymous letter. The two older women spoke anxiously about Uson and feared that there might truly be a hidden secret surrounding the child. Still, both wanted to protect the family and avoid destroying Jainagul's marriage. Soon afterward, Kyna traveled to Osh. Jainagul warmly met her at the airport and brought her home. That night, Tolkunbek did not return at all, and Jainagul assumed he had gone on a work trip. The next morning, Jainagul prepared beautifully for a job interview at the local maternity hospital. Watching her, Kyna quietly whispered protective ritual words against the evil eye.

Kyna Confronts Tolkunbek While Kyna rested briefly after the journey, Tolkunbek finally arrived home. Seeing his mother unexpectedly sitting there, he happily greeted her, but Kyna suddenly began crying. She showed him the anonymous letter that Tumar had secretly handed to her. Kyna explained that a young boy had delivered it to Tumar and her daughters, though they had hidden it from Jainagul. Tolkunbek nervously read the accusations and insisted that Zynat was only like a sister from their earlier years in Frunze. Kyna immediately asked why, if that were true, he had never introduced Zynat properly to Jainagul. Meanwhile, the previous evening, Zynat had shown Tolkunbek her newest painting titled *Couples*.

Corruption at the Construction Site At the construction site, Tolkunbek and several colleagues finally uncovered Ergeshbaev's corruption. The foreman had secretly been stealing cement and construction materials for a private house. Earlier, Ergeshbaev had claimed that the building materials were for his brother's new home. However, when Tolkunbek and the administration visited the site, workers admitted

that the house actually belonged to Ergeshbaev himself, while his younger brother was still only a student. The investigation quickly exposed the truth, and Ergeshbaev was arrested for corruption and theft. Although Tolkunbek felt relieved that the dishonest activities had finally been revealed, tension in his own private life continued growing far more dangerously around him every day.

Jainagul's Growing Worry Jainagul was officially accepted as a doctor at the maternity hospital after being recommended by a former university classmate who now headed the city healthcare services. She happily shared the news with Kyna. However, during their conversation, Jainagul quietly admitted that she increasingly suspected Zynat might somehow be connected to Uson. She remembered how painfully jealous Zynat had looked during the dinner at the neighbors' house. Kyna immediately tried calming her, insisting again that both twin boys belonged only to Jainagul. That evening, Tolkunbek once again returned home very late. Jainagul waited anxiously beside the telephone. Suddenly it rang, but nobody spoke. The silent caller was actually Zynat calling the family apartment.

Tolkunbek Tries to End the Affair Tolkunbek next day visited Zynat and showed her the anonymous letter describing their secret relationship. He explained that he desperately did not want Jainagul to receive such letters. Zynat calmly answered that whoever had written the letter would probably continue sending more. Tolkunbek firmly told her never to call his home telephone again. Hurt by his coldness, Zynat asked why he always worried only about Jainagul while ignoring her own feelings. She admitted openly that she loved him deeply. Tolkunbek said that their affair needed to end completely. Crying desperately, Zynat begged him at least to meet her once a month. Remembering her recent fainting spells, Tolkunbek softened and tried calming her emotionally.

Jainagul Finds Tolkunbek's Secret

Jainagul Discovers the Truth Late that night, while Jainagul still waited alone for Tolkunbek, another anonymous letter was suddenly pushed through the window. Trembling, she began reading it. The writer described the relationship between her husband Tolkunbek and the famous painter Zynat Esenova. The letter included Zynat's address and instructed Jainagul to wait at a nearby bus stop. Devastated, Jainagul left the twin boys with neighbors and quietly traveled there alone. At the bus stop, a strange woman pointed out Zynat's house. Jainagul immediately recognized Tolkunbek's car parked outside. Inside the apartment, she noticed a painting showing Tolkunbek, herself, and the children together. Then she suddenly saw Tolkunbek staring silently at her while Zynat turned around in shock.

Jainagul Wanders Through the Night After leaving Zynat's house, Jainagul wandered alone through the dark streets of Osh. Her mind was overwhelmed with pain and humiliation. At one moment, standing near the river, she even thought about throwing herself into the water and ending her life. She felt that everything she had trusted had collapsed in a single evening. Yet suddenly another thought stopped her: if she died, Zynat would gain both Tolkunbek and the children. Realizing this, Jainagul slowly regained control over herself and returned home. She cried throughout the entire night, understanding that she had been naïve to believe their love would last forever without betrayal or suffering.

Tolkunbek Spends the Night in Detention Meanwhile, Tolkunbek became drunk and desperate after Jainagul discovered the truth. Filled with guilt, he decided to drive home immediately and beg for forgiveness. However, on the way he was stopped by the police for drunk driving and taken into detention for the night. He had no money to pay the fine or secure his release. Ashamed and frightened, he contacted Zynat and asked her to pay the necessary bond and fine for him. Jainagul realized that the anonymous letters had most likely been written by Ergeshbaev's wife after her husband's arrest. Still, Jainagul blamed not the woman, but Tolkunbek himself for betraying her trust completely.

Preparing to Leave By morning, Jainagul noticed the tire marks from Tolkunbek's car outside the building and understood that he had returned sometime during the night. Exhausted and heartbroken, she quietly began gathering her belongings. She packed clothes, personal items, and important documents into two large suitcases and placed them beside the entrance door. Every object she folded reminded her of the years she had spent believing in their marriage and shared future. Although deeply hurt, she tried remaining calm for the children's sake. Inside, however, she felt empty and betrayed. For the first time

since their marriage, Jainagul seriously considered leaving Tolkunbek completely and returning to her family with the children.

Kermekash Brings More Gossip Later that day, their neighbor Kermekash came to visit. She immediately began discussing the rumors spreading through the neighborhood that Jainagul had told Tolkunbek to leave because of his relationship with Zynat. Jainagul was shocked by how quickly the gossip had spread across the city. At the same time, she knew very well that Kermekash herself was one of the biggest gossipers in the neighborhood, so she answered carefully. Kermekash also explained that Zynat had visited her earlier and confessed everything. According to her, Tolkunbek had actually gone to Zynat's apartment intending to end the relationship forever before Jainagul unexpectedly arrived there and discovered them together that same evening.

Zynat Asks for Forgiveness Kermekash continued speaking about Zynat's confession. According to her, Zynat admitted that she herself was guilty because she had loved Tolkunbek since childhood and had never managed to forget him emotionally. She reportedly cried while speaking and asked Kermekash to pass her apology to Jainagul. Hearing these words only deepened Jainagul's pain. She listened silently for some time before firmly answering that everything between them was already over. For Jainagul, the betrayal had destroyed not only trust in Tolkunbek, but also her belief in the stability of family, marriage, and lifelong love completely.

The Separation

Separation from the Family It became very painful for Tolkunbek to live separated from Jainagul and the children. Although he now stayed at Zynat's house and had moved many of his clothes and belongings there, he could not find peace or happiness. Zynat herself felt shocked and strangely happy at finally having Tolkunbek completely beside her after loving him for many years. At the same time, she constantly thought about how to keep him forever and prevent him from returning to Jainagul. Meanwhile, the gossip-loving woman Kermekash spread everything she heard from Jainagul and openly repeated that Jainagul would never forgive Tolkunbek for betraying his family and abandoning his children.

Shame at the Construction Site Around that same time, Tolkunbek's construction team successfully completed a large apartment block with one hundred eighty apartments. During the grand opening ceremony, Tolkunbek received an official paper of appraisal for his successful work as an engineer. However, the award brought him no happiness because his personal life had already become chaotic and shameful. Later, Tolkunbek discovered that Ergeshbaev's wife had secretly written all the anonymous letters exposing his affair. Ergeshbaev himself testified before officials that Tolkunbek had abandoned his wife and three children and moved into Zynat Esenova's house. He also reported that Tolkunbek had once been drunk and detained, which greatly damaged his reputation as a Soviet citizen.

The Communist Party Investigation Soon the matter reached the Communist Party committee at Tolkunbek's workplace. The party secretary collected letters written by both Zynat and Jainagul as evidence. In her letter, Zynat openly admitted that she had loved Tolkunbek all her life and described their secret relationship in detail. Jainagul's letter was shorter and colder. She simply wrote that she no longer wished to continue living with Tolkunbek. News of the scandal quickly reached Tolkunbek's parents in the village. Kyna became furious and cursed both Tolkunbek and Zynat for destroying the family. She suffered greatly because she could no longer see Jainagul or her beloved grandchildren regularly.

Kyna's Illness Unable to endure the pain and separation any longer, Kyna traveled to Osh to see Jainagul personally. When the two women met, both began crying bitterly. Jainagul felt abandoned and humiliated, while Kyna suffered from guilt and sorrow because her own son had destroyed the family's happiness. The emotional stress became so severe that Kyna's blood pressure suddenly rose dangerously high, and she was taken to the hospital. When Tolkunbek learned that his mother had arrived in Osh and become seriously ill, he felt overwhelmed with shame and fear. He wandered restlessly around the house, unable to calm himself.

Tumar Blames Jainagul Tumar, Jainagul's mother, also arrived in Osh to understand what had happened between Jainagul and Tolkunbek. Jainagul explained that after receiving the letter, she went to Zynat's house herself and saw Tolkunbek together with Zynat. After witnessing them together, she decided she could no longer continue living with her husband. Jainagul also said that Zynat later visited Kermekash and asked Jainagul to forgive Tolkunbek, but she refused. Surprisingly, Tumar blamed her own daughter instead. She said Jainagul should have forgiven Tolkunbek for his mistake and added that Zynat had turned out to be a good woman. Tumar also criticized Jainagul for going to Zynat's house and chasing after Tolkunbek there.

Tolkunbek's Dismissal and Shame Soon afterwards, Tolkunbek was dismissed from his engineering job and received a severe official reprimand for his immoral behavior. The scandal had become too public, and his actions were considered shameful for a Soviet citizen. Even his mother Kyna admitted bitterly that Tolkunbek deserved such punishment. Meanwhile, Zynat bought a new Volga car and presented it to Tolkunbek as a gift, but he could not feel happiness or excitement. He remained deeply humiliated, lonely, and emotionally broken because of losing his family. Trying to distract him from sorrow, Zynat took him on trips to Leningrad, Moscow, and other famous Soviet cities, hoping that travel and new surroundings would help him forget his pain.

Zynat's World During their travels, Zynat tried to surround Tolkunbek with comfort, beauty, and attention. She even considered moving with him to another city so they could begin a completely new life together. In Moscow, Tolkunbek attended exhibitions of Zynat's paintings and saw how respected she was among Soviet intellectuals and artists. For some time, Tolkunbek became slightly distracted from thoughts about Jainagul and the children. After returning from the trip, Zynat sent expensive gifts to Jainagul and the children, but everything was returned unopened. She also sent presents to Tolkunbek's parents. Gradually, Tolkunbek's life became increasingly connected to Zynat and her world.

The Meeting in the Street Zynat began buying expensive and fashionable clothes for Tolkunbek, and his appearance changed greatly. He looked more handsome, confident, and elegant than before. Slowly, he became more involved in the life Zynat created around him, even though sadness still remained inside him. One day, while walking through the city, Tolkunbek unexpectedly saw Jainagul together with the twin boys. Jainagul immediately recognized him in his new clothes and polished appearance. For a moment she stopped, without saying a word, Jainagul quickly gathered the boys and hurried away from the place, unwilling to continue the painful meeting any longer.

Rejected by His Parents Tolkunbek returned to his home village hoping to see his parents and repair their relationship. He brought many gifts for them, but neither Mansur nor Kyna accepted him or the presents. Tolkunbek tried to explain himself and said that if Jainagul had forgiven his mistake, he would never have separated her. He also argued that Zynat was not a bad woman because their families had known her parents for many years. However, his words only made the situation worse. Mansur became so furious that he wanted to shoot his own son. Kyna bitterly declared that Jainagul and the children were now their true family, while Tolkunbek was no longer their son.

Gossips While Tolkunbek stayed in the village, Kermekash, the gossiping neighbor, came to visit and eagerly shared news about Jainagul's life. She explained that Jainagul continued working successfully at the maternity hospital and often invited respected guests to her home. Kermekash especially mentioned Sultan, the head of the city healthcare services, who frequently visited Jainagul. Hearing another man's name connected to Jainagul immediately made Tolkunbek jealous and restless. Although he had chosen Zynat and another life, thoughts about Jainagul still deeply troubled him and awakened painful regret and possessiveness inside him.

Searching for the Twin Boys One day Tolkunbek received a promising job offer in Almaty, Kazakhstan. Because he was a talented engineer, he was invited to participate in large construction projects there. Before leaving Osh, however, Tolkunbek desperately wanted to see his twin sons Asan and Uson one last time. Unsure what to do, he wrote a letter to Jainagul explaining that he would soon leave the city. Afterwards he secretly went to the kindergarten hoping to see the boys, but he could not find them there. Unknown to Tolkunbek, Zynat had already begun secretly following him because she was receiving

anonymous letters claiming that Tolkunbek wandered near Jainagul's house and searched for the children.

