

HUMANITIES INSTITUTE

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***Munabiya* (1982)**

Kazat Akmatov (1941–2015)

Film: *Munabiya* (2017), Kulmendeev, T. (Director).

Retrieved from <https://m.ok.ru/video/1802348923444>

Reference: Kazat Akmatov. (1987). *Munabiya*. Frunze: Kyrgyzstan Publishing House.

OVERVIEW

Author Kazat Akmatov was born on December 23, 1941, in the village of Bosteri, Ysyk-Kol Province, Kyrgyzstan. He passed away on September 14, 2015, after a prolonged illness.

He graduated in 1966 from the Higher Komsomol School under the Central Committee of the Komsomol in Moscow and in 1967 from the Department of Kyrgyz Language and Literature at Kyrgyz State University. Akmatov began his professional career in 1954 as a laborer at the Horse Breeding State Enterprise in the Ysyk-Kol District. From the 1960s, he engaged in Komsomol activities. In 1972, he joined the editorial staff of the *Kyrgyzstan* publishing house as an editor and later served as deputy chief editor. Between 1974 and 1983, he held various positions within the Communist Party of Kyrgyzstan. From 1983 to 1986, he served as senior editor at the State Television and Radio Committee of Kyrgyzstan. Between 1986 and 1990, he was Secretary of the Board of the Union of Writers of Kyrgyzstan. In 1990, he became one of the founders and the first chairman of the Kyrgyz Democratic Movement, a driving force in the formation of the country's modern political system and an important influence in the rise to power of A. Akaev. From 1990 to 1995, he served as a member of the Parliament of the Kyrgyz Republic.

His first collection of stories, *Young Man (Boz Ulan)*, was published in 1974. He is also the author of novels, stories, and collections including *Sacred Homeland (Yiyk yurt)*, *Time (Mezgil)*, *Munabiya (Munabiya)*, and *The Years That Turned Around the Sun (Kundu aylangan jyldar)*. Several of his works were adapted for the stage, including the plays *Ajyrashuu (Ajyrashuu)*, *Munabiya (Munabiya)*, co-written with J. Kulmambetov, and *Accident (Avariya)*. In 2013, his work *Erika Klaus' Thirteen Steps (Erika Klaustun 13 kadamy)*, originally published in Russian, appeared in English in London. His final novel, *Arhat (Arhat, 2006)*, received the Toktogul State Prize of Kyrgyzstan for literature. Notably, the film *Munabiya (Munabiya)* was adapted from his novella for Kyrgyz cinema.

Kazat Akmatov received the Jubilee Medal *Manas-1000*, the Toktogul State Prize of Kyrgyzstan, and the All-Union Nikolai Ostrovsky Literary Prize. He is recognized as a People's Writer of Kyrgyzstan and is considered one of the founders of Kyrgyz democracy.

Novella Kazat Akmatov's novella *Munabiya*, published in the early 1980s, holds a distinctive place in Kyrgyz literature. The Russian M. Lomonosov Prize was awarded for the novella *Munabiya*, along with the presentation of the M. Lomonosov Order.

A film adaptation of *Munabiya*, with the same title, later brought the story to an international audience. It premiered at the Busan International Film Festival in Busan on October 13, 2017, where it was warmly received by both critics and viewers. The film *Munabiya* was awarded the Grand Prix at a film festival organized by the Eurasian Creative Guild in London. Then, in 2018, the film participated in the 27th Open Film Festival "Kinoshock" in Russia, where it won the Grand Prix and the award for Best Screenplay. The film also won the "Nika" (Russia) award in the category of "Best Film from the CIS and Baltic States."

Background Before its release, the emotional and romantic experiences of among older adults had rarely been explored in such depth within the national literary tradition. The work therefore marked an important shift, introducing new psychological and thematic perspectives.

Kazat Akmatov told that in the 1970s, people from the Dargin, Chechen, and Karachay communities were brought to Kyrgyz lands for political reasons. Karachay families settled in the village of Bosteri, but most eventually left. However, one young woman remained behind. The villagers spread countless rumors about her, saying things like “She is trouble” or “She seduces our husbands,” giving her no peace. It turned out that she had fallen in love with a young Kyrgyz man and could not leave him. She stayed in Kyrgyzstan until she grew old, but the social norms and traditions of the time did not allow the couple to live openly together. Inspired by the woman’s deep and resilient love, the writer created his masterpiece Munabiya.

The author, deeply moved by his character, named his daughter Munabiya. Tragically, she died unexpectedly at the age of 17. Following her death, he fell seriously ill and passed away two years later.

MAIN CHARACTERS

Teken – Januzak’s son

Januzak – Old goldsmith, quiet father

Munabiya – Beautiful, lonely woman

Teken’s Mother – Jealous, strong-willed mother

Ajike – Teken’s aunt, protector of family honor

Asylbek – Ajike’s husband, Teken’s uncle

SYNOPSIS

Teken, a city-dweller, is shaken by an anonymous letter accusing him and his siblings of abandoning their widowed father in the village and allowing a woman named Munabiya to dishonor their late mother’s home. Driven by guilt, he returns to the village intending to take his father back to the city, but instead finds himself pulled into an old, unspoken family history.

As memories resurface, Teken recalls his mother’s lifelong hatred of Munabiya, the violent quarrels of his childhood, and his father Januzak’s silent, withdrawn nature. In the village, relatives insist that Munabiya is a disgrace and invoke the mother’s dying wish that she never be allowed into the household. Yet Teken gradually learns that the bond between his father and Munabiya is not new scandal but a deep attachment that has endured for decades, hidden beneath family anger, jealousy, and social custom.

Unable to truly understand his father, Teken confronts him in the name of duty, honor, and his mother’s memory. Soon after, Januzak dies. At the funeral, his final request shocks the entire village: Munabiya is to come dressed in black and sit beside his body. Her arrival stirs outrage and shame, but when she begins to sing her lament, the noise of judgment falls away. In that moment, the truth becomes undeniable: beneath years of silence, resentment, and repression, Januzak and Munabiya had shared a love stronger than custom, stronger than family opposition, and stronger even than death.

