

HUMANITIES INSTITUTE

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Sunrise / The Story of a Dog (1977)

Salijan Jigitov (1936–2006)

Reference: Jigitov, S. (1977). *Kun tuudu* [Sunrise]. Mektep Publishing House.

OVERVIEW

Author Salijan Jigitov was born on March 17, 1936, in Kolduk village, Osh Region, and died on February 11, 2006, in Bishkek. He was a Soviet and Kyrgyz poet, literary critic, translator, journalist, and public figure.

In 1954, he entered the Department of Kyrgyz Language and Literature at Kyrgyz State University. After graduating in 1959, he worked as a teacher and later as a junior researcher at the Institute of Language and Literature of the Academy of Sciences of Kyrgyzstan, then part of the Soviet Union. In 1962, he defended a dissertation on *Tradition and Innovation in Kyrgyz Soviet Poetry*, and earned his Candidate of Philology degree (similar to a PhD). In 1992, he received a Doctor of Philology, the highest academic degree in his field.

He taught at Kyrgyz State University from 1966 to 1973. From 1974, he worked as deputy editor of the Kyrgyz Soviet Encyclopedia and later headed a department at the Institute of Language and Literature until 1992. He also served as an advisor to the President of Kyrgyzstan and as ambassador to Uzbekistan. From 1996 to 2000, he was vice-rector of the Kyrgyz-Turkish University “Manas.” He became a professor in 1999 and was named a People’s Writer of Kyrgyzstan in 2005.

Jigitov debuted as a poet in the 1950s and became known as a master of literary parody. His first poetry collection appeared in 1971. He also published literary-critical works, including *Songs and Years* (1972), *On the Way to News* (1975), *Problems of Artistic Speech* (1982), and *Lessons of Yesterday, Demands of Today* (1990).

He wrote the novella *Sunrise (The Story of a Dog)* and translated works by Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, Nazim Hikmet, Mustai Karim, and others into Kyrgyz. In his monographs *Kyrgyz Literature of the 1920s* (1994), *Finding New Traditions* (1994), and *The Poet’s Second Life* (1998), he explored the development of Kyrgyz written literature, the relationship between folklore and literature, the social role of literature, and both traditional and modern poetic forms.

Jigitov played an important role in creating the first multi-volume national encyclopedia in Kyrgyz history and shaping its style. He also wrote on social and political issues and contributed to new interpretations of literary history.

He was equally skilled in Russian and Kyrgyz, writing clearly and expressively in both languages. He also spoke Azerbaijani, Tatar, Uzbek, Turkish, and Kazakh, and was known for his strong interest in languages.

Novella The writer’s novella *Sunrise (The Story of a Dog)* was published as a separate book in 1977 by the Mektep publishing house. It is considered a notable example of children’s literature. Jigitov himself noted that the work was intended to develop into a full novel. However, he later expressed regret that he was unable to complete this plan, and as a result, the work remains an unfinished piece.

Background Salijan Jigitov was widely known for his sharp wit and aphoristic style. In his writings, he critically engaged with the shortcomings of Kyrgyz society, often expressing disapproval of socially ingrained practices such as extravagant weddings and lavish feasts. Salijan Jigitov has been popularly nicknamed “The Socrates of the Kyrgyz.”

His novella is composed in a literary-polemical mode, enriched with elements of artistic parody and satire. Jigitov employs animal figures as central characters, drawing on their instincts, behavior, and patterns of movement to mirror human nature. Through these representations, he conveys insights into human psychology—sometimes explicitly, but more often through indirect and nuanced suggestion.

Within this symbolic framework, the dog occupies a particularly significant role. As one of humanity's oldest companions, it represents loyalty, closeness, and shared existence with humans. In such narratives, the author appears to address the animal while implicitly speaking to the human reader—an approach reminiscent of the rhetorical strategy: "I speak to the animal, but I mean the human."

Jigitov's novella *Sunrise (The Story of a Dog)* can be situated within this tradition. Through this work, he seems to convey a deeper message to his audience: "I speak of the dog, but it is the human condition I ask you to hear."

In the Soviet Union, there were people whose job was to control, remove, or kill dogs that went out into the streets and could pose a danger; they were called "it atar," meaning dog shooter. The dog's hide was collected to be used as raw material for making products. An illustrative example from the novella is the dog Jolbors, who blocks the road and growls at passersby until they throw him food.