Tolkunbek in Almaty

Life in Almaty Eventually Tolkunbek and Zynat moved together to Almaty, Kazakhstan. There Tolkunbek worked successfully in construction and contributed to several important housing projects in the growing Soviet city. Because of his achievements and engineering talent, he eventually received his own apartment. Outwardly, his life seemed successful and stable again. However, internally he remained unhappy and emotionally divided. He constantly thought about his children, Jainagul, and his aging parents in the village. Despite the passing years, Mansur and Kyna still refused to forgive him for abandoning his family and bringing shame upon them.

Jainagul's Dream and Doubt Jainagul lived her life as a successful doctor and devoted herself fully to her work and children. One night she saw a disturbing dream: Tolkunbek was standing outside a door, leaning forward but unable to enter the house. Although she tried to focus on her present life, sometimes she regretted not forgiving Tolkunbek when there was still a chance to rebuild their family. At the same time, she grew especially attached to Uson, treating him almost like her own child, while still caring for Asan and Jannat deeply. Her mother-in-law's visits with Jannat reminded her how much the children still missed their father.

Tolkunbek's Inner Conflict Far away, Tolkunbek continued living with Zynat in Almaty, but his heart remained divided. He often thought about Jainagul, Asan, Uson, and Jannat, feeling constant emotional pain. During one argument, he finally admitted that he missed his children and even considered leaving Zynat, though fear stopped him from acting. He worried that Jainagul would never accept him again if he returned. Zynat noticed his emotional distance, especially after she found a hidden photograph of Jainagul inside a newspaper. At night, Tolkunbek sometimes spoke their names softly in his sleep, revealing how deeply his past family still lived inside his heart.

Zynat's Realization Zynat slowly understood that Tolkunbek had never fully belonged to her, even though she had tried to build a life around him. The truth was painful, but she accepted that their relationship had no future. Realizing this, she decided to let him go. She prepared to travel to Moscow for an important art exhibition, but before leaving she deliberately organized a farewell dinner, inviting guests and creating a calm, respectful atmosphere to say goodbye properly. Behind her composed appearance, she was hiding deep emotional pain. Tolkunbek did not immediately understand that this was her final decision. After she left, he found a letter she had written, quietly explaining that she was letting him go and ending their shared life.

Zynat's Decision to Let Go Zynat finally understood that Tolkunbek was suffering every night and no longer found peace beside her. She realized that forcing him to stay would only increase his pain. Seeing that he was still officially married to Jainagul, she took it as proof that his heart still belonged to his wife and children. With quiet dignity, Zynat told Tolkunbek that he should leave. She asked him to take his money and even the car. She also bought clothes for his children as gifts. If he could not leave his job properly, she said he should simply tell the truth and be free.

Farewell with Friends in Almaty Tolkunbek felt deep guilt and sadness toward Zynat, knowing he had hurt her despite her kindness. He had already been thinking about leaving her many times but never found the courage. His greatest fear remained Jainagul's rejection. His friend Zhakan, who had originally invited him to work in Almaty and was now his boss, read Zynat's letter and agreed that Tolkunbek should leave. Zhakan and his wife Galia invited Tolkunbek to dinner, where he openly shared his life story. Both felt sympathy for Tolkunbek and Zynat. Finally, Tolkunbek transferred ownership of the apartment to Zynat and prepared to return to Kyrgyzstan.

Return to Cholpon-Ata Tolkunbek returned to his hometown in Cholpon-Ata, where his village stood on the outskirts of the city. His aging mother welcomed him at the door, and Tolkunbek felt tears rising in his eyes as he saw how much she had grown older. His daughter Jannat was overjoyed and immediately looked through his bags, asking which gifts were for Jainagul, Asan, and Uson. His mother cautiously

asked whether he planned to leave again, and Tolkunbek firmly said that he had returned to stay with his family. Even his father Mansur was uneasy, disliking the Volga car because it reminded him of Zynat and the painful past.

Mansur's Anger and Family Pressure Mansur greeted his son Tolkunbek sarcastically and immediately began scolding him again for destroying the family. He could not hide his anger and disappointment. Jannat and Kyna begged him to stop the quarrel, but Mansur remained firm. Tolkunbek, overwhelmed with guilt, repeatedly asked for forgiveness. Mansur asked harshly whether he had ended his relationship with Esen's daughter. Tolkunbek confirmed that he had. Mansur also questioned the car, refusing even to say Zynat's name out of hatred. Mansur insisted that Jannat would act as a mediator between Tolkunbek and Jainagul and told his son to find a way to soften Jainagul's heart.

Jainagul's Inner Conflict Jainagul now lived a lonely life as a single mother, focusing on her work and children. At her workplace she observed many women who tolerated their husbands' mistakes and even forgave adultery. Slowly, these examples began to influence her thoughts, and she started to wonder whether she, too, could forgive Tolkunbek one day. Some colleagues gossiped that Jainagul might eventually accept her husband back, but she remained silent and unsure. Meanwhile, she still carried pain from the past, remembering how Tolkunbek had left her for Zynat. Most of all, she noticed how deeply the children missed their father, even if they did not openly express it.

Zynat's Letter and Shocking Confession Tolkunbek took his daughter Jannat and began his journey toward Osh. In Almaty, he had already written a letter to Jainagul. Around the same time, Jainagul received another letter, this time from Zynat. In the letter, Zynat asked for forgiveness and admitted she had loved Tolkunbek since childhood. She explained that she had taken advantage of his separation from his family in Osh and that Tolkunbek had always truly belonged to Jainagul. Zynat wrote that she was now letting him go and urged Jainagul to forgive him and accept him back into the family, ending their long separation and pain.

The Truth about the Lost Child In the same letter, Zynat made a shocking confession. She revealed that she had given birth to a baby boy during that painful period and had left him near Mansur's gate, where the child was believed to have died. She added that one of the twin boys, Asan or Uson, might actually be her biological son. This confession deeply shocked Jainagul. The most painful thought for her was the possibility that Uson might belong to Zynat. At that moment, Tolkunbek's return seemed less important than the fear of losing her child. Yet, she also felt admiration for Zynat's honesty, courage, and painful sacrifice.

The Return of Tolkunbek After reading Zynat's letter, Jainagul called her sister-in-law and informed her that Tolkunbek was returning to the family. Her mother Tumar also advised her to forgive him when he arrived. Confusion and emotions filled the house. The children suddenly ran inside shouting that a stranger had arrived at the gate. Jainagul's heart froze for a moment as she asked who it was. At that instant, Jannat entered the room and joyfully said, "Father has arrived."

SECOND PART OF THE NOVEL

The Family Reunion

Tolkunbek's Return Tolkunbek returned to Osh with Jannat, consumed by guilt and weakness. Jannat rushed into the house shouting, "Father is coming!" Asan and Uson stood in shock while Tolkunbek fell onto his knees before Jainagul. Begging desperately, he asked forgiveness for the sake of their children and parents. He confessed that he still loved her and could not live without her anymore. Jainagul felt anger and humiliation because he had abandoned the family years earlier for Zynat. Although she wanted to drive him away immediately, she controlled her emotions and silently listened to his sorrowful words with pain.

Tumar's Compassion Tumar witnessed the painful reunion and felt sympathy for Tolkunbek despite his betrayal. She asked him to stand up and reminded Jainagul that they had once been a loving and happy couple. Although she admitted that Tolkunbek was guilty, she believed every person makes mistakes and deserves forgiveness. Her calm words reflected maternal wisdom and kindness during a difficult moment. Seeing Tumar, Tolkunbek felt deep gratitude toward her and her son Sady for helping him through difficult times. Ashamed and emotional, he respectfully asked Tumar to forgive him as well, realizing how much pain his actions had caused everyone.

Jainagul's Resentment After reading Zynat's letter, Jainagul's heart softened because she realized that Tolkunbek had truly loved only her. Zynat's honesty reduced some of her anger, yet resentment still remained strong inside her heart. Bitterly, Jainagul reminded Tolkunbek how he had abandoned her, their children, and his parents many years earlier for the sake of Zynat. She told her mother that she wanted to leave somewhere far away where she would never see him again. Jainagul could not forget the humiliation and loneliness she had suffered before relatives, neighbors, and friends while raising the children alone after his betrayal and abandonment.

Children's Fear of Separation Jannat began crying when Jainagul tried to send Tolkunbek away. Holding onto him, she begged her mother not to force her father to leave again. Hearing this, Asan and Uson became frightened as well. Jannat sadly told her brothers that she and their father would leave together if Jainagul refused him. The boys immediately started screaming and begging their father to stay with them. Their fear revealed how deeply they longed for a complete family. Watching the children's suffering, Jainagul could no longer remain as cold and angry as before, despite the pain and humiliation she still carried inside herself.

Tumar's Intervention Tumar became angry with her daughter and told her to stop creating unnecessary drama inside the house. She reminded Jainagul that Tolkunbek had not returned because of the children alone, but because he truly loved her and wanted forgiveness. Tumar insisted that he should be allowed to enter the house and stay with the family. Hearing these words, Jainagul slowly stopped arguing. The children then asked Tolkunbek whether he would remain with them forever. Uson even questioned whether he was truly their father. Tolkunbek warmly answered yes, yet suddenly remembered Zynat's words that one of the boys might actually belong to her.

Gifts and Softening Hearts Jainagul finally allowed Tolkunbek to enter the house because of Tumar's persuasion and the children's tears. Although she still spoke bitterly, Tolkunbek noticed that her heart was slowly softening. He himself feared that he would leave again if her insults continued. Meanwhile, the boys became joyful after seeing the gifts he had brought for them, especially the bicycles. Watching her children's happiness, Jainagul reflected on Zynat's letter and thought that Zynat must have been a good woman to sacrifice her own feelings and write honestly to her. Deep inside, despite her anger, Jainagul also felt quiet happiness.

Forgiveness at Night That evening, Jannat wanted to sleep beside her father, although her grandmother offered to keep her instead. Jainagul prepared a bed for Jannat and another one for Tolkunbek in the children's room before quietly cleaning the kitchen and washing the dishes. After taking a shower, she stood silently before the mirror, struggling with her emotions. She wondered whether she should forgive Tolkunbek completely or continue treating him coldly. Suddenly, she heard his cough from the next room.

Soon Tolkunbek approached her again, apologizing sincerely. Jainagul realized that she had missed her husband deeply and could no longer resist forgiving him.

The curious neighbor Kermekash The next morning, Jannat woke up crying and told her grandmother that Tolkunbek had disappeared again. Tumar became frightened, fearing that he had left the family once more. However, when she noticed his car outside, she realized that Tolkunbek and Jainagul had gone somewhere together. Relieved and happy, Tumar prepared dough and fried bread for a traditional superstition ritual celebrating the safe return of a family member. According to custom, the bread was shared with neighbors. Their curious neighbor Kermekash immediately began asking questions about Tolkunbek's return. Tumar explained that he had separated from Zynat and reunited with Jainagul after many painful years apart.

Gossip across the City Kermekash eagerly spread the news of Tolkunbek's return throughout the city. She even claimed that someone must have cast a spell on him because he suddenly abandoned Zynat and returned to Jainagul. Tumar dismissed such gossip as nonsense and superstition. Nevertheless, the news quickly reached neighbors, and acquaintances, and many guests soon arrived to congratulate the reunited family. Most people felt happy that Tolkunbek had returned home after years of separation. However, Zynat's aunt and uncle, who lived in her house, were deeply shocked because Zynat had never informed them about the separation. They could not understand why Tolkunbek had suddenly left her and returned to his first family.

The Secret of Uson

Tolkunbek's Doubts and Uson's Talent As life slowly returned to normal, Tolkunbek noticed that Uson possessed remarkable artistic talent. The boy could draw and shape sculptures naturally, and Tolkunbek became astonished when a few simple lines suddenly turned into the clear image of a person. While admiring Uson's abilities, Tolkunbek still carried anxiety inside himself. He feared that Jainagul might one day lose patience and ask him to leave again. At the same time, Jainagul remained troubled by Zynat's letter, where she told that the baby left at Mansur's door was hers and Tolkunbek. Although she had accepted Tolkunbek back into the family, neither of them truly felt secure about the future awaiting them together.

Dreams and Anxiety Tolkunbek believed that returning to Jainagul would finally restore peace in his life, yet thoughts of Zynat continued troubling both of them. Jainagul suffered restless nights and constant anxiety. One night, she dreamed that Akkyz, Zynat's mother, demanded that Uson be returned to Zynat. The dream frightened Jainagul deeply, and after waking she blamed Tolkunbek for creating such confusion and pain in their lives. She shared the dream with her mother Tumar, who suggested that Jainagul simply thought too much about Zynat. Later, Kyna, Tolkunbek's mother, called and revealed that she had also dreamed about Zynat. Hearing this, Tumar herself became uneasy and anxious.