SCENES

A Letter from Village Teken living in the city received a letter from his relatives in the village. Sometimes life can be strict with you for overlooking those closest to you. In that moment, his eyes opened wide, and he rose abruptly, suddenly remembering forgotten responsibilities and unresolved worries that had been waiting for him. With his mind unsettled, he drove on, turning off the radio, closing the curtains, and letting his anxiety rise with every drop of sweat on his hands as he gripped the steering wheel. The envelope seemed to rest right in front of him, heavy with meaning.

Guilt on the Road As Teken passed through Sokuluk district, he suddenly flung the envelope into the depths of the glove compartment and slammed it shut. He drove on. The road was nearly empty, and whenever he pressed harder on the pedal, the speed seemed unchanging. Yet the words from the letter kept returning, cutting into his heart like stone. It said his mother had been dead for two years, and that he and his brothers had abandoned their aging father alone in the old house. A woman named Munabiya, the

letter claimed, had taken over the home and dishonored his mother's memory. The unsigned letter bitterly accused the sons of cruelty and heartlessness.

Bitter Awakening When Teken finished reading the letter, it felt as though a scoundrel had poured a bucket of filth over him. Never had such bitter words cut so deep. At first, rage burned through him — how dare this unfair stranger smear them all with groundless shame? He felt no guilt, none at all. Yet it was only his own selfishness speaking, that quiet, ugly flaw they all carried. Only when the storm inside him quieted did the truth settle like cold ashes: three years ago their mother died, and they had left their old father alone in the silent village house ever since, with no one to care for him, no one to watch over his lonely days.

The Silent Goldsmith His father had never patched his own clothes in his life. From youth, he had given himself completely to jewelry-making. All his thoughts, joy, and sorrow flowed into the pieces he crafted. When working alone, his face would glow with quiet passion, eyes sparkling, heart brimming with unspoken secrets. Yet he remained utterly silent. He spoke barely a word all day. People fondly called him “Gentle Uzak.” He sometimes placed part of the blame on his father too, thinking, “Why didn’t the poor man let us know he was suffering and in need?” City life had swallowed him — work, endless duties, weeks passing without a thought of home. Forgetting one’s parents felt too easy. As he drove, he carefully chose his words. His only wish now was to bring his old father back to the city with him.

Voices from the Village Last year, his village relatives had offered gentle advice: “Take your father to the city, look after him during the winter. Find a good widow there and marry them. When spring arrives, let them return home together.” These words had warmed his heart. Yet it seemed there were almost no unmarried women left in the village. Everyone was searching, but none could be found. Now his mind turned to Munabiya. If he could, he wanted to face her. She was the woman his late mother had disliked the most in the village.

A Mother’s Grudge For many years, his mother had been at odds with that woman for reasons no one understood. Though their houses stood on the same street, they never visited one another. From childhood, the children never heard a single kind word from their mother about Munabiya. “That bad woman wishes us no good. That scoundrel has stolen the luck from our home! That shameless old woman this, that cursed woman that...” His mother never grew tired of repeating these bitter words.

The Fight at the Wedding When they were children, they heard that a fight had broken out among the women at a wedding feast and ran there full of curiosity. The mother had grabbed Munabiya by the hair and dragged her across the ground, beating her with fierce anger. It was as if all the resentment she had carried for years was pouring out in that moment. The other women tried to pull them apart; most sided with the mother, leaving Munabiya isolated. Some laughed loudly, while others gently said, “Let them be, they’ll calm down when they’re tired.”

Mother Was Supported Teken’s anger must have flared, because he ran over and pushed Munabiya, who was resisting the mother. At that, the women burst into loud laughter. “Look at this boy! This is what supporting his mother looks like! Grab her legs! Pull her hair!” they shouted cheerfully. The boy lost control and kept attacking her again and again. Looking back now, Munabiya had been much younger than the mother—a young woman in the full bloom of her youth. The boy’s angry blows must have felt like nothing more than a fly landing gently on her skin. Yet she raised her hands softly in defense, as if afraid she might hurt the small, fragile creature before her.

The Father’s Whip Their fight suddenly stopped. That moment remained vividly etched in his childhood memory, as clear as if it had happened yesterday. The women were still shouting when a whip suddenly cracked sharply across their backs. All three cried out in pain and fled in different directions. His back burned as though his skin had been torn open. The one who struck them was his father. He had rushed out from the men’s side of the house, his eyes glowing red with rage. “Damn! Damn!” was all he could utter. His tall frame trembled with fury. He looked as if he could destroy everyone present. The women inside the house panicked and scattered in chaos. No one dared to speak a word.

The Father's Rage "Go home!" his father commanded his mother sternly. Still clutching strands of hair in her fist, his mother had fled in fear to the highest corner of the room. When his father shouted again, the men nearby quickly grabbed and held her down. The women burst into laughter and mocked him behind his back. His father, still burning with rage, scanned the crowd. Suddenly his eyes fell on the boy. The child ran toward the house in terror. Everyone called his father "Gentle," but when anger seized him, he spared neither himself nor others. Fortunately, such fury was rare.

Unexpected Mercy Crying from the beating he was going home, the boy spotted Munabiya walking ahead. He ran and tugged at the hem of her skirt. When he looked back, Munabiya had tilted her head sadly, tears flowing freely down her face. She walked as if lost to the world, seeing nothing, hearing nothing. The boy was surprised but kept running, because his father was coming after them with the whip. He wondered what his father would do to her. But it did not happen as he expected. His father caught up, bent down, and spoke to her in a soft, gentle voice.

The Broken Whip Munabiya looked at him with tear-filled eyes for a moment, then suddenly turned and took the narrow path through the fields. The boy stood still, wondering what would happen next. His father began to follow her but stopped, cast an angry glance at the crowd behind him, and then walked straight toward the boy. The child ran home in fear and hid in the darkest corner of the barn. His father came to the middle of the yard and stood swaying unsteadily. Clutching his chest as if in pain, he broke the silver-handled whip over his knee with a loud crack and hurled it toward the hearth.

Return to Silence Two days after the quarrel, his mother returned home, turned the house upside down, and left his father helpless. To him, family seemed like a strange and incomprehensible world, and this was the first time he had truly seen it with his own eyes. For two days after the fight, his mother did not come home. His father behaved as though he did not care where she was. Quietly, he lit the forge again and went back to work as usual. By the third day, his anger had completely faded. He had once more become the calm, submissive "Meek Uzak" everyone knew. Only after that did his mother gradually begin returning home.