Over time, people become used to feeding him just to pass, and the dog, accustomed to this easy gain, refuses to let anyone through without an offering, effectively becoming corrupt in behavior. The author explains this as a result of human treatment: ordinary people, unless they are passionate hunters, tend to neglect dogs, feeding them scraps only occasionally and failing to care for them properly. As a result, the animal's behavior reflects the conditions in which it is raised.

MAIN CHARACTERS

The Boy — the narrator and protagonist

Jolbors — the puppy who grows into a large, spirited, and ultimately tragic dog

Tumon — the boy's older brother, who is tasked with handling Jolbors' execution.

The Father — a stern and pragmatic figure; he is the head of the household

Ulukbek ake — the eccentric village dog shooter, a marksman known for his strange habits and wild stories. (*Ake* or *aga* in Kyrgyz is used as a term of respect for a male who is older than the speaker, even if he is only a few years older.)

SYNOPSIS

In a village just before the Second World War ended, a boy is overjoyed to receive a puppy, which he names Jolbors. He and his little sister are filled with happiness, spending an idyllic spring and summer together, while the boy proudly watches his playful and clever companion grow. Their bond is strong, and the boy feels happy and important among his friends.

As Jolbors grows into a large, powerful dog, his wild nature begins to cause trouble. He becomes mischievous and aggressive, chasing people and eventually biting a respected war hero. At the same time, his bond with the boy weakens, leaving him hurt and lonely. After the attack on the war hero, the boy's father decides that Jolbors must be put down.

The boy is sent to fetch Ulukbek, the eccentric village dog shooter. The execution turns into a chaotic and tragic scene. Jolbors attacks Ulukbek, who panics and, after a clumsy struggle, shoots and kills the dog. The boy and his older brother, Tumon, are left with the grim task of burying their former companion. After digging the grave and laying Jolbors to rest, they share a moment of prayer over the mound, which unexpectedly ends in shared laughter—a quiet release from grief and an acceptance of life and loss.

SCENES

The Puppy It was late winter, just before the war ended. Fog rose from the hills as Jamshit and the boy walked along a rough path toward their village. Below, patches of snow gleamed gray, and streams of melted water flowed. He carried a tiny puppy to his chest, thrilled to finally have one. At home, no one seemed impressed—only his little sister danced with joy, stamping the ground. When he placed the puppy on the mat, she pressed herself to it, stroking it and calling, "Puppy! Puppy!" Her excitement touched him deeply, filling him with warmth and love.

Puppy Joy It was sweeter when someone shared his happiness. The boy's little sister beamed at him: "My puppy? Mine?" she teased, then quickly straightened herself. He stayed quiet. The puppy shivered, sniffing and tapping the ground with its tiny black nose, making funny little squeaks, spinning in place like it missed its mother. Unsure how to please it, his sister ran to the kitchen and returned with a whole loaf. "Here, puppy, puppy!" she offered. He gently stopped her. She hugged the bread to her chest, stared at him, and waited. "It won't bite bread," he laughed. "Bring some milk instead."

Milk Adventure The little sister ran back inside. "There's only a little milk—should I give it?" she asked. She poured a full bowl anyway. The puppy didn't know how to drink yet. Its tiny nose touched the milk! Milk spilled on the floor and its fur, covering its eyes. It shivered, squeaked, and licked carefully. Slowly, it began drinking, wagging its tail and wiggling its legs. The sister and observer laughed, sharing the joy. The puppy's messy milk adventure filled everyone with warmth, laughter, and a sweet, silly scene.

Summer with the Puppy All spring, he wandered cheerful, following his puppy everywhere. Sometimes he scolded it, sometimes laughed. He loved everything about it—its tiny nose, its wobbly run, the way it barked at strangers or animals from afar. He even chuckled when it went to the corner to relieve itself. They raced through streets and fields together; he felt light, almost flying, while the puppy trailed faithfully. Children shouted with delight, surrounding the puppy—stroking, hugging, tugging, and teasing it. He laughed and warned, "Careful! Don't harm it, or it won't grow strong." The puppy's energy made every day joyful, lively, and warm.

The Proud