Children's Dreams and Family Happiness While Jainagul went to the airport to meet her mother-in-law, the children waited excitedly for their mother's return. Asan proudly declared that he would someday travel to the Ysyk-Kol region and build houses like his father Tolkunbek. Uson, however, dreamed of becoming a painter. He happily told grandmother Tumar that he would draw portraits of his father, mother, Jannat, Asan, and even Tumar herself. Uson also mentioned that a painter named Esenova had once painted their whole family together. His words filled the family with warmth and innocence, revealing the children's hopes despite the tension and uncertainty surrounding their parents' complicated past and reconciliation.

Dreams, Omens, and Fear Tumar and Kyna continued discussing the strange dreams Jainagul and Kyna had both seen about Zynat and Uson. They believed the dreams were not ordinary but carried the meaning of an omen. Hearing their conversation, Jainagul became frightened and emotional. She asked how she could ever give Uson away because he had become her true son in every way. Tumar gently replied that Jainagul already had two other children and could have more in the future. Nearby, little Jannat overheard the painful conversation and suddenly burst into tears. At that moment, Tolkunbek discovered Zynat's letter again while preparing for construction work near the hotels of Ysyk-Kol.

Uson's Talent and Jainagul's Emptiness Tolkunbek increasingly noticed Uson's extraordinary intelligence and artistic talent. The boy could easily read difficult words and pronounce the surnames of famous authors without hesitation. His abilities deeply impressed Tolkunbek, especially because Asan seemed less interested in books and reading. Watching Uson, Tolkunbek remembered how Zynat had once cared for the child while they secretly left him near Mansur's gate long ago. Those memories filled him with guilt and confusion again. Even though Tolkunbek had returned home, Jainagul still felt emptiness in her heart. Nothing excited or inspired her anymore. Although she lived beside her husband again, her spirit remained wounded and emotionally distant from him.

Growing Doubts about Uson Jainagul still kept her heart closed toward Tolkunbek, and he did not know how to regain her trust completely. One day, Tolkunbek visited Zynat's aunt and uncle, who continued living in her house in Osh. During the conversation, the aunt revealed that the nurse who helped during Jainagul's childbirth had arrived too late and never actually witnessed the delivery of both babies. Later, another woman who had known Zynat carefully observed Asan and Uson and commented that although Uson resembled Asan, some of his facial features looked strangely similar to Zynat's. Hearing those words, Tolkunbek once again felt a heavy burden of fear, guilt, and uncertainty.

The Woman Who Knew the Truth One day, neighbors from Ysyk-Kol informed the family that Mansur had become seriously ill. Together, the entire family traveled toward Ysyk-Kol through Bishkek. During the journey, Jainagul noticed an elderly woman waiting alone beside the road for transportation and kindly asked Tolkunbek to stop and help her. To his shock, Tolkunbek recognized the woman as the midwife who had once assisted Zynat during childbirth. While traveling together, the elderly woman recalled how a frightened couple had once arrived at her house unexpectedly, where the pregnant woman delivered a child before quickly leaving again. Hearing her story, everyone silently remembered Zynat, Tolkunbek, and the abandoned child left near Mansur's gate years earlier.

Mansur's Illness and Unspoken Truth When the family arrived home, they found Mansur seriously ill. Jainagul tried to help him with medicines and injections, while villagers visited constantly according to Kyrgyz custom, asking about his condition and offering support. During this difficult time, news arrived that Kasymbek, the father of Tolkunbek's friend Turat, had died. Hearing this, Mansur unexpectedly asked whether Zynat would come to the funeral. Because Kasymbek was father-in-law of Emil, Zynat's brother. Tolkunbek became confused and assumed his father was hallucinating because of illness. However, Jainagul immediately understood the hidden meaning behind his words. Tumar and Kyna also remained silent, realizing that Mansur still connected Zynat with their family and carried unspoken worries about Uson's true identity.

Zynat's Loneliness and the Arrival of Aygerim

Zynat in Moscow After writing her farewell letter to Tolkunbek, Zynat flew from Almaty to Moscow. During the flight, she met the famous Kazakh writer Sherkhan Musurepov, who already knew her as a talented painter. He admired both her beauty and intelligence and accompanied her to the Hotel Rossiya after their arrival. Although Zynat remained heartbroken over her separation from Tolkunbek, she accepted his invitation to dinner instead of remaining alone with her sorrow. That night, she dreamed of her parents, Akkyz and Esen, giving her a hawk beneath the moon and sun. In Kyrgyz and Kazakh traditions, such a dream symbolized a child and a powerful omen for the future.

Zynat's Loneliness and Moral Strength Although Sherkhan admired Zynat deeply and hoped for a romantic relationship, she remained dignified and faithful to her moral principles. Even after learning that his wife had died, Zynat never encouraged intimacy and hid her painful separation from Tolkunbek. Her paintings were successfully exhibited at the Surikov Museum, yet emotional emptiness continued troubling her. Before flying to New Delhi from Moscow, severe stomach pain forced her into a hospital unexpectedly. Later, she returned alone to Almaty, she entered the apartment she had once shared with Tolkunbek. Her neighbor Saliya handed her the forgotten keys left behind by him and repeated his final request: "Please take care of Zynat." Hearing those words, she cried through the entire night.

The Baby Left at the Door The next day, Zynat spent hours speaking with her neighbor Saliya and secretly hoped Tolkunbek might still return if Jainagul rejected him again. Suddenly, someone knocked on the door. Opening it, Zynat saw only the silhouette of a woman disappearing into the distance and a bas-

ket containing a baby girl. Inside was a letter from a desperate student asking Zynat to adopt the child because the baby's father had deceived her and abandoned them. Deeply moved, Zynat accepted the child and named her Aygerim. News of the adoption quickly spread throughout the city, and friends soon arrived to congratulate her.

Tolkunbek's Phone Call to Zynat One day, Tolkunbek called Zynat from Cholpon-Ata and asked about her life. Bitterly, Zynat replied that he probably thought she would die after their separation. Tolkunbek congratulated her for adopting a baby girl after hearing the news from Zhakan. Zynat then asked whether she could give the child Tolkunbek's surname and register her as "Tolkunbek kyzy Aygerim." He agreed and assured her that Jainagul respected Zynat and would not object. During their conversation, Tolkunbek also mentioned the illness and death of Turat's father. After ending the call, Zynat cried deeply, then officially registered Aygerim as Tolkunbek's daughter before deciding to travel to Osh.

Rumors about Uson's Identity Arriving in Osh, Zynat stayed with her aunt and uncle, who warmly congratulated her on adopting Aygerim. They also informed her that Tolkunbek had recently visited them. During the conversation, her aunt spoke about old rumors surrounding the abandoned baby left near Mansur's gate years earlier. She explained that the doctor who attended Jainagul's childbirth arrived only after the delivery and never personally witnessed both babies being born together. According to village gossip, one of Jainagul's sons might actually be Zynat's child. Hearing this, Zynat confessed that she had never truly believed her son had died. The possibility awakened both hope and fear inside her heart once again.

Revelation of the Hidden Child

Zynat Returns to Tolkunbek's Village After receiving a telegram announcing the death of Emil's father-in-law, Kasymbek Zynat traveled to the village where Tolkunbek's family lived, leaving baby Aygerim with her aunt. There, Tolkunbek invited her to visit his family home because his father Mansur wished to see her before dying. As soon as people saw Zynat and Tolkunbek speaking together, rumors spread through the village that they still shared romantic feelings. Emil angrily questioned why she would visit after Tolkunbek had abandoned her, but Zynat reminded him that Mansur himself had called her. She also recalled how Tolkunbek and his parents had supported their family during her mother's illness and death, finally convincing Emil to let her go.

The Revelation about Uson When Zynat entered Tolkunbek's family home, Jainagul became pale but greeted her politely. Zynat brought gifts for everyone, including a traditional coat for Mansur and clothes for the boys, although Jainagul pushed the gifts aside in irritation. Suddenly, Mansur announced that before dying he needed to reveal a long-hidden truth: the abandoned baby boy had survived and was alive. Calling Uson forward, he told the child that Zynat was his biological mother and that he now had two mothers. Uson immediately answered that Jainagul was his true mother. Hearing this, both Jainagul and Zynat burst into tears while Tolkunbek finally realized that Zynat's repeated claims about one of the boys had always been true.

Zynat and Uson's Connection While visiting Tolkunbek's family home, Zynat noticed an album of her paintings lying on the couch. Uson proudly explained that his mother Jainagul had bought the album and taught him about the famous painter Esenova Zynat. Smiling emotionally, Zynat revealed that she herself was the artist. She gently kissed Uson, feeling both joy and sorrow after finally meeting her son openly. Soon afterward, Mansur's condition worsened, and he passed away peacefully. Zynat and her uncle remained with the family until the funeral ceremonies ended according to tradition. The atmosphere of grief also strengthened the emotional bond between Zynat, Uson, and Jainagul during those painful days together.

Gratitude toward Jainagul After returning to Osh, Zynat's aunt became shocked upon learning that Uson was truly Zynat's biological son. At the same time, she continued lovingly caring for baby Aygerim. Zynat spoke warmly about Jainagul, calling her the kindest woman she had ever known. Her uncle also described how Kyna had initially become angry when Zynat entered the family house, but Jainagul calmly prevented conflict and protected her dignity. Zynat felt deeply grateful that Jainagul had encouraged Uson's artistic talent and inspired him through her paintings. Knowing that another woman had raised her child with love and respect filled Zynat with painful gratitude and emotional admiration.

Zyinat's Attempts to Preserve Family Bonds

Success in Almaty Zyinat's uncle advised her not to discuss Uson's future until the forty-day remembrance ceremony for Mansur had passed. Returning urgently to Almaty, Zyinat organized a major exhibition and sale of her paintings because she needed financial stability. She told her neighbor Saliya that she had finally found her son but felt deep sorrow for Jainagul, who had raised him lovingly for many years. Saliya comforted her by saying that time would reveal the right solution. Meanwhile, Zyinat's exhibition became a tremendous success. Important public figures attended, after a week she received another good news: her paintings won a prestigious award in New Delhi, and the prize money was transferred directly into her account.

Musurepov's Feelings for Zyinat The famous Kazakh writer Sherkhan Musurepov visited Zyinat again after learning more about her through mutual friends. Deeply impressed by her beauty, dignity, and artistic talent, he confessed that he had fallen in love with her. Although Musurepov was known for his romantic nature and had considered many women as possible future wives, Zyinat was completely different from the others he had pursued. She remained careful, emotionally reserved, and unwilling to begin a new relationship quickly because she still loved Tolkunbek and worried constantly about Uson's future. When Musurepov visited her apartment for dinner, he realized that Zyinat's heart remained devoted mainly to her children and unresolved family struggles.

Life after Mansur's Death After Mansur's death, Tolkunbek was overwhelmed with grief and guilt. He blamed himself for being a bad son and felt that his father had never been proud of him. At the same time, Jainagul became seriously ill due to emotional stress and was taken to the hospital. Her mother and mother-in-law visited her, while her brother became angry after hearing rumors that Uson would be taken by Zyinat. The family atmosphere turned tense and uncertain, as grief, guilt, and fear of losing Uson created deep emotional conflict for everyone involved.

Journey to Cholpon-Ata Zhakan, his wife Galiya, and Zyinat traveled from Almaty to Cholpon-Ata to attend the mourning ceremonies. Zhakan and Galiya intended to offer condolences to Tolkunbek, while Zyinat planned to attend Turat's father's forty-day remembrance. Zhakan encouraged Zyinat to visit Tolkunbek's house with them, but she felt embarrassed and hesitant. On the way, she remembered meeting Tolkunbek, who had mentioned that Jainagul was preparing to send Uson to her. This memory made Zyinat even more emotionally confused, as she struggled between responsibility, guilt, and uncertainty about her son's future.

Separation, Longing, and Divided Motherhood

Zyinat's Letter and Understanding Before meeting the family, Zyinat wrote a letter to Jainagul explaining her true feelings. She said that although Uson was her biological son, Jainagul was his real mother because she had raised him with love. She also described Asan as his twin brother, Tolkunbek as his father, and Jannat as his sister. Zyinat clearly stated that she had no intention of taking Uson away permanently. She only wished to see him occasionally in the future. After reading the letter, Jainagul considered inviting Zyinat after the mourning guests left, showing a gradual softening in their emotional conflict.

Exchange of Gifts and Forgiveness After the remembrance ceremonies ended, Zyinat and the others visited Tolkunbek's house. Zyinat brought gifts for the family, including fashionable coats for Kyna and Tumar. She gave Jainagul a fur coat and a white scarf, thanking her sincerely for raising Uson and asking for forgiveness for the past. In return, Jainagul emotionally said that she entrusted Uson to Zyinat and placed both of them under God's protection. Zyinat reassured her that Uson would remain with his adoptive family and promised not to disturb their bond. Jainagul gave her diamond ring to Zyinat and it was a symbolic moment of mutual understanding and emotional reconciliation.