Mom's Grumbling Voice She first headed to the yard, muttering to herself as she entered, gathered the scattered firewood, and tossed it toward the stove. She didn't immediately confront Dad; instead, she grumbled and fussed outside for a bit before finally entering the room where Dad and I sat. Her first jab was at me: "Look at you! Like an orphan left in the fields. Get up, wash your face and head, change your shirt!" After shooing me out, she stormed into the workshop, slammed the door, and attacked Dad. For ages, Mom's grumbling voice echoed—snarling, mocking, imitating him, then bursting into bitter laughs. Poor Dad's brain must've been thoroughly fried.

Mother's Jealous Rage But he barely raised his voice; the father just kept clattering his tools steadily. It was unclear who she was ranting at or quarreling with. That seemed to ignite her jealousy—the poor mother's black envy took over. "I bore you children! Five kids surround me. Where are the gold earrings? Or did you give her to that devil—is it a lie?!" She dove into her core grievance, the main accusation she always lobbed at him during fights.

The Gold Earrings Trigger Even as children, they hadn't yet sensed the special sting in their mother's gold earrings accusation. Their father, unmoved by other jabs, would erupt at those words—blood surging, grabbing anything to fling at her. It happened again. His hammer's clatter halted abruptly; something thudded. She yelped, flustered, bolting to the door, rubbing her right shoulder and fixing her scarf, as if done talking. Vaguely to someone: "I'll drive your corpse from this village!" Not defiant, but a future vow, voice softening. So quarrelers' rage fades bit by bit; family's sly life resumes its hypocrisy, quietly weeping toward its end.

He Has Reached His Home in the Village The sharp bend shattered his speeding thoughts. He had reached the street leading home. Scattered ideas flew off; he quickly gathered words for his father and raced his mind to the gate. With the engine off and car cooling, he hesitated before stepping out. The heavy silence loomed ominously. The house without his mother felt distant. Perhaps Munabiya was inside, claiming it. Through the window, he gazed heart aching at their blue-framed home—veranda, gate, every nail

etched in memory. Deep down, faint hope flickered: her flowery dress, black shawl, stepping from the threshold...

The Familiar Workshop Sound No sooner had he stepped from the car than the familiar chik-chik-chik echoed from his father's workshop. That sound steadied his frayed nerves and inner turmoil. At least the anxiety of the unknown world felt half-resolved! "Salam Aleikum," he said at the threshold. His father looked up, saw the worried face, squeezed his hand, and chuckled softly—a paternal "come in, no shame." As Januzak's children, they rarely glimpsed other expressions on Dad's face. Mom alone punished, forgave, spoiled them; only from her came the rod or fist.

Father's Transformed Face "Well, where have you been?" his father asked, setting down the hammer but pausing. He saw Dad looked renewed, old illness gone: cheeks flushed, eyes bright, beard trimmed neatly, clothes immaculate. The gaze showed surprise at his arrival, no trace of reproach. He felt unworthy as this man's son; deep anxiety gnawed. Still, like a longing child, he hugged with full tenderness. He wished Dad would rise, kiss his cheeks and eyes, dote with every gaze, follow adoringly, as in childhood dreams. But Dad stayed distant, unchanged. He realized: no burdening Dad with Mom's lost love; irreplaceable maternal warmth gone forever.

Missed the Poker? "Missed the poker? Come on, thrust it!" his father said softly, as if the dearest words. He shed his coat and gripped the poker double-handed. Long-forgotten hands fumbled awkwardly, sleeves snagging. Dad watched then burst into heartfelt laughter. "You've forgotten!" he said soon after, joy bursting in chuckles. Warm tears welled toward Dad. From then, their father-son bond thawed; they talked freely.

Invitation to the City "Father, were you waiting for us?" he asked. "You are busy, son," Dad replied. "Two years passed so fast..." "Two years? Just two days." "Were you lonely alone, Dad?" "The living muddle through, son." "Come to the city this winter. I came to arrange it." Dad first ignored him, then frowned reluctantly, displeasure clear. "I'd go," he said softly, "but impossible, son. An old man unused to city life won't adjust." "Stay winter, return spring. Everyone's parents do that now."

Leave Me Be His father wrinkled his cheek, as if catching an unpleasant whiff from him. "I don't know their sort... abandoning home is not good." "Relatives look after the house." Dad gazed searchingly, eyes wondering if he'd truly come to invite him cityward. He met it pleadingly, awaiting response. Dad pondered. "Do not disturb me," he said firmly after a pause. "Don't worry about me." He thought warm winter house, soft bed would convince Dad fast. But Dad resisted. Trying again, Dad hammered away obliviously. Even at forty, gray-haired, Dad saw his little boy—no words heeded.

The Silence of a Home The scattered, restless images vanished from his mind at once. Before reaching the gate, he gathered the words he would say to his father. The engine stopped; as the car cooled, he hesitated to step outside. A deep, motionless silence settled over everything. The house, left without his mother, felt strangely distant. Perhaps Munabiya was there now, as if she had taken its place. Through the window, he gazed at the familiar house, blue-framed, with its blue veranda and gate, etched into his memory. Deep within, a fragile hope still flickered, as if his mother might step out at any moment.

Aunt Ajike Arrives In anger, he thrust the poker vigorously, raking ashes fiercely. Dad scowled: "Where've you come from looking like that?!" as if disliking his very skin, turning neck away. They fell silent. Then the gate creaked; Aunt Ajike entered the yard—Dad's middle brother's wife. She swept the main house roof, banged pots, right at home. "Salaam, aunt?" "Big man! Why not say you arrived?" She hugged wrestler-style, poured water over his head per tradition. He adored her: she'd kept lonely Dad company, cleaned, fed him while away. Gratitude swelled, sibling bond special.

Spotless Home and Brewing Tea Entering the main house, every room sparkled impeccably: items as in Mom's day or neater, flowers watered, books dust-free. The home lifted spirits. He longed to thank Aunt Acike; he just gazed warmly, heart melting gratefully. Yet soon odd events stirred among the three, hinting at strife ahead. It started when Aunt set the samovar for evening tea.