Silent Reflections of Tolkunbek Sady, Jainagul's brother, had never met Zyinat before and had always imagined her negatively. However, when he finally saw her, he was surprised by her beauty, dignity, and kindness. Tumar encouraged the two women to embrace, and Zyinat and Jainagul hugged each other emotionally. Tolkunbek stood silently, thinking about the two most important women in his life. He felt guilt and confusion, remembering Zyinat once accusing him of destroying her child's life. Looking at Jainagul's

tired face and gray hair, he wondered why his father had revealed the secret and disrupted their already fragile family peace.

Uson's Departure to Almaty When Zynat took Uson to Almaty, Jainagul, Jannat, and Asan cried uncontrollably. Jainagul held Uson tightly and said he would be both Zynat's and her son, begging him to behave well and listen. Zynat promised she would bring him back soon. As Uson entered the car, he also burst into tears, calling for his mother and refusing to leave. Jainagul collapsed in sorrow, while Tolkunbek stood helpless and silent. After Uson's departure, Jainagul became emotionally and physically weak, unable to recover from the separation that deeply wounded the entire family and changed their fragile emotional balance.

Uson in Almaty In Almaty, rumors spread that Zynat Esenova had brought her son to the city. Uson enjoyed the new environment at first and was curious about everything around him. Zynat tried her best to make him feel at home and cared for him lovingly. However, after a few days, the boy became sad and started crying often. He sat in the yard shaping clay figures of his mother Jainagul, father, and siblings, trying to recreate his lost family. He also drew Jainagul but could not finish the portrait and constantly asked when he could return to his mother in Cholpon-Ata.

Tolkunbek and Zynat's Conversation Tolkunbek called Zynat to ask about Uson and admitted that he missed her deeply. He confessed that he no longer fully understood his feelings and was confused about love. Zynat asked about his relationship with Jainagul, and Tolkunbek replied that once trust is broken, it is very difficult to restore. He also said that his heart seemed divided between two women. Zynat, too, realized that her emotions were shifting; she missed Tolkunbek but was also deeply concerned about Uson and her daughter Aygerim. Both of them felt emotionally trapped between past love, present responsibilities, and uncertain future decisions.

Accident and Separation from Musurepov Zynat's uncle and aunt arrived from Osh to support her, bringing baby Aygerim with them. On the way to the airport, Zynat saw Musurepov with another woman and lost respect for him, thinking he was unfaithful. Later, Musurepov came drunk and asked Zynat to be his fiancée, but she refused. Insulted, he reacted badly, and Zhakan had to take him away. On the way home, they met with an accident, after which Musurepov promised to stop drinking. Despite everything, Zynat chose to remain only friends with him and focused on her children and responsibilities instead of romance or emotional instability.

Uson's Escape and Rescue Uson increasingly missed Jainagul and constantly drew pictures of her. He asked for toys, including a moped, and even requested another one for Asan. Although Zynat fulfilled his wishes, he still longed for Cholpon-Ata and his mother. One day, overwhelmed by sadness, he disappeared and went to a bus stop. There, older boys tried to force him to bring money from home and beat him when he refused. Two women later found him, rescued him, and asked about his identity. Uson said he came from Cholpon-Ata and wanted to return home. The women informed the police, and he was safely found and protected.

Uson's Illness and Search That night when Uson went missing, Jainagul saw a disturbing dream in which she lost him completely. In panic, Jainagul and Kyna asked Tolkunbek to call Zynat, but no one answered because everyone was searching for the boy. In the morning, Tolkunbek finally reached them and learned that Uson had run away but was later found with difficulty. In reality, the boy had fallen ill with a high fever after he had been found. Meanwhile, Zynat quietly thought that Uson might be happier and safer with Jainagul, believing that perhaps the child did not truly belong in her care and should return home.

Healer's Words and Rituals Zynat took the sick Uson to a traditional healer for treatment. The healer explained that the boy was suffering from emotional trauma and fear, caused by being raised in another woman's care. She predicted that although Zynat might think of returning him to his adoptive mother, Uson would remain connected to both women. According to the healer, the boy would grow up caring for both mothers emotionally. She performed traditional rituals to calm his condition. Zynat listened carefully, feeling both hope and sorrow, as she realized the boy's heart was deeply divided between two families and two mothers.

Zyinat Hosts Tolkunbek's Family

Family Arrival and Tensions Zyinat's brothers Emil, Emir, and Temir, along with their families and her sister, arrived in Almaty to celebrate her success and children. They brought a foreign Volvo car, rare in the post-Soviet region at that time. Most of her brothers were successful professionals, though Emil remained rough and morally unstable. Zyinat invited Jainagul, Asan, Jannat, Tumar, Sady, Kyna, Tolkunbek, Turat, and others to Almaty, with her brothers covering all expenses. Tolkunbek stayed initially with Zhakan, but later revealed confusion, admitting he still felt attached to both Zyinat and Jainagul, unable to choose between them or fully let go.

Jealousy and Conflict Tolkunbek later visited Zyinat and brought her favorite flowers. At the dinner, Musurepov became the center of attention, singing Kyrgyz and Kazakh songs. Tolkunbek grew jealous and asked Zhakan whether Musurepov was married; when told he was not, Tolkunbek became irritated. He confronted Musurepov, accusing him of speaking about love without shame. Musurepov defended himself calmly. Later, Tolkunbek and Musurepov argued outside, where Tolkunbek insisted he was still married to Zyinat, while Musurepov claimed she was single. Jainagul overheard this and felt deeply disappointed in Tolkunbek's conflicting behavior and emotional instability.

Farewell As the family prepared to return to Kyrgyzstan, Zyinat thanked Tumar and Kyna for raising Uson and asked forgiveness for past pain. She expressed a desire to see the children often, but insisted she would visit them herself rather than rely on Tolkunbek. During the farewell, Tolkunbek warned Zyinat that if she married Musurepov, she would never see Uson again. Zyinat calmly replied that she had no intention of marrying anyone or taking the boy away from his family. Despite emotional tension, she reaffirmed her respect for Jainagul and her commitment to preserving peace between both families.

Street Conflict and Humiliation After returning from Almaty, Jainagul faced public humiliation when the boys quarreled in the street. A woman insulted Uson, shouting that he was not Jainagul's real son and accusing her of fear because she still could not fully let go of Tolkunbek. She also claimed Jainagul was only keeping the child out of insecurity. Hearing the noise, Kyna sent Jainagul outside to see what was happening. Uson cried and said the woman had hit him. Jainagul was deeply hurt and confused, feeling attacked from both sides. The incident intensified emotional tension in the family and exposed fragile social judgment in the village.

Family Pressure and Zyinat's New Life Jainagul's mother and mother-in-law advised her to give Uson back to Zyinat, arguing that the child's life would be unstable between two households. They believed Jainagul already had two children and might even have more in the future, so separation would be better for Uson's future development. Meanwhile, Zyinat sold her house in Osh and, with her brothers' help, bought a new home in Bishkek as the economy opened to dollar-based trade. Despite outward progress, emotional uncertainty remained within both families as decisions about Uson's identity and belonging continued to create tension and uncertainty for everyone involved.

Doubts, Dreams, and Physical Signs Zyinat's friends visited her in Bishkek and were happy for her success, while she shared her complicated story about Tolkunbek and Uson. When she looked closely at baby Aygerim, she noticed a defect in the child's right-hand finger, which reminded her of Tolkunbek's similar trait. This shocked her and raised suspicions about Tolkunbek's past relationships. She feared she might suffer like Jainagul if truth remained hidden. Her aunt suggested that if Tolkunbek was the father, then it would connect both children as siblings. Zyinat recalled the timeline of his construction work, realizing how complex and unclear her emotional history with him had become.

Illness, Fear, and Separation of Children Disturbed by suspicion and dreams, Zyinat traveled urgently to the village after imagining danger to Asan and Uson. In reality, a boy near their age had drowned in the lake, increasing her anxiety. She decided to officially bring Uson to Bishkek for school enrollment and even received livestock and belongings that belonged to him. Jainagul later joined Zyinat in Bishkek and considered allowing Tolkunbek to live in a polygamous arrangement for Uson's sake. However, Uson still missed Jainagul deeply. Soon after, Jainagul suffered a heart attack and was hospitalized, telling Zyinat to care for her children if she died.

Tolkunbek's Polygamous Proposal

Rumors, Marriage Pressure, and Rejection Later, Turat and his wife Gulush visited Zynat and reported that Jainagul wanted her to marry Tolkunbek again for Uson's stability. Although polygamy was not legal, it was still practiced informally. Zynat firmly refused, saying she could not marry Tolkunbek. Gulush then claimed that Jainagul disliked Zynat and only pretended kindness, even calling her a harsh name in private. Turat immediately became angry, accusing his wife of lying and insisting that Jainagul had sent them with this message. The argument revealed deep mistrust between families, showing how rumors and emotional conflict continued to damage relationships and create misunderstanding among everyone involved.

Uson's Drawings and Longing Uson spent most of his time drawing pictures of his mother Jainagul. He proudly showed his drawings, expressing how deeply he missed her, as well as Asan and Jannat. His art reflected his emotional state, especially his sense of separation and longing for home. When Turat and his wife visited, they informed Zynat that she had refused to become Tolkunbek's second wife, saying she would not repeat past mistakes. Despite this, Uson remained emotionally connected to Jainagul and continued drawing images of a child missing his mother, revealing his inner struggle between two families and divided affection.

Shared Motherhood

The Unity between Families Zynat felt slightly hurt when Gulush repeated negative remarks about her, especially comments related to Jainagul's attitude. For several days, she reflected deeply on the situation. She realized that holding resentment toward Jainagul would only result in losing Uson emotionally as well. This thought troubled her greatly, as she understood that the boy's happiness depended on peace between both women. Zynat began to reconsider her emotional position, recognizing that forgiveness and understanding were necessary to maintain her bond with Uson. Slowly, she decided that unity between families was more important than personal pride or unresolved emotional pain from the past.

Return to Cholpon-Ata and Reunion Zynat brought Uson back to Cholpon-Ata and visited Jainagul once again. This time, Jainagul directly asked why Zynat had refused to marry Tolkunbek as a second wife. Zynat calmly replied that her main goal was to raise her children in peace and stability. She suggested that they should remain like sisters for the sake of the children. The two women then embraced each other emotionally. At that moment, Uson and Asan entered the room and noticed that both of them had crooked fingers like their father. They also learned that Aygerim shared the same trait, strengthening the connection between the children.

CHARACTER ANALYSIS

Tolkunbek

Tolkunbek grows up in a village near Issyk-Kul and studies at a boarding school where he meets Jainagul. He is the best student in his class and a talented komuz player. After failing university entrance exams, he falls into crime alongside Emil. He later redeems himself through honest work, marries Jainagul, and becomes a construction engineer. However, in Osh he begins a secret affair with Zynat, destroying his family. He moves to Almaty with Zynat but remains unhappy. Eventually he returns home seeking forgiveness from Jainagul and his parents.

Loyal Despite his many mistakes, Tolkunbek consistently shows deep attachment to people he cares about. When Akkyz welcomes him into her home, he travels to his village, sells a cow, and brings back food and money for her struggling family. Even while living with Zynat in Almaty, he speaks his children's names in his sleep and hides Jainagul's photograph inside a newspaper. His loyalty is imperfect and often misdirected, but it never fully disappears.

Weak Tolkunbek repeatedly falls under the influence of stronger personalities around him. Emil teaches him gambling and robbery, and he follows without resistance. Later Zynat calls him again and again until he agrees to visit her dark house, where she has prepared wine and a richly set table. He knows the situation is dangerous yet cannot refuse. His inability to say no at critical moments leads directly to the destruction of his marriage and career.

Guilty Guilt follows Tolkunbek throughout the entire story. After robbing Jainagul, he saves money to replace her stolen watch and ring. After Akkyz dies cursing him, he abandons crime forever. After his affair is exposed, he drives drunk and ends up in detention. When his mother shows him the anonymous letter, he turns pale and cannot speak. His guilt is genuine but always arrives too late, after the damage is already done.

Redeemable Tolkunbek proves he can transform himself when given proper guidance. Under Sady's mentorship he becomes one of the best construction workers. He earns honest money, studies at evening university, and builds a family with Jainagul. Even after losing everything in Osh, he works hard again in Almaty and earns his own apartment. When Zynat finally releases him, he returns home not as a broken man but as someone ready to rebuild his life honestly once more.

Parallels: Tolkunbek from *The Stranger* from Zuura Sooronbaeva and Yuri Zhivago from Boris Pasternak's novel *Doctor Zhivago*

Tolkunbek and Yuri Zhivago walk through their stories as men with divided hearts. Both are educated and gifted, one a Soviet engineer who once played the komuz, the other a doctor who writes poetry in quiet moments. Their talents promise meaningful lives, yet neither man finds the strength to live up to what he could have become. Instead, they drift through the years, carried more by circumstance than by choice.

At the center of both novels stands the same quiet tragedy of a man who loves two women and cannot truly choose between them. Zhivago loves his wife Tonya, who represents home, family, and gentle devotion, but he is drawn into a deep and fateful love with Lara, who embodies passion and the sorrow of a turbulent age. Tolkunbek loves Jainagul, the calm pillar of his household, yet he cannot free himself from Zynat, the woman who has loved him since childhood and who carries the wounds of their shared past. Neither man is cruel, nor does either plan his betrayal. They simply lack the will to act, and their hesitation slowly destroys the people closest to them.

Guilt follows both men wherever they go. Zhivago thinks of Tonya and his children even in the arms of Lara, just as Tolkunbek whispers the names of Jainagul and his children in his sleep while living with Zynat in Almaty. Their suffering is quiet, internal, and constant. In the end, both men are exiled from the families they once cherished, Zhivago by war and history, Tolkunbek by scandal and shame. Their stories remind the reader that a divided heart, no matter how gentle or talented, cannot hold a family together.

Jainagul

Jainagul studies at a boarding school where she meets Tolkunbek. She enters a medical university in Frunze and dedicates herself to becoming a doctor. She marries Tolkunbek and gives birth to their daughter Jannat. When twin boys appear in her life, she raises all three children with equal love. After discovering Tolkunbek's affair with Zynat, she throws him out and raises the children alone while working at a maternity hospital. Despite years of pain and betrayal, she eventually opens the door to forgiveness when Tolkunbek returns home.

Resilient Jainagul endures one hardship after another without breaking down permanently. She is robbed on a dark street by someone she trusted. She raises three children mostly alone while her husband works far away in Osh. When she discovers the affair, she wanders the night streets of Osh and even considers throwing herself into the river. Yet she stops herself, realizing that if she dies, Zynat will take everything. She walks home, cries until morning, and then begins packing her suitcases to start a new life.

Devoted Jainagul gives herself completely to everyone around her. She leaves her own celebration dinner to perform an emergency surgery at the maternity hospital. She bathes and massages the weaker twin Uson every day until he matches his brother in weight and strength. She cares for her aging parents-in-law Mansur and Kyna as if they were her own parents. Her mother-in-law Kyna calls her the apple of the house, showing how deeply Jainagul has become the heart of the entire family.

Proud Jainagul refuses to accept betrayal quietly or beg for love. When she sees Tolkunbek with Zynat at the apartment, she leaves without saying a word. She returns all of Zynat's expensive gifts unopened. When Kermekash brings gossip and Zynat's apology, Jainagul firmly answers that everything is already over. She never chases Tolkunbek or asks him to return. Even years later, when colleagues suggest she should forgive him, she remains silent and keeps her dignity, letting Tolkunbek come back to her on his own terms.

Forgiving Despite all the pain Tolkunbek causes her, Jainagul never completely closes her heart. She reads Zynat's final confession letter with shock but also with quiet admiration for her honesty. She watches her children missing their father and slowly begins questioning her own stubbornness. She remembers her mother's words that forgiveness is important in family life. When Tolkunbek finally arrives at the gate and Jannat runs inside shouting that father has come, Jainagul does not turn him away. She cautiously opens the door to a new beginning.

Maternal Jainagul pours all her love and energy into her children without distinction or condition. She bathes and massages the weaker twin Uson every day until he matches his brother in weight and strength. She sits between the two cradles singing lullabies late into the night. She leaves her own celebration dinner to perform an emergency surgery at the maternity hospital, saving both mother and baby. Even knowing that Uson may not be her biological son, she never treats him differently, raising him with the same tenderness and protection she gives Asan and Jannat.

Paralels: The Archetype of the Resilient Wife: Jainagul and Tonya Gromeko

Jainagul from *The Stranger* and Tonya Gromeko from Boris Pasternak's *Doctor Zhivago* stand as powerful literary parallels, embodying the archetype of the resilient wife. Both women are the steadfast anchors of their families, enduring profound personal betrayal and societal upheaval with remarkable grace and inner strength.

Jainagul, the diligent medical student and later doctor, navigates not only her husband Tolkunbek's initial criminal acts but also his devastating affair with Zynat.

Similarly, Tonya, educated and refined, faces the chaos of revolution, starvation, and the loss of her home, all while her husband Yuri Zhivago is pulled into his fated love with Lara. Both women become the quiet pillars, holding their families together amidst the personal and historical turmoil. They exhibit immense strength, not through grand gestures or outward rebellion, but in their unwavering resolve to care for their children (Jainagul with Jannat, Asan, Uson; Tonya with her own children and even, in her spirit, Zhivago's child with Lara) and to sustain a semblance of normalcy and moral order.

However, the nature of their suffering, while equally profound, differs in its origin. Tonya is largely a victim of external, cataclysmic forces such as war, political upheaval, and the immense sweep of history that separates her from Zhivago. Her resilience is in surviving an almost unimaginable world.

Jainagul's pain is primarily rooted in Tolkunbek's personal moral failings and direct betrayal. Her resilience is in confronting infidelity, rebuilding her life, and ultimately facing the possibility of forgiveness on her own terms. Both, however, represent the enduring spirit of women who preserve family and hope against formidable odds.

Zynat

Zynat is the talented sister of Emil, who harbored a lifelong, often unrequited love for Tolkunbek since their boarding school days. Despite a difficult upbringing marked by poverty and her mother Akkyz's early death, she became a successful painter. Her deep-seated desire for love and motherhood, combined with her enduring feelings for Tolkunbek, led her into a secret affair that resulted in the abandonment of their child. Though she achieved professional acclaim, her emotional life remained turbulent, culminating in a poignant act of confession and ultimate self-sacrifice, allowing Tolkunbek to return to his family.

Obsessive Zynat's love for Tolkunbek consumed her, remaining strong even after his marriage to Jainagul. When he first visited her in Osh, she revealed deep "resentment and hatred toward Jainagul for

taking him away." She actively manipulated Tolkunbek, calling him repeatedly until he agreed to meet, then creating a "trap" with the dark house and wine, proving her determination to keep him in her life.

Artistic From childhood, Zynat showed immense talent, dreaming of a "fine arts college." She not only achieved this dream but became a renowned painter, earning the "Lenin Komsomol Award" and exhibiting in Moscow. Her art became her refuge and expression, particularly after her emotional turmoil, when she devoted herself to "painting images connected with mothers and children."

Maternal (Unfulfilled) A deep longing for motherhood shaped much of Zynat's later actions. She expressed sadness at not having children with her husband and, after the initial abandonment, "motherhood became the center of her emotional life." Her desperate demand to Tolkunbek that he "give her one of Jainagul's sons" because "perhaps one of them was her own son" underscores her profound, almost frantic, yearning for a child.

Remorseful Despite her manipulative actions, Zynat was capable of profound guilt and regret. She "cried in deep sorrow" after Tolkunbek told her their abandoned baby had died. Later, she "cried while speaking and asked Kermekash to pass her apology to Jainagul," eventually writing a full confession, revealing the truth of the abandoned child, and selflessly letting Tolkunbek go for his own peace.

Paralels: The Archetype of the Tragic Muse: Zynat and Lara Antipova

Zynat finds her most striking parallel in Lara Antipova, Boris Pasternak's iconic tragic heroine in the novel *Doctor Zhivago*. Both women embody the archetype of the passionate, fateful "other woman" who offers the male protagonist an irresistible emotional pull, completely disrupting his stable, domestic life.

Both Zynat and Lara are marked by early hardship and trauma. Lara is exploited and scarred by Komarovsky in her youth, while Zynat grows up in crushing poverty, shadowed by her brother's gambling and her mother's tragic death. Because of these early wounds, both women love with a desperate, all-consuming intensity.

To Tolkunbek and Zhivago, they represent more than just romance; they represent memory, art, and a profound, almost fatalistic emotional depth. Zynat literally channels this passion into her acclaimed paintings, much like Lara embodies the poetic soul of the Russian tragedy for Zhivago.

However, their most profound connection lies in their ultimate sacrifice. Both women realize that their love, no matter how deep, brings only suffering and cannot survive the moral and societal realities of their worlds.

Just as Lara is ultimately separated from Yuri to survive, Zynat reaches a heartbreaking moment of clarity. Realizing that Tolkunbek's guilt is destroying him, Zynat makes the ultimate sacrifice: she writes a confession, relinquishes her claim on him, and selflessly sends him back to Jainagul.

In the end, both Zynat and Lara are tragic muses, women who love immensely, suffer deeply, and are ultimately left alone with their memories.

Paralels: Character Differences and Similarities between Jainagul and Zynat

Jainagul and Zynat are presented as contrasting yet interconnected maternal figures whose differences and similarities revolve around motherhood, sacrifice, emotional suffering, and responsibility. Through these two women, the novel explores motherhood not simply as a biological role, but as a complex emotional and social experience shaped by love, separation, betrayal, and care.

Differences between Jainagul and Zynat

The most important difference between the two women lies in the type of motherhood they represent. Jainagul embodies lived, practical, and socially recognized motherhood, while Zynat represents biological and emotionally reflective motherhood.

Jainagul is the woman who raises the children and carries the daily burden of family life. After Tolkunbek abandons the family, she endures loneliness, humiliation, and emotional exhaustion while car-

ing for the children alone. Her motherhood is built through sacrifice, patience, and responsibility. She reflects the traditional maternal role rooted in family duty and social expectations.

Zyinat, however, gives birth to Uson but does not raise him during his early years. Her motherhood develops through absence, longing, guilt, and emotional distance. Unlike Jainagul, she is independent, artistic, and intellectually oriented. Her life is connected to painting, travel, and personal achievement rather than domestic stability. Even after reuniting with Uson, she struggles with uncertainty because another woman has already become his emotional mother.

Their social positions also differ greatly. Jainagul belongs to the traditional family and village environment, whereas Zyinat represents a more modern and independent female identity. Jainagul's life is shaped by relatives, neighbors, and social judgment. Her suffering becomes public after Tolkunbek leaves her. Zyinat, by contrast, moves between cities such as Almaty, Moscow, and Bishkek, builds a successful artistic career, and gains social recognition through her talent. However, despite her independence and success, she remains emotionally lonely and incomplete.

The two women also respond differently to Tolkunbek's betrayal. Jainagul's emotions are dominated by resentment, wounded dignity, and anger, while Zyinat's suffering is quieter and connected to longing, regret, and emotional isolation. Jainagul struggles to forgive because she directly experienced abandonment and humiliation. Zyinat, meanwhile, suffers from uncertainty and the fear of never fully belonging to a family.

Similarities and Uniting Features

Despite these differences, Jainagul and Zyinat share important similarities. Both women are deeply maternal figures whose lives revolve around children and emotional responsibility. Both sacrifice personal happiness for Uson's well-being, and both experience suffering caused by separation, motherhood, and social pressure.

Another important similarity is that both women remain emotionally tied to Tolkunbek and to the fragmented family structure he created. Neither is fully free from the past, and both carry emotional wounds connected to betrayal and loss.

Most importantly, the two women gradually move beyond jealousy and rivalry toward mutual understanding. At first, each sees the other as a source of pain. Jainagul views Zyinat as the woman who destroyed her family, while Zyinat fears losing Uson completely. Over time, however, they begin recognizing each other's suffering. Jainagul understands that Zyinat also lost her child and lived with years of grief, while Zyinat realizes that Jainagul raised Uson with genuine love and sacrifice.

Shared Motherhood as the Core Connection

Uson becomes the emotional connection between the two women. Through him, the novel challenges the idea that motherhood belongs exclusively to one person. Jainagul represents upbringing, care, and emotional protection, while Zyinat represents biological origin and hidden truth.

The novel ultimately presents motherhood as shared rather than exclusive. One mother gives life, while the other gives daily love and protection. Although the two women experience conflict, pain, and jealousy, they eventually reach mutual respect and emotional reconciliation through their shared love for Uson.

Uson

Uson is a sensitive and central child figure in the novel, raised in Jainagul's household as one of the twins, while later revealed to be the biological son of Zyinat. This hidden origin places him between two mothers and two family structures. Throughout the story, he moves across Osh, Almaty, and Bishkek, experiencing repeated separation and emotional instability. Scenes show him crying during departures, drawing family members, and longing for home. He is gentle, observant, and emotionally responsive, reflecting innocence shaped by adult conflict. His character embodies the novel's main themes of divided motherhood, identity uncertainty, and emotional fragmentation within family life.

Sensitive Uson is highly sensitive, reacting strongly to emotional and physical separation. In scenes where he is taken from Jainagul to Almaty, he cries uncontrollably and calls out for his mother,

showing immediate emotional distress. He is deeply affected when family members argue or when he feels uncertainty about where he belongs. Even small conflicts among adults influence his mood, and he often becomes silent or tearful. His sensitivity also appears in his reactions to illness, travel, and change of environment. This trait makes him vulnerable but also emotionally aware, reflecting a child who experiences family instability very deeply and personally.