The Father's Irritation Aunt hurried off to prepare the samovar, but she could not find the right dishes or even the matches. When they finally found the samovar, they still had to search for firewood and water. The cupboards and chests had changed since Mother's time; even the food was no longer where it used to be. While they struggled, Father grew strangely impatient. He kept standing up, brushing off his clothes, and snapping at everything Aunt did, said, or even how she moved. He had never seen him so touchy. The son grew more upset, unable to understand why Father treated helpful Aunt so coldly.

The Missing Tea After a while, Aunt Ajike began searching cupboard after cupboard for tea. The tea would not appear, and she refused to give up. The man noticed she looked like someone who had not entered this house for a long time. At once, Munabiya came to his mind again. Perhaps she, not Aunt, had been managing the house. Or perhaps not. "Where do you usually keep the tea?" the man asked, growing irritated. Aunt did not answer. She kept pulling out drawers and rummaging through them. Stranger still, she looked even angrier than Father, her face darkening as she muttered under her breath like someone deeply insulted.

Tension Over Tea "Thank you for your tea, Ajike. Leave it!" the father suddenly snapped, unable to bear her muttering. The son was stunned. Could an old man speak so harshly? What fault had poor Aunt committed? Was boiling tea for them her crime? At first he feared she would spring up and go home at once. But, strangely, she did not. She acted as if she had heard nothing, still searching for the tea and grumbling to someone unseen. The more she continued, the more anger showed on the father's face, until he seemed ready to drive her out of the house.

Poison Instead of Tea "Don't give me tea, give me poison. Poison!" the father cried, trembling with rage. Yet Aunt acted as if she had heard nothing. The son was stunned. What was happening? He did not know whom to defend or what to say. He wanted to side with Aunt, but she seemed to carry some secret he did not understand. Otherwise, why would she not answer him even once? Perhaps she had done something wrong. But what could it be? As their quarrel deepened, he felt pushed aside. What hurt most was that his father ignored his return and remained trapped in some hidden life of his own.

The Samovar Thrown Away The son could not understand how this had happened. How had a quiet, withdrawn man once known as "Meek Uzak" changed so sharply in less than a year, becoming almost unrecognizable? While he stood there hurt and confused, his father seemed to lose all control. Trembling, not knowing what he was doing, he suddenly lifted the samovar Aunt had just brought in, boiling water and all, and hurled it out the door. "I will not drink tea. All of you together, bring me poison. I want poison!" he shouted hoarsely again and again. Then he went inside and slammed the door.

Aunt's Sharp Reply "What kind of performance is this?" he burst out in his city-bred slang, angered by Aunt's expression. But she brushed past his question and muttered, "Why don't you just drink tea? Didn't you just come from the road?" "No, what kind of behavior is this? Explain it to me," he said, trembling with frustration that even she ignored his words. Then Aunt looked at him sideways, half surprised, half doubtful, shut the door, and stepped outside. "They call you a son, a man of forty. Why are you asking me about your own father's condition?" she said sternly, arms folded. He was left speechless.

Aunt's Accusation "Why is it that you city-bred intellectual fools never come and ask how your father is? Are you still children? Or do you not need a father? You are forty, your younger brother is thirty, and your three sisters are all married and gone. Meanwhile your father is here alone, letting some widow trample your mother's white sheets and break every custom. Your poor mother must be turning in her grave. Did you know her dying wish?" He stood blankly, as if to say no. Aunt went on. Their mother had begged them never to let shameless Munabiya cross the threshold of the Tanay household.

Aunt's Warning Unable to answer Aunt Ajike, he could only stare and think, So it was she who had written that bitter note in the glove compartment. Too many unexpected thoughts struck him at once; his tongue felt tied. But Aunt, irritated by his blank expression, went on even more harshly, as if wounding his pride and stirring his anger against Munabiya. "We, the daughters-in-law of the Tanay family, bear your late mother's last wish and let your father resent us for it. But you children have no sense of honor. Now that you are here, take your father away from Munabiya and take him to the city."

Take Your Father Away Aunt must have sensed from his eyes that he believed her. She moved closer and began speaking in a whisper, as if she fully trusted him now. "Take your father away," she said again, making clear what he had to do. "Otherwise we cannot control this anymore. In the daytime we can manage, we keep that shameless Munabiya away. But at night she comes secretly and crawls into your father's bed. At dawn she slips away again. Shame on her, an old woman with no decency. Your father is a man, fine, but her behavior is disgraceful. And his too, to be honest."

Need to Talk to Someone Else He still could not respond to Aunt's frank words. Speaking felt impossible. His mind was in such turmoil that he wanted to jump in the car and drive somewhere empty. But he could not manage even that. "Is Uncle Asylbek home?" he asked, wanting to discuss this urgently with someone else. Without that, he could not understand the deep-rooted relationship between Munabiya and his father. "Where else would he be? You know your uncle," Aunt replied, then gathered up the scattered samovar, lid in one place, body in another, and carried it back inside.

Is Uncle Asylbek Home? He still could not answer Aunt Acike's frank words. Speaking was impossible. His mind was in such chaos he wanted to jump in the car and drive away to nowhere. But his legs would not move. "Is Uncle Asylbek home?" he asked, desperate to talk to someone else about this. He could not grasp what was happening between Munabiya and his father.

"He is never home," Aunt said with a bitter smile. "You know your uncle..." She gathered the broken samovar pieces and carried them inside.

Mother's Ghost in Aunt Walking to Uncle Asylbek's house, something struck him deeply. The more Aunt Ajike had spoken, the more she cursed Munabiya, the more clearly he saw his late mother's living image in her every word, gesture, and expression. The resemblance was astonishing, as if deliberately crafted. It seemed his mother had entrusted her entire inner world, her views and opinions, to Aunt Ajike before dying. Perhaps all women were alike, or perhaps, as his mother used to say, the women of the Tanay clan were simply cut from the same cloth. When it came to Munabiya, every woman in his family spoke with one voice.

A Mother's Last Wish His late mother had been fiery, outspoken, and, thanks to Father's quiet nature, often spoke for the men at family gatherings. Her influence on her sisters-in-law was strong. Was it her dying wish that bound them so tightly? What to do now with Father who had broken it? He could not understand. A last wish is sacred everywhere in the world. No one ever disobeys it, or the whole nation would talk of it for generations. He had never heard of such a thing. How then to judge his father? What would people say? Perhaps they already had. Aunt Ajike might not know. Maybe Uncle Asylbek would.