Imaginative Uson is imaginative, often expressing his inner world through drawing and creative play. In several scenes, he draws his mother Jainagul, his father Tolkunbek, and his siblings, trying to rebuild his broken family through art. In Almaty, he also creates clay figures of family members, showing his desire to preserve emotional connections visually. His drawings are not simple images but emotional reconstructions of his lost home. He also speaks about becoming a painter like Esenova Zynat, showing aspiration shaped by imagination. This trait allows him to process confusion and separation creatively, turning emotional pain into artistic expression.

Longing Uson is defined by a strong sense of longing for home, family, and stability. In multiple scenes, he asks to return to Cholpon-Ata and repeatedly expresses desire to be with Jainagul and his siblings. Even when living with Zynat in Almaty, he feels incomplete and disconnected, often saying he misses his mother. His escape attempt and emotional breakdowns highlight this persistent longing. He cannot fully accept either household as permanent, as his heart remains tied to his early childhood home. This longing drives many of his actions and reflects his unresolved identity between two mothers and two fragmented family worlds.

Kyna

Kyna is Tolkunbek's mother, a traditional and emotionally grounded elderly woman who lives within the family structure of Mansur's household. She is closely connected to household life and grandchildren, especially during periods of crisis in the family. Throughout the novel, she witnesses major conflicts between Tolkunbek, Jainagul, and Zynat, often reacting with silence, concern, or cautious judgment. Her role is not confrontational but stabilizing, as she tries to preserve family unity during emotional breakdowns. Kyna represents continuity of tradition, maternal authority, and silent endurance within the extended family system affected by betrayal, secrecy, and changing social realities.

Traditional Kyna is deeply traditional, shaped by rural values and family customs. In scenes of conflict, she often relies on silence, rituals, and accepted norms rather than direct confrontation. She respects family hierarchy and expects emotional problems to be handled within the household. Her reactions to Zynat and Jainagul's conflict are guided by cultural expectations rather than personal judgment. Even during emotional crises, she maintains traditional roles of grandmother and caretaker. Her thinking reflects continuity of older generational values, where family unity and reputation are prioritized over individual emotional expression or modern interpretations of relationships and motherhood.

Observant Kyna is highly observant, often noticing emotional tensions and hidden meanings in family interactions. She silently watches conversations between Tolkunbek, Jainagul, and Zynat, understanding unspoken conflicts even when she does not intervene. In several scenes, she becomes aware of emotional shifts in Jainagul's behavior or Tolkunbek's hesitation. She also notices the impact of Uson's identity conflict on the household atmosphere. Her observation is quiet but accurate, allowing her to understand situations deeply without verbal expression. This trait positions her as an internal witness of family breakdown and emotional complexity within the household.

Concerned Kyna is consistently concerned about the well-being of her family, especially her grandchildren and Tolkunbek. In moments of crisis, she expresses worry about stability, health, and unity within the household. She reacts emotionally to illness, separation, and conflict, even when she does not openly intervene. Her concern extends to both emotional and physical safety of children, particularly during disputes over Uson's custody. Although she rarely imposes decisions, her presence reflects quiet anxiety about the family's future. This concern makes her a stabilizing figure who carries emotional weight without direct control over the events unfolding around her.

Tumar

Tumar is Jainagul's mother, an elderly woman who plays a stabilizing and mediating role within the family. She lives closely with Jainagul and is present during major emotional crises involving Tolkunbek, Zynat, and the children. Throughout the novel, she supports her daughter through abandonment, childbirth, and later conflicts over Uson's identity. Tumar often acts as a voice of moderation, encouraging forgiveness and practical solutions rather than prolonged conflict. She observes family tensions carefully and intervenes when emotions escalate. Her character represents maternal wisdom, endurance, and social pragmatism within the household, especially during periods of uncertainty and emotional breakdown.

Mediating Tumar is strongly mediating, often stepping between conflicting family members to reduce tension. In scenes where Tolkunbek returns or when Zynat enters the household, she encourages calm dialogue instead of confrontation. She persuades Jainagul to listen rather than react impulsively and often asks others to understand different perspectives. During emotional breakdowns, she reminds the family of shared history and children's needs. Her mediating role is especially visible when she urges reconciliation between Jainagul and Tolkunbek or softens emotional hostility toward Zynat. She functions as a bridge figure, trying to maintain fragile family unity despite deep emotional divisions.

Pragmatic Tumar is pragmatic, focusing on practical solutions rather than emotional extremes. When conflicts arise over Uson, she considers realistic outcomes such as children's future stability, education, and household balance. She often advises Jainagul to think about consequences instead of reacting emotionally to betrayal or humiliation. In difficult situations, she prioritizes what is workable for the family rather than ideal emotional justice. Her pragmatic approach is also seen in her acceptance of changing circumstances, including separation, return, and shifting family structures. This trait allows her to navigate instability with a grounded perspective rooted in daily survival and family continuity.

Protective Tumar is deeply protective, especially toward Jainagul and the children. She defends her daughter during moments of public humiliation and emotional crisis, ensuring she is not left alone in vulnerable situations. She also cares for the grandchildren, particularly during separations and disputes over custody. In scenes of conflict, she reacts strongly when she believes Jainagul is being unfairly judged or emotionally harmed. Her protection is not aggressive but steady and emotional, focused on preserving dignity and safety. This protective instinct makes her a key emotional shield within the family, especially during periods of betrayal, illness, and social pressure.

THEMES The author extensively uses proverbs throughout the novel to convey its central themes.

Marriage:

The Husband as a Soulmate and Lifelong Companion

The novel reflects a traditional Kyrgyz view of marriage in which the bond between husband and wife remains significant despite separation, conflict, or hardship. Through Tumar's words and advice to Jainagul, the narrative presents the husband not merely as the father of children but as a lifelong companion whose place in a woman's life cannot easily be replaced.

One Kyrgyz saying used by Tumar is "On balam bolgucho, osurak chalym bolsun," which can be translated as, "Better to have even a weak or flawed husband than to have ten children."

Tumar says these words when Jainagul refuses to let Tolkunbek return home after his years of betrayal and absence. Through this proverb, Tumar expresses a traditional Kyrgyz understanding of marriage as a form of lifelong companionship, where emotional partnership is valued even in imperfect circumstances.

For Tumar, a husband is not only the provider or the father of children, but also a lifelong companion — some-one with whom life's hardships, grief, aging, and memories are shared. While children eventually grow up and leave, a spouse remains the person who accompanies one through loneliness and the later stages of life. From this perspective, Tolkunbek's return represents not only the restoration of the family structure but also the return of a shared life partner.

A similar idea is reflected in the proverb “Er menen et-ten könül kalbayt,” which literally means, “A person never grows tired of meat, and a woman never grows tired of her husband.” Tumar uses this expression when Jainagul continues to reject Tolkunbek despite his return. The proverb suggests that emotional attachment between husband and wife is persistent and does not easily disappear, even after conflict or separation. By comparing a husband to meat, an essential element of Kyrgyz hospitality and daily life, the saying emphasizes the deep-rooted and enduring nature of marital bonds in traditional culture.

Together, these proverbs highlight the values of the older generation, who emphasize emotional endurance and the preservation of marriage even after betrayal or suffering.

Illustrative moment: After reading Zynat's letter, Jainagul's heart softened because she realized that Tolkunbek had truly loved only her. Zynat's honesty reduced some of her anger, yet resentment still remained strong inside her heart. Bitterly, Jainagul reminded Tolkunbek how he had abandoned her, their children, and his parents many years earlier for the sake of Zynat. She told her mother that she wanted to leave somewhere far away where she would never see him again. Jainagul could not forget the humiliation and loneliness she had suffered before relatives, neighbors, and friends while raising the children alone after his betrayal and abandonment.

(Long Distance) Marriage:

Marriage in novel is not portrayed as a stable and unchanging bond. Instead, the novel explores how physical distance, emotional separation, and unspoken tensions can slowly weaken even a loving relationship. Through Jainagul and Tolkunbek, the author examines the fragile balance between duty, ambition, and intimacy.

At the beginning of their marriage, Jainagul and Tolkunbek share mutual respect, affection, and shared dreams. However, when Tolkunbek is sent to work in Osh, distance enters their lives. What begins as temporary separation gradually becomes emotional detachment.

Letters and phone calls replace daily conversation. Visits become less frequent. Responsibilities grow heavier for Jainagul, who raises the children and continues her medical career largely alone.

The long-distance marriage creates silence and misunderstanding. Without daily presence and shared routine, trust becomes vulnerable. Tolkunbek begins to live a parallel life in Osh, where he reconnects with Zynat. The physical distance between husband and wife makes emotional betrayal easier. The novel suggests that absence does not only create longing; it can also create space for weakness.

At the same time, the theme highlights the strength required to sustain marriage. Jainagul remains loyal and committed despite loneliness. She carries the responsibilities of both parents and preserves the dignity of the family. Her endurance contrasts with Tolkunbek's emotional instability.

Ultimately, the novel presents marriage as a partnership that requires not only love but also presence, honesty, and moral strength. When couples begin to live separate lives, physically and emotionally, the foundation of marriage begins to crack. The story warns that distance, if not carefully managed, can transform love into isolation and misunderstanding.

Illustrative moment: Jainagul, together with Kyna and the children, travels to Osh to visit Tolkunbek. After nearly two years of separation, she expects warmth, longing, and reunion. However, when they arrive at the airport, Tolkunbek is not there to meet them. They take a taxi to his dormitory, only to discover that he has moved to a hotel without informing them. He finally appears two days later, accompanied by an unknown woman, surprised and uncomfortable to see his family.

This scene clearly illustrates how distance has transformed their marriage. Tolkunbek no longer behaves like a husband waiting for his wife. He seems detached, distracted, and emotionally absent. Jainagul searches his eyes for warmth and longing, but instead finds guilt, exhaustion, and silence. The emotional gap between them has grown wider than the physical one.

Through this moment, the novel shows how living separate lives slowly destroys intimacy. Without shared daily life, communication weakens, suspicion grows, and love loses its center. The visit, which should have been a reunion, becomes a quiet confirmation that their marriage is already drifting apart.

Extramarital Relationship

In Osh Tolkunbek begins to live as if he has two selves. By day he is a capable engineer, respected at the construction site, speaking firmly to workers and solving problems. This role gives him something he once lost after his failures in Frunze: a sense that he is worth something. But when evening comes, the room in the dormitory is quiet, the telephone line is weak, and the family he loves is far away in the north. In that silence he feels the old shame again, the memory of robbery, of mistakes, of being the son who disappointed his parents. He does not speak about these thoughts to anyone. He simply endures them.

Then Zynat returns, connected to his past like a thread he never cut. At first everything is proper. She and her husband invite him as a guest. They give him a suit, they treat him with respect, and Zynat's eyes show what she never said aloud in youth. When she later phones him about the hidden letter, Tolkunbek is startled, then flattered, then uneasy. He tells himself it is harmless. He tells himself he is only being polite.

But Zynat's attention begins to work on him. It does what loneliness always does to a person. It fills the empty place where family warmth should be. It also feeds his wounded pride. With her he is not the man who once fell; he is the best man she has ever loved. Slowly he starts to depend on that feeling.

When he tries to step back, he meets tears, accusations, and pressure. And inside him another pressure speaks too, Akkyz's dying words, "Take care of my Zynat." Instead of helping Zynat from a distance, he mixes duty with desire and calls it responsibility. He avoids making a clean choice because a clean choice would require conflict, truth, and pain. So he delays, he lies, he divides his life into two parts.

In the end the affair is not only passion. It is Tolkunbek's way of escaping adult responsibility, escaping shame, escaping the fear of being ordinary again. The more he escapes, the deeper he sinks, until secrecy becomes habit, guilt becomes daily bread, and a child is left at a gate in the winter night.

Illustrative moment: The house is dark and the lamps are not turned on. Zynat explains that she is a married woman and keeps the lights off so that neighbors will not notice a man visiting. Inside, Tolkunbek sees a richly set table with wine and strong drinks prepared in advance. They begin to talk about the past, about their lives, and about families, and Zynat suggests a toast. Tolkunbek notices that she looks especially beautiful and that her voice and manner pull him in. For a moment he remembers Jainagul and his daughter, but he does not leave. He stays, even though he understands the danger.

The Abandoned Woman

Jainagul represents the theme of the abandoned woman. After years of marriage, children, and shared struggles, she is left emotionally and physically alone when Tolkunbek begins his affair with Zynat and later moves away with her to Almaty. The abandonment is especially painful because Jainagul had built her entire life around family, loyalty, and sacrifice.

The novel shows abandonment not only as the loss of a husband, but as a deep emotional humiliation. Jainagul waits for Tolkunbek during his years in Osh, raises the children mostly alone, and believes in the stability of their marriage. When she discovers the truth by seeing Tolkunbek in Zynat's apartment, her pain becomes overwhelming. She wanders through the city at night and even thinks about ending her life. However, she continues living because of her children.

Unlike melodramatic heroines, Jainagul does not collapse completely. She returns home, continues working as a doctor, and raises the children independently. The abandoned woman in the novel is therefore not passive. She suffers silently, but she also survives and rebuilds life through work and motherhood.

The theme also reflects Soviet and Kyrgyz social realities. A woman abandoned by her husband faces gossip, pity, and social pressure, yet she is still expected to remain strong and dignified. Through Jainagul, the novel presents abandonment as both personal tragedy and a test of female endurance.

Illustrative moment: Jainagul receives the anonymous letter about Tolkunbek and Zynat. Shocked and trembling, she secretly goes to the address written in the letter. Near the house she sees Tolkunbek's car, and inside she notices a painting of her own family hanging on the wall. Then she suddenly sees Tolkunbek and Zynat together.

After leaving the apartment, Jainagul wanders alone through the dark streets of Osh. Her mind is filled with humiliation, pain, and disbelief. Standing near the river, she even thinks about throwing herself

into the water. At that moment she feels completely abandoned, not only as a wife but also as a woman whose trust and family life have collapsed.

Yet she does not jump. She suddenly realizes that if she dies, Zynat will receive Tolkunbek and the children. This thought pulls her back from despair. She returns home and cries through the entire night.

Emotional Polygamy:

The concept of emotional polygamy is clearly reflected in Tolkunbek's relationships with Zynat and Jainagul, where he is unable to commit fully to one woman and instead remains emotionally attached to both. When he lives with Zynat, he constantly misses Jainagul and his children, yet after returning to Jainagul, he begins to miss Zynat. This emotional instability shows his divided loyalties and inability to form a single, stable family identity.

Tolkunbek also displays jealousy and emotional conflict in his relationship with Zynat, especially in his tension with Musurepov, which further reveals his possessive yet inconsistent emotional nature. At first, he believes that Zynat loves him while he loves Jainagul, creating an illusion of balanced emotional attachment. However, the author gradually reveals his polygamous tendencies not only in action but also in thought, presenting him as a man incapable of emotional clarity or commitment.

His longing for Zynat is expressed through the proverb "*jogolgon bychaktyn saby altyn*," meaning "the lost knife has a golden handle," which suggests that what is lost becomes idealized and more valuable in memory. This reflects how Tolkunbek romanticizes Zynat after separation, even while he is with Jainagul. His emotional division becomes more explicit when he tells his friends Zhakan, Turat, and Turat's wife about his intention to maintain relationships with both women, attempting to normalize his desire for dual family life.

However, Zynat rejects his proposal to become a second wife, refusing to accept a divided position in his life. Although post-independence Kyrgyzstan experienced social uncertainty and some informal attempts to revive polygamous practices, such arrangements were legally and morally contested. In contrast, Jainagul, motivated by loneliness and longing for her son Uson, reluctantly agrees to the arrangement.

Tolkunbek summarizes his emotional duality with the saying "*bir barmagym tishtesem, bir barmagym kalat*," meaning "if I bite one finger, the other remains," expressing his belief that he can love both women simultaneously. Ultimately, he is portrayed as a deeply indecisive man whose emotional fragmentation drives the instability of both relationships.

Illustrative moment: Tolkunbek called Zynat to ask about Uson and admitted that he missed her deeply. He confessed that he no longer fully understood his feelings and was confused about love. Zynat asked about his relationship with Jainagul, and Tolkunbek replied that once trust is broken, it is very difficult to restore. He also said that his heart seemed divided between two women. Zynat, too, realized that her emotions were shifting; she missed Tolkunbek but was also deeply concerned about Uson and her daughter Aygerim. Both of them felt emotionally trapped between past love, present responsibilities, and uncertain future decisions.

Parenting:

The Older Generation as Guardians of Family and Tradition

In *The Stranger*, the older generation — Kyna, Mansur, and Tumar, represents tradition, moral authority, and the preservation of family unity. Through their actions and decisions, the novel shows how parents carry the responsibility of protecting not only their children but also the honor of the entire family.

Mansur symbolizes patriarchal authority and concern for reputation. When the abandoned baby is found at his gate, he immediately worries about social judgment. His decision to bury Jannat's doll in the cemetery demonstrates how strongly he values public honor and family name.

Kyna represents emotional wisdom and maternal protection. She senses danger before the truth is revealed and tries to protect Jainagul from pain. When Tolkunbek's betrayal becomes known, her suffering and illness show how deeply the older generation experiences shame and disappointment.

Tumar, on the other hand, represents patience and endurance. She believes that forgiveness is more important than pride. Even after betrayal, she advises Jainagul to save her marriage, showing the traditional belief that family must remain united despite suffering.

Through these characters, the novel presents the older generation as moral guardians who struggle to balance truth, honor, forgiveness, and survival.

Illustrative moment: When Jainagul tells her mother that Tolkunbek is returning, Tumar gently advises her to forgive him. Her words are calm but powerful, reflecting the wisdom of the older generation. Tumar believes that family unity is more important than pride or past mistakes. She reminds Jainagul that children need both parents and that forgiveness brings peace to the home. Although Jainagul has suffered deeply from betrayal, her mother's advice softens her heart. Tumar's response shows her traditional values, patience, and belief in the sacredness of marriage. Through her words, the novel highlights forgiveness as a path toward healing and restoration.

Motherhood

In *The Stranger* motherhood is presented as a source of endurance, sacrifice, emotional strength, and moral responsibility. The novel portrays mothers not as passive figures, but as women who hold the family together during periods of betrayal, separation, and suffering. Through characters such as Jainagul, Kyna, and Tumar, motherhood becomes closely connected with protection, patience, and unconditional care.

Jainagul represents motherhood as self-sacrifice and resilience. Even after Tolkunbek's betrayal, she continues to care for her children and maintain stability within the family. Although she experiences deep emotional pain and humiliation, she does not abandon her maternal responsibilities. Instead, she keeps working as a doctor, raises the children independently, and continues living for their sake. Her motherhood gives her the strength to survive emotional collapse.

Motherhood in the novel is also linked to forgiveness and compassion. Jainagul accepts and raises the abandoned child with genuine care, despite the painful connection between the child and Tolkunbek's secret relationship with Zynat. She sees the child not as a symbol of betrayal, but as an innocent life in need of love and protection. Through this act, the novel presents motherhood as morally higher than resentment or revenge.

Kyna and Tumar represent another dimension of motherhood: wisdom and emotional guidance. They worry not only about their children's happiness, but also about the unity and honor of the family. Their advice, fears, and emotional suffering show how mothers carry the burdens of the entire household.

The novel ultimately suggests that motherhood is one of the strongest moral forces in human life. While men often escape responsibility or hide behind silence, mothers continue protecting, forgiving, and enduring suffering for the sake of their children and family.

Illustrative moment: After discovering Tolkunbek's betrayal, Jainagul feels completely devastated and wanders alone through the dark streets of Osh. Standing near the river, she even thinks about ending her life. However, at the moment of despair, she suddenly remembers her children. She realizes that if she dies, they will be left without their mother and their family will completely collapse. This thought pulls her back from the edge of death. She returns home and spends the entire night crying beside her children. This moment clearly shows how motherhood becomes stronger than despair, pain, and humiliation.

Motherhood, Shame, and Social Pressure

The absence of a child is presented as both a personal tragedy and a social stigma in Zynat's life, and the author clearly reflects it in the sayings "*Biröögö kör duino, biröögö zar duino*" and "*tuubagan katyndan ulaktuu echki oido*."

The proverb "*Biröögö kör duino, biröögö zar duino*" expresses the unequal nature of human experience. It suggests that while some people live in emotional fullness and satisfaction, others live in longing and deprivation. In Zynat's case, the absence of children becomes the central source of her emotional emptiness, making her feel excluded from the happiness and fulfillment experienced by others.

The second proverb, "*tuubagan katyndan ulaktuu echki oido*," which literally means "even a goat with a kid is better than a childless woman," highlights the strong stigma attached to childlessness in tra-

ditional society. It shows that the absence of children is not only a private sorrow but also a public shame, where a childless woman is often humiliated, devalued, and socially marginalized. In this cultural context, motherhood is closely tied to a woman's identity and social respect, and its absence leads to judgment and exclusion.

Together, these proverbs reveal that Zynat's suffering is shaped by both emotional loss and social pressure. While one reflects her inner sense of lack, the other exposes the cultural stigma that intensifies her pain and defines her position in society.

Illustrative moment: The next day, Zynat spent hours speaking with her neighbor Saliya and secretly hoped Tolkunbek might still return if Jainagul rejected him again. Suddenly, someone knocked on the door. Opening it, Zynat saw only the silhouette of a woman disappearing into the distance and a basket containing a baby girl. Inside was a letter from a desperate student asking Zynat to adopt the child because the baby's father had deceived her and abandoned them. Deeply moved, Zynat accepted the child and named her Aygerim. News of the adoption quickly spread throughout the city, and friends soon arrived to congratulate her.

Maternal Separation

Another deeply painful theme in the novel is the separation between Jainagul and Uson, which reveals the emotional complexity of motherhood and attachment. When Mansur reveals the truth about Uson's biological mother before his death, Jainagul becomes deeply distressed. She cries, falls ill, and initially reacts with anger toward those involved. However, over time she comes to understand that Uson is Zynat's biological child, and despite her emotional suffering, she agrees to return him. This decision is extremely painful for her, as she has raised him as her own son and formed a strong maternal bond with him.

Jainagul's feelings are reflected in the saying "elik sutun bergen", which expresses that she did not give birth to the child but nourished him with her own milk and raised him with love and care. This highlights the emotional depth of motherhood beyond biological ties. Nevertheless, she accepts the idea that a child ultimately belongs to his biological mother, a belief expressed in the proverb "eesi kelse bees-in ber", meaning "if the owner comes, return his mare horse." In this context, it suggests that if Uson is Zynat's biological son, Jainagul should return the boy.

At the same time, Zynat also realizes that motherhood is not defined only by giving birth. Although Uson is biologically her son, he has a deep emotional attachment to Jainagul, constantly crying, resisting separation, and longing for her presence. This situation is captured in the proverb "*boru balasy it bolboit*", meaning "a wolf's puppy will not become a dog," emphasizing that a child's true emotional identity cannot be easily changed. Similarly, the saying "*bala tapkandyky emes, bakkandyky*" highlights the idea that a child belongs not only to the one who gives birth but also to the one who raises and nurtures him.

The novel presents motherhood as both biological and emotional, showing how love, care, and upbringing create bonds that can be as strong as blood relations, yet also lead to profound emotional pain when separation becomes necessary.

Illustrative moment: Uson increasingly misses Jainagul and constantly draws pictures of her. He asks for toys, including a moped, and even requests another one for Asan. Although Zynat fulfills his wishes, he still longs for his mother. One day, overwhelmed by sadness, he disappears and goes to a bus stop. There, older boys try to force him to bring money from home and beat him when he refuses. Two women later find him, rescue him, and ask about his identity. Uson says he comes from Cholpon-Ata and wants to return home. The women inform the police, and he is safely found and protected.

The abandoned child

The theme of the abandoned child in *The Stranger* serves as one of the novel's most powerful symbols of adult weakness and hidden guilt. The baby left near Mansur's gate is entirely innocent, yet his destiny is shaped by the secret relationship between Tolkunbek and Zynat. He does not choose his circumstances, but he becomes the one who carries the burden of their fear, passion, and moral failure. Through this child, the novel shows how the powerless often suffer most from the mistakes of others.

The abandonment takes place silently on a cold winter night, and this silence is deeply symbolic. It hides the truth from the community, but it cannot erase the guilt from those responsible. Tolkunbek leaves the baby near his own family's gate, hoping to distance himself from the consequences of his actions. He believes that by doing so, he can escape shame and protect his reputation. Instead, the child remains at the center of the family's life, becoming a living reminder of a secret that refuses to disappear.

Jainagul takes the baby in and raises him with genuine love and care. She sees only a helpless child in need of warmth and protection. However, the mystery of his origin slowly creates emotional tension within the household. As the boy grows older, his strong resemblance to Tolkunbek becomes increasingly clear. This resemblance acts as a silent accusation, awakening suspicion and deepening the hidden conflict.

Ultimately, the abandoned child symbolizes innocence burdened by adult guilt, revealing how concealed truths continue to shape lives long after the original sin is committed.

Illustrative moment: Tolkunbek secretly leaves the baby near Mansur's gate. This scene clearly reveals the novel's central idea that innocent people often suffer because of the moral weakness of adults. The child, wrapped against the cold, has no understanding of why he has been abandoned. He is completely helpless, yet his life is already shaped by the fear and irresponsibility of his parents. Tolkunbek's decision to leave the baby in silence shows his attempt to escape shame and protect his reputation instead of accepting responsibility. The darkness and coldness of the night reflect the emotional coldness of his action.

This moment is especially powerful because it combines innocence and guilt in a single image. The baby represents purity and vulnerability, while Tolkunbek represents hidden sin and cowardice. Although the act is done secretly, it creates consequences that cannot be erased. The child does not disappear from the story; instead, he becomes a constant reminder of the past.