Uncle Asylbek Uncle Asylbek looked as though he had just lain down after tiring himself out with his usual bookkeeping. The moment he heard "Hello," he sprang up, not looking sleepy at all. "How is your stomach?" he asked after they had settled. As usual, Uncle gently pressed the spot where his ulcer troubled him and nodded. He had once held district posts and was known as a capable, respected man. Then, for some reason, something in him seemed to break. Now he worked as the village accountant. Illness and drink had worn him down to a thin shadow of himself. Even so, people still counted him among the sensible men, though in recent years pain had made him quiet and withdrawn.

Asking About Munabiya When he found the right moment, he first asked Uncle Asylbek about Munabiya. "She is just a harmless woman living on her own. You know that yourself," his uncle replied, without lifting his eyes from the ground. From his face and his answer, it seemed that none of the accusations Aunt Ajike had repeated all morning were really true. For some reason, he found himself trusting Uncle Asylbek less than he had expected. At last, he asked the question that had been weighing most heavily on his heart: what should be done with his father for failing to carry out the wish of his mother?

The Broken Wish "What wish was that?" Uncle asked, as though he knew nothing. "About Munabiya," he said. "Oh," Uncle smiled through a thousand wrinkles, "that must be what your impossible aunt told you." He pressed on. Was it true his mother had spoken such words before dying? Uncle said he did not know. Perhaps she had said something to the daughters-in-law. But what could be done now? Hang the old man? Words were only words, he said. Then he added quietly, almost sadly: if his mother could not stop his father in twenty years, who could stop him now?

Too Late to Understand He was stunned. So Uncle Asylbek too had long accepted the matter. Most of all, the words twenty years struck him. Then his father's story had been known to everyone for years. Why had none of the relatives ever told the children?

"You knew it yourself," Uncle muttered, as if reading his thoughts. "How could we know if no one told us?" he asked bitterly. "How could you not know? Did you fall from the sky? Weren't there many quarrels when your mother was alive?" "But we did not understand..." "Then blame yourselves. Such things must be understood." His uncle's face hardened, and he walked out.

No Mercy from Kin "What a pity... what a pity..." he muttered as he walked away, burning with hurt and anger, unable to answer his brother with anything else. Deep down, he had long sensed that one day someone would blame him in exactly this way. Now Uncle Asylbek had done it. He had said it bluntly, wounding him. But why had he not shown a little kindness, spoken more gently, treated him as someone who truly had not known his father's story? Had even simple human feeling among relatives grown so thin? He walked quickly and barely reached his car. By then, darkness had already swallowed the evening.

Between Fear and Silence His chest filled with resentment, and not knowing what to do, he leaned back helplessly. Part of him wanted to confront his father, while another part feared him. He felt weaker than the "twenty-year" past between two people. Even a dead man's last wish seemed powerless before it. He was angry but knew he could not resist. That day, he realized he was nothing before his father's will. Fear grew inside him. He knew he could not speak, and even if he could, he would not. His father no longer seemed gentle, but like a stranger who had already left them behind forever.

A Son's Pain Mother, perhaps it was better that you passed away earlier and did not witness father fall into such a state. Lying in the car, my heart ached. A tragic feeling that had long tied my father to Munabiya seemed to crush and mock the pure intentions of my sister-in-law and me. That merciless emotion ignored everything, even insulting the sacred duty of a final wish and the deep spiritual traditions of the people. What could we do? If father would not protect his own honor, then let it be. But how could we allow an ancient human tradition to be broken? I felt I had the right to tell him this.

A Silent Night Meeting The heavy burden on him seemed to grow lighter, and he slowly began to rise. Just then, the house door opened, and his father came outside. The night was very dark. He stayed quietly in the car, wondering whether his father was looking for him. His father passed through the gate and walked silently by without stopping. At first, he thought his father was going to Munabiya's house. He wanted to follow, but feared the car door would make noise. So he watched carefully in the dark. Soon he realized the truth: his father was not going there, but had come out to meet Munabiya.

Night Clash, Then Calm Suddenly, Aunt Ajike arrived, furious. "Did you see that? I told you—she ruins our peace even at night! She has no shame. Oh, Munabiya, couldn't you at least feel embarrassed in front of his son?" He stepped out of the car and tried to calm her, but could not quiet her. Munabiya left quickly, and his father approached them silently. Thoughts raced through his mind: he hoped the day's conflict would not continue. His aunt went into their yard. "Aunt, please go home," he said, holding her back. She seemed surprised; fear of his father clearly wasn't in her heart. Still, he worried his father might act rashly in his tense state. She came to him with baskets and household items, asked if he wanted help, then father went inside, lit a lamp, and began arranging the wet cloths, pots, water buckets, and dishes.

Mother Left a Final Wish After dinner, when Ajike left, his father began making his own bed. In a village home, one of the most uncomfortable sights is an elderly man, left alone, struggling for long moments to arrange his bedding—he cannot manage his blankets, and there is no one nearby to help. "Go to bed and sleep," his father said as he moved toward his room, offering no further words. That left the son feeling his prepared speech would remain unspoken.

"Mother left a final wish, didn't she?" he asked.

"What will you do about it?" his father replied.

"I just want to hear it," the son answered.

His father turned toward the other room, hesitated briefly, and then fell silent, growing distant and unclear.

What about Munabiya? His father turned toward the other room, hesitated, then fell silent. He had spoken about laying a carpet, covering the bed, forbidding alcohol until his bones settled, and asking children and in-laws not to lean on canes until forty days passed. The son recalled leaving for work just three days after his mother's death, unable to ask why. "Father, why didn't you ask us to stay until forty days, as mother wanted?" His father looked down: "Would you really stay?" "We should have." "Go to bed!" "What about Munabiya?" "I didn't hear. Sleep!" "We must talk." "Turn off the light!"

Refusal to Quiet Down He left the light on and stood there for a long time, waiting for an answer. His father lay still, unmoving. His chest tightened, and he swallowed hard, trying to hide his hurt. Then, suddenly, his father rose slowly from the bed. "Are you interrogating me?" his father asked, sitting up, his head shaking. "Why won't you leave me in peace?! Would you be content if I died?" "I'm only asking about my mother's final wish," he said calmly. "Your mother never said that! It's a lie, made up by your sister-in-law!" his father shouted, then his voice broke into a whisper. He felt pity for his father, yet he held firm for his mother: "Even if she didn't say it directly, that's what she wanted. You must honor it."

A Father's Tears Then his father looked at him with a sharp, resentful gaze: "Then let me die—because you restless ones cannot measure up to a living person's wishes. Let me die; there's no other way." The son struggled to understand him, even feeling pity for his father's silence and the confusion that kept him speechless. Yet he left as if victorious, driving his car toward the city the next morning with a steady heart.

The Funeral Exactly three days later, we all received a telegram. When we arrived, the house lay mute, and our father lay cold on a white sheet, stiff in the chill. According to the village custom, an empty bed was placed in the center, the body uncovered briefly, then covered with a dark cloth. Amid mourning and people's talk, I sensed unease about a visitor's arrival: Munabiya. Some said my sister-in-law had opposed her coming; men insisted she must come. I felt indifferent, but feared renewed conflict if they brought her. Then someone came to call me to the elders' gathering in the main room.

Elders' Call, Father's Final Word "Come here, my son—have you cried out your sorrow? Grieve as you must, because later your children will grieve the same way for you," said Uncle Konokbay, holding his hands and showing warmth. Then he revealed the purpose of the meeting: "There is no life without ups and downs, Teken. We all live that way. You've become an honorable man, and we gather here to advise you. Before he died, your father left a request we must follow..." He waited, nodding for the elder to continue. "Your father said: 'Let Munabiya sit beside my body, dressed in black, by my head.'"

Januzak's Request Teken's eyes flickered. Munabiya's coming or not had once seemed unimportant, but his father's final request struck him deeply. The memory of the late father's harsh last look—angry and bloodshot—felt like an arrow pressing into his heart. He sat motionless before Uncle Konokbay.

"Come here, boy," the elder said, sending a youth to Munabiya's house: "Januzak requested that you come and sit beside his body."

"Exactly—one clear word is enough; she'll understand," the others agreed.

"Don't confuse your words," one elder said; people laughed. The message was meant to pass directly to him; Teken's consent wasn't necessary.

A Final Request Stirs a Village Debate Now the whole Tanay clan—young and old, women and men—waited to see whether Munabiya would come, and what would happen if she did. Time passed. When Ajike learned that a message had been sent to Munabiya, she broke off her mourning, went outside, and openly condemned Uncle Konokbay's action, saying: "Can even an elder decide this? People do not disrespect Shaarkan's final wish—so why treat a woman's wish differently?"

Men replied: "Didn't you deny Munabiya access when Januzak was alive? Now you judge after his death!" Furious, Ajike declared: "Munabiya won't come! Would you shame yourselves by letting a widow sit beside a husband's body in black? If you're so eager, Tanay men—go and take her home yourselves!"

Waiting for Munabiya: Shame, Dread, and Silence Some relatives laughed aloud, some seemed to side with Ajike, and others turned away, tense. No one spoke openly. It became clear that Ajike, eminent among the street women, had taken his mother's place as the guardian of the family's dignity. By midday, mourners crowded the yard, standing near fences and logs. Women inside the house broke into hushed exchanges

whenever someone new arrived. Finally, footsteps signaled movement: "She's coming." When they heard Munabiya was heading toward their house, the men stopped speaking, bowed their heads, and waited uncertainly. To each person it meant something different—honor, shame, bitterness, fear, even mockery.

Munabiya's Arrival Munabiya walked alone down the empty road, wearing a long black dress and a black *shal* scarf hanging from her head. The excited crowd stretched out like two wings from the felt tent door. When she reached the end of those wings, she slightly tilted her head and, with her long fingers, lifted the scarf ends from her shoulders and covered her chest. She let out a sound - probably from crying alone at home since yesterday when she heard of his death. Her eyes were swollen and puffy, her face bloated from crying.

Confrontation Upon hearing Munabiya had arrived, Ajike pushed past the women in the yurt and ran outside. He instinctively moved forward, fearing a fight might break out between the two women. Munabiya walked straight toward Ajike with unblinking, swollen eyes. His sister-in-law stood like a mountain warrior, fists clenched, face pale, body trembling. It seemed disaster was about to begin. Just then, an elderly man's angry voice cut through the air: "Make way for the grieving woman! Don't block the path of someone who came to mourn!"

The Clash Ends, Rumors Surface Asylbek, Ajike's husband had also been nearby and arrived just before the elder's voice. He pulled his wife by the sleeve. Ajike did not give in easily, pulling her sleeve away as if about to rush at Munabiya. But Munabiya gave her a sharp look, and suddenly the sister-in-law deflated like a broken spring. Her angry fire in her eyes went out. Her demeanor immediately calmed him, and he wished she could always be like this. However, some determination remained. As Munabiya entered the felt tent, she tore at her face in shame: "Shameless! She came wearing the golden necklace my father lost last year!" she cried, looking at those around for support. No one answered. He had once heard that the village women, led by his late mother, had spread rumors that "Munabiya stole the golden necklace," and they had even searched her house.

Munabiya's Lament After easing her breath through weeping, Munabiya joined the women and began singing laments. At first, her voice blended into the crowd and couldn't be distinguished. Then, as they listened more closely, it stood apart—soft, distinct, and different from the usual tones. It grew clearer over time, deepening like spring water: filling with emotion, rising in pain, and gradually turning into a mournful, measured sound. Her verses and words did not resemble the familiar phrases of complaint; they carried something personal. Even the men outside the white house fell silent, listening to that single voice above the body.

Januzak, I will follow after you Teken didn't know about everyone else, but all his attention focused on the words Munabiya was now speaking to his father. He took a seat and listened intently, closing his hot, tearful eyes:

“Januzak, you came into this world and wandered,
Januzak, our front turned into a thorny net.
Januzak, farewell took away our laughter,
Januzak, life turned into gold and then was gone.
Januzak, if you go beneath the earth,
Januzak, I will follow after you.
Januzak, if you leave this world,
Januzak, I will depart in longing.
Januzak, if you're gone from the cloudy sky,
Januzak, I will leave this life.
Januzak, fate is harsh,
Januzak, destiny is strong.
Januzak, go in peace,
Januzak, the world is an ordeal for us.”