Emotions:

Love

Love is not presented as simple happiness or romantic fulfillment. Instead, it appears as a powerful, complicated force that shapes destinies, tests morality, and reveals the strengths and weaknesses of each character. Through Jainagul, Tolkunbek, and Zynat, the novel explores different forms of love: faithful love, obsessive love, maternal love, and sacrificial love.

First, the love between Jainagul and Tolkunbek begins as innocent affection from their boarding school years and later develops into marriage. Their relationship represents stable, family-centered love built on shared dreams and responsibility. However, this love is fragile. When Tolkunbek begins his affair with Zynat, the novel shows how love without moral strength can turn into betrayal. Love alone is not enough; it must be supported by loyalty and integrity.

Second, Zynat represents passionate and obsessive love. She loves Tolkunbek from childhood and never truly releases him from her heart. Her love is intense and emotional, but it becomes destructive. It leads to secrecy, the abandonment of a child, and the collapse of a family. Yet her love also contains sacrifice. In the end, she lets Tolkunbek go, proving that true love may require self-denial.

Maternal love forms another powerful dimension of the theme. Jainagul's unconditional care for all three children, including the abandoned baby, shows love as protection and devotion. Unlike romantic love, maternal love remains steady and selfless.

Ultimately, the novel suggests that love can heal or destroy depending on the choices people make. It is both a blessing and a burden, shaping every major event in the story.

Illustrative moment: An abandoned baby is found at Mansur's gate. Jainagul is in labor, in pain and fear, while Tolkunbek is far away, hiding the truth of his affair. When the newborn child is discovered, Jainagul does not reject him, even though she senses that something is wrong. Instead, she accepts the baby and later raises him as her own son. This moment clearly illustrates the contrast between different kinds of love in the novel. Tolkunbek's romantic love is weak and divided, leading to secrecy and betrayal. Zynat's passionate love results in desperation and abandonment. In contrast, Jainagul's maternal love is

unconditional and selfless. She gives warmth and protection to a child who may not even be biologically hers.

Women's Intuition

In *The Stranger*, women's intuition appears as a quiet but powerful ability to sense hidden truths before they are openly revealed. Both Jainagul and Kyna repeatedly feel that something is wrong long before Tolkunbek's affair becomes public.

Jainagul notices small changes in Tolkunbek after arriving in Osh. She searches his eyes for warmth and longing but instead sees guilt, distance, and exhaustion. Although he gives explanations, she feels emotionally that he is hiding something. Her suspicions grow stronger when she sees him with another woman at the hotel and later notices his strange behavior, late returns, and emotional coldness. Eventually her intuition leads her to Zynat's house, where she discovers the truth for herself.

Kyna also relies on intuition rather than facts. She worries about Tolkunbek's long absence from home and senses danger around Zynat even before understanding the full situation. She notices how closely little Uson resembles Tolkunbek and quietly fears that the abandoned child may carry a hidden secret.

The novel presents women's intuition as emotional intelligence born from daily observation, care, and experience. The women notice what men try to hide through words and excuses. Their intuition is not magical; it comes from attentiveness to behavior, silence, and emotional change. Through Jainagul and Kyna, the novel suggests that women often understand family truths long before they are spoken aloud.

Illustrative moment: Jainagul, Kyna, and the children arrive at the hotel where Tolkunbek is staying. He appears only two days later, accompanied by a woman. The woman leaves quickly, but Kyna immediately feels something is wrong. She thinks the woman's face looks familiar, yet she instantly dislikes her appearance and manner. A heavy feeling settles in her heart.

That same evening Jainagul also senses the change in Tolkunbek. While they lie in bed, she searches his eyes for the old warmth and longing. Instead she sees only guilt, tiredness, and distance. He says he only wants to sleep. Jainagul pretends to believe him, but inside she already knows something has broken. She does not ask direct questions. She simply feels the emotional coldness that was never there before.

Flaws:

Appearances, Secrets, and Deception

Appearances, secrets, and deception shape both personal relationships and social standing. The novel portrays a world in which reputation is deeply important, especially within Soviet society and traditional Kyrgyz culture. Characters often hide the truth to protect honor, status, or emotional security, but these hidden realities slowly erode trust.

Tolkunbek's life is built on duality. Publicly, he is a disciplined engineer and family man. Privately, he struggles with moral weakness and emotional confusion. His affair with Zynat develops in secrecy—through hidden meetings, late-night phone calls, and carefully constructed excuses. He fears scandal more than wrongdoing, choosing silence instead of honesty. This desire to preserve appearance ultimately damages both his marriage and his career when the truth is exposed through anonymous letters.

Zynat also lives behind a mask. As a respected and talented painter, she appears independent and successful. However, emotionally she remains attached to Tolkunbek, unable to free herself from the past. Her composed public image contrasts with her intense private longing. Even her invitation to Tolkunbek's darkened house reflects deception—love presented as intimacy, yet built on secrecy.

Jainagul, in contrast, values dignity and restraint. When she discovers the betrayal, she does not create public scandal. She protects her pride by remaining silent and composed. Yet beneath this calm exterior lies deep emotional pain. Her silence becomes another form of hidden suffering.

The novel suggests that deception may protect reputation temporarily, but truth cannot remain buried forever. Anonymous letters, rumors, and chance encounters gradually expose what was hidden. In the end, the collapse of appearances forces the characters to confront reality. The story reveals that hon-

esty, though painful, is the only foundation strong enough to sustain love and family.

Illustrative moment: Jainagul receives the anonymous letter and goes to Zynat's apartment. Until that moment, Tolkunbek maintains the appearance of a husband trying to repair his life. He speaks calmly at home, avoids open confrontation, and behaves as if everything can still be controlled. However, when Jainagul unexpectedly enters Zynat's apartment and sees Tolkunbek standing there in silence, the carefully constructed illusion collapses.

The painting inside the apartment, showing Tolkunbek together with Jainagul and the children, deepens the irony. Outwardly, it represents family unity and harmony. In reality, the scene exposes betrayal and emotional division. Tolkunbek's public image as a respectable engineer and family man stands in sharp contrast to his hidden actions.

This moment clearly illustrates the conflict between appearance and reality. What had been hidden behind excuses and silence becomes visible and undeniable. The scene marks the destruction of illusion and forces the characters to confront the truth.

The Return of the Prodigal Son

The idea of "The Return of the Prodigal Son," which comes from the Biblical parable about a son who leaves his family, loses his moral direction, and later returns home seeking forgiveness, strongly reflects Tolkunbek's storyline in the second part of *The Stranger* by Zuura Sooronbaeva.

In the novel, Jainagul's mother Tumar uses Kyrgyz proverbs to justify and explain Tolkunbek's return to his family after years of separation. One of the sayings is "*At aylanyp kazygyn tabat*" ("Even a wandering horse returns to its own tethering post"). In Kyrgyz culture, the "*kazyk*," or tethering post, symbolizes one's true home, roots, and family. No matter how far the horse wanders, it eventually returns to the place where it belongs. Through this proverb, Tumar explains that Tolkunbek, despite his betrayal and emotional wandering, has finally returned to his real family and moral place in life.

Another proverb she uses is "*Adashkandyn aiby jok, kairyp uirun tapkan song*" ("There is no shame in making mistakes if a person returns to the right path"). This saying reflects the traditional Kyrgyz belief that a person's mistakes can be forgiven when they recognize guilt and sincerely return home.

Tumar uses these proverbs not only to calm Jainagul's anger, but also to express cultural ideas of forgiveness, reconciliation, and family unity. Tolkunbek's return is not presented as simple or heroic. Jainagul still remembers the humiliation and loneliness she suffered after he abandoned the family for Zynat, while the children fear that their father may leave again.

However, through Tumar's words and the symbolic use of these proverbs, the novel connects Tolkunbek's personal return with broader Kyrgyz cultural values about repentance, moral restoration, and the importance of preserving family bonds despite human mistakes.

Illustrative moment: Tumar witnessed the painful reunion and felt sympathy for Tolkunbek despite his betrayal. She asked him to stand up and reminded Jainagul that they had once been a loving and happy couple. Although she admitted that Tolkunbek was guilty, she believed every person makes mistakes and deserves forgiveness. Her calm words reflected maternal wisdom and kindness during a difficult moment. Seeing Tumar, Tolkunbek felt deep gratitude toward her and her son Sady for helping him through difficult times. Ashamed and emotional, he respectfully asked Tumar to forgive him as well, realizing how much pain his actions had caused everyone.

Psychology

Inner Conflict:

The novel does not focus only on external events such as betrayal, separation, or scandal. It explores the internal struggles of its characters, especially the silent battles between love and guilt, desire and responsibility, weakness and morality. Through Tolkunbek, Jainagul, and Zynat, the author shows how the deepest conflicts often take place inside the human heart.

Tolkunbek is the clearest example of inner conflict. He loves Jainagul and his children, but he also feels drawn to Zynat. He knows that his actions are wrong, yet he cannot resist temptation. Through-

out the novel, he is torn between two lives: one built on family, duty, and honesty; the other built on secrecy, passion, and emotional escape. Even when he lives with Zinat in Almaty, he whispers Jainagul's name in his sleep and hides her photograph in a newspaper. His inner struggle never disappears; instead, it slowly destroys him.

Jainagul also experiences deep inner conflict, especially after discovering Tolkunbek's betrayal. She is torn between pain and forgiveness, pride and love. She protects her dignity by refusing to chase him, yet she silently regrets not giving him a second chance. Her conflict reflects the inner struggle of many women who must balance personal pride with the needs of their children and family.

Zinat carries her own inner battle. She loves Tolkunbek deeply but knows that her love cannot survive without destroying others. In the end, she chooses sacrifice over possession, showing that inner conflict can also lead to moral growth.

Ultimately, the novel suggests that the most important struggles in life are not external but internal, shaping every choice and every relationship.

Illustrative moment: Tolkunbek lies awake in bed beside Jainagul during her visit to Osh. Outwardly, he appears tired and quiet, telling her that he only wants to sleep. Jainagul believes he has already fallen asleep. In reality, however, Tolkunbek remains awake in the darkness, tormented by guilt, fear, and confusion. He thinks about the growing mess in his life, his hidden relationship with Zinat, the abandoned child, and the love he still feels for his wife and children.

This silent moment clearly illustrates the depth of Tolkunbek's inner conflict. He is physically beside Jainagul, yet emotionally divided between two worlds. He cannot speak the truth, but he cannot escape it either. His silence is not peace; it is the sound of an internal struggle between morality and weakness, love and desire, responsibility and escape.

Through this scene, the novel shows that inner conflict is often invisible to others. While the family sleeps, Tolkunbek battles himself in the darkness, unable to find a way out of the situation he has created. The moment captures the painful truth that the deepest struggles in life happen quietly, inside the human heart.

Symbols:

The Unrevealed Identity of the Baby Girl

The author deliberately leaves the identity of the girl abandoned at Zinat's door unresolved, that creates ambiguity and emotional tension in the narrative. The girl's young mother, a student, leaves a note; she explained that she had been involved with a man who told her that his wife was childless, while in reality he already had children from another relationship. However, she does not fully reveal her own circumstances or the reasons for abandoning the child, she leaves her story incomplete and uncertain.

This uncertainty is reinforced through symbolic details surrounding the child. The baby girl has a physical defect that resembles Tolkunbek's trait, which is also shared by his twin sons, Asan and Uson, it arouses suspicion about possible kinship.

The meaning of Zinat's dream also becomes significant in this context: she sees her parents giving her a hawk shortly before the child appears. The hawk is interpreted as a symbolic representation of Uson, her son, linking the dream to real events and suggesting emotional and familial connection.

By structuring the narrative in this way, the author emphasizes emotional complexity and the fragile nature of family ties. The identity of the child is not fully clarified, so it reflects broader tensions of hidden truths and fragmented relationships.

At the same time, the baby girl's arrival can be read as an omen of Zinat's eventual reunion with Uson, her biological child. When Zinat adopts the girl, her home becomes filled with warmth and liveliness, captured in the saying "*balaluu ui bazar*," meaning "a house with children is like a bazaar," full of noise and joy.

The community also responds with support and blessing, wishing the child health and strength through the traditional phrase "*beshek boosu bek bolsun*," meaning "may the cradle ties be strong," a wish for the baby's health, stability, and long life.

Illustrative moment: Zinat's friends visited her in Bishkek and were happy for her success, while she shared her complicated story about Tolkunbek and Uson. When she looked closely at baby Aygerim,

she noticed a defect in the child's right-hand finger, which reminded her of Tolkunbek's similar trait. This shocked her and raised suspicions about Tolkunbek's past relationships. She feared she might suffer like Jainagul if truth remained hidden. Her aunt suggested that if Tolkunbek was the father, then it would connect both children as siblings. Zynat recalled the timeline of his construction work, realizing how complex and unclear her emotional history with him had become.