The Power of Lament The mourners, heads bowed until the end, turned as white as the earth, white yurt, trees, and sky. The power of the lament made nature seem to change. The women in black scarves at the tent's entrance appeared with shining white headscarves. Looking up, he saw all their fates had connected with Munabiya's—their feminine compassion awakened, holding onto human and feminine oaths together. Even the chattering elders finally fell silent. The men sat with heads bowed. Then Munabiya emerged, her black scarf flowing loosely. He wanted to see her, but she saw no one. She only stared at the white crow covering the ground before walking alone toward her home.

Munabiya's Silent Departure Munabiya walked away quietly, leaving the gathering behind. When they called her back to attend Januzak's funeral, she did not answer. A boy ran to her, but she only stopped for a moment, gently stroked his head, and continued on her way. She said nothing, and her silence felt heavy. No one understood why she refused to return. Perhaps her grief was too deep for words, or the pain too personal to share. She chose distance instead of mourning with others. Even later, her decision remained a mystery, remembered as a quiet but powerful moment of sorrow.

CHARACTER ANALYSIS

Januzak

Januzak is a quiet, reserved, and emotionally closed man. He is known as a calm and gentle person who devoted his life to goldsmith art. Although he seems weak or passive on the outside, he carries deep and powerful feelings inside. As a father, he is distant and does not show love openly.

His most important trait is his long-hidden love for Munabiya. This love continues despite village traditions, his wife's anger, and social pressure. In this way, Januzak is silent but stubborn. Even in his final wish, he asks for Munabiya to be by his side, which shows that he stayed loyal to his true feelings until the end. Because of this, Januzak is a character who appears quiet and submissive on the outside, but is deep, tragic, and determined within.

Outwardly Gentle, Inwardly Strong As a Januzak, this man embodies a profound duality. To the village, he appears passive—a man of soft words and slow movements, perhaps even physically slight. However, the Januzak nature means his soul is dense and heavy with resolve. His gentleness is not weakness; it is a mask for a will of iron. He does not need to raise his voice to be immovable. Internally, he is a fortress of stubbornness; once he commits to a feeling, he is unyielding, holding his truths with a silent, tenacious strength that no external force can break.

Silent but Passionate A Januzak is defined by depth rather than volume. He does not waste words, and his face rarely betrays the storm inside. Yet, his love for Munabiya is not a quiet stream but a deep, underground river—powerful, constant, and life-sustaining. Because he does not perform his emotions for public consumption, his affection is pure and concentrated. It is a silent, burning devotion that exists entirely within the private sanctuary of his spirit, untouched by the passage of time or the absence of expression.

Complex The complexity of the Januzak man is most evident in his emotional allocation. He is emotionally reserved with his children, not out of malice, but because his capacity for deep intimacy is finite and entirely consumed by Munabiya. He is a man of singular focus; his "soulful" nature is poured entirely into his romantic devotion. He is distant in the domestic sphere but intensely present in the realm of secret passion.

Traditional in Appearance, Rebellious in Heart Externally, he wears the costume of conformity, playing the role of the ordinary village elder to maintain social order. However, the Januzak spirit is inherently rebellious against the superficial constraints of honor and tradition. His rebellion is not loud or violent; it is a quiet, persistent refusal to let social rules dictate the truth of his heart. He navigates the tension between his public persona and his private reality with a stoic grace, living a double life where his true self remains hidden yet vibrantly alive beneath the surface.

Munabiya

Based on the narrative, Munabiya is defined not by what she speaks, but by what she enables. She is the invisible center of a silent rebellion. While the text describes Januzak intensely, Munabiya's character emerges through the shadows cast by their secret connection.

Authentic Munabiya is the living counterpoint to Januzak's public performance. While Januzak presents himself under the mask of the "Traditional Village Elder"—ordered, restrained, and obedient to village rules—Munabiya represents the unvarnished truth of who he is behind that mask. In the rigid hierarchy of village honor, where appearances don't just matter but are enforced, she becomes the only space where he can step out of role and exist freely. Her presence isn't simply affection; it's oxygen—she allows him to breathe when the social world presses him into silence.

She validates his internal strength by refusing to treat him as the "weak elder" others assume him to be. In a life constructed from half-explanations and quiet compromises, Munabiya is the Muse of Truth: the one person who recognizes, accepts, and guards his genuine self. Through her, Januzak's private will is not just hidden, but confirmed as real—transforming what the village dismisses as meekness into the visible, enduring proof of a love that remains loyal even when discretion and duty demand otherwise.

Silent As the object of a forbidden affair (evidenced by the wife's anger and social pressure), Munabiya likely endures significant social stigma. Unlike Januzak, who maintains a public persona, she may live entirely in the margins of society. Her strength lies in endurance; she survives the judgment of the village and the wrath of the household not through confrontation, but through quiet resignation and loyalty.

Unshakable Munabiya is unshakable—a force of quiet resilience that persists without spectacle. The village condemns her through narrowed glances and whispered judgments; Januzak's wife and Ajike rage in the open, trying to turn shame into punishment; tradition works methodically to erase her, treating love as disobedience and desire as a stain on honor. Yet Munabiya remains. She does not falter when time stretches, when distance hardens, or when the world offers her only risk and no recognition. She does not waver when others read silence as weakness or interpret restraint as absence.

THEMES

Love: Forbidden Relationships At its heart, *Munabiya* tells the story of an extramarital romance between a widowed family patriarch, Januzak, and his longtime mistress, Munabiya. Unlike a typical "Romeo and Juliet" story of young lovers, this is about mature adults whose passion continues despite societal taboos, including marital fidelity, family honor (namus), and clan expectations in conservative Kyrgyz culture. In late Soviet Kyrgyzstan, early 1980s, pre-perestroika, such desires were condemned by socialist realism, which emphasized ideological conformity, collective duty, and moral lessons.

Akmatov portrays the lovers as deeply connected and genuine, driven by destiny and emotional compatibility rather than fleeting lust. The story explores the family's complex reactions: frustration, anger, and grief that eventually give way to reluctant acceptance as the lovers' bond becomes undeniable.

The novel's innovative style, with lyrical prose, multiple viewpoints, and psychological insight, breaks from the linear, propagandistic norms of socialist realism. It emphasizes personal passion over conventional morality, showing love as a universal human force that transcends ethnic tensions, Soviet hierarchies, and cultural rituals.

Set in an ethnically mixed Kyrgyz society with enduring traditions, the story anticipates post-Soviet freedoms, where personal authenticity challenges societal norms. Ultimately, it celebrates love's redemptive power, showing that true emotional bonds can heal even the deepest family rifts.

Illustrative moment: At Januzak's funeral—after his wife Shaarkan dies from years of silent suffering—Munabiya defies family fury. Ajike, sister-in-law of Januzak, brands her a devil, barring her to protect honor and rituals. Munabiya arrives in black headscarf and unleashes a haunting *koşok* (Kyrgyz lament): "Januzak, you came astray to the world... If you go under the earth, I will follow you..." Her voice reveals their 20-year forbidden passion as fateful redemption, halting the village and shifting family rage toward acceptance. This public catharsis humanizes their love against Soviet taboos and cultural hierarchies.

Misogyny / Patriarchal Gender Roles

Munabiya critiques the misogynistic norms of late Soviet Kyrgyz society, showing how rigid patriarchal rules force women to bear the emotional and social costs of male infidelity and family honor. Shaarkan, Januzak's long-suffering wife, represents passive victimhood. Her twenty years of silent suffering caused by her husband's affair ultimately lead to her death, showing how women often internalize betrayal without the power to act and are bound to endure domestic hardships.

Munabiya, the defiant mistress, resists these expectations through her mourning and lament, yet she is vilified as a devil by Ajike, Januzak's sister. Ajike enforces social norms to protect the male-led family lineage, using patriarchal authority aggressively and exposing her own internalized misogyny.

Akmatov portrays all perspectives with empathy, favoring emotional truth. He reveals the pressures of Soviet-Kyrgyz society: ideological conformity that stifles personal bonds, and cultural taboos that deepen gender inequality. The family eventually accepts the lovers, showing resilience, but the story highlights that women bear a heavier burden in a male-centered moral system.

Illustrative moment: As children, they once heard a fight among the women at a wedding feast and ran to see what happened. The mother had grabbed Munabiya by the hair, dragged her across the ground, and beat her in a sudden outburst of anger. It was as if years of resentment were pouring out in that moment. Other women tried to separate them. Most supported the mother, leaving Munabiya isolated. Some laughed loudly, while others quietly said, "Let them be. They'll calm down when they are tired."

Children: Filial Duty for Elderly Parents

In *Munabiya*, Kazat Akmatov highlights the important Kyrgyz value of filial piety, showing how children carry a deep responsibility toward their elders, especially sons. This duty stands in contrast to parental failings, such as Januzak's decades-long affair. In traditional Kyrgyz society, sons bear the heaviest responsibilities: they provide financial support, care for aging parents, organize rituals like funerals and ash feasts, and uphold clan honor, often at great personal cost. Daughters help emotionally and domestically but have fewer obligations, reflecting patrilineal norms. Failing to fulfill these duties can bring social rejection, curses, or loss of inheritance.

Januzak, the aging patriarch, represents flawed elder authority. His forbidden relationship with Munabiya disrupts family harmony, leads to Shaarkan's death, and provokes anger among siblings. Despite this, his children remain committed to their duties. As children, they observe scandals, such as the wedding fight, with curiosity rather than rebellion. As adults, they carry out his funeral, combining grief with acceptance, even in the face of betrayal. Sons, like the narrator, internalize *adamdyk parz*, or human duty, prioritizing ritual obligations over personal resentment, contrasting with Januzak's self-centered choices. Brother Asylbek shows leniency, putting human duty above strict social rules, while Ajike enforces family hierarchies and traditions.

The story shows how Kyrgyz families balance moral responsibility, personal feelings, and cultural expectations. It portrays the strength and resilience of children honoring their elders, even when faced with parental mistakes and emotional turmoil.

Illustrative moment: As Teken passed through Sokuluk district, he suddenly flung the envelope into the depths of the glove compartment and slammed it shut. He drove on. The road was nearly empty, and whenever he pressed harder on the pedal, the speed seemed unchanging. Yet the words from the letter kept returning, cutting into his heart like stone. It said his mother had been dead for two years, and that he and his brothers had abandoned their aging father alone in the old house. A woman named Munabiya, the letter claimed, had taken over the home and dishonored his mother's memory. The unsigned letter bitterly accused the sons of cruelty and heartlessness.

Final Wish: Osuyat

In *Munabiya*, final wishes (osuyat) carry immense moral and cultural weight, reflecting Kyrgyz values of respect for elders, and the dead, and family authority. Shaarkan, the long-suffering wife of Januzak, leaves a final wish expressing her anger and moral judgment: she desires that Munabiya, whom she views as evil, be excluded from her marital bed and symbolically "make it dirty." This wish reflects Shaarkan's attempt to maintain moral authority even after death, exerting control over the household and preserving her dignity, despite having suffered silently for decades. Her osuyat demonstrates how Kyrgyz culture allows elders' wishes to shape the living's actions, even when those wishes involve strong emotional or moral condemnation.

However, Januzak's response complicates the authority of a final wish. Before his own death, he declares his osuyat: he wishes for Munabiya to come in mourning clothes, sing a lament, and sit beside his

body as his woman. His request prioritizes personal desire and emotional truth over the conventional moral expectations enforced by Shaarkan's osuyat. Januzak's final wish challenges patriarchal norms and societal taboos, asserting that even after death, the individual's authentic bonds and passions have moral force in Kyrgyz culture.

Analyzing this, we see that osuyat is not simply a preference but a negotiation of authority, morality, and emotional truth. It is a social and ethical instrument: Shaarkan's osuyat represents moral and familial authority bound by cultural expectation, while Januzak's reflects personal authenticity and love that transcends normative constraints.

Illustrative moment: "Why is it that you city-bred intellectual fools never come and ask how your father is? Are you still children? Or do you not need a father? You are forty, your younger brother is thirty, and your three sisters are all married and gone. Meanwhile your father is here alone, letting some widow trample your mother's white sheets and break every custom. Your poor mother must be turning in her grave. Did you know her dying wish?" He stood blankly, as if to say no. Aunt went on. Their mother had begged them never to let shameless Munabiya cross the threshold of the Tanay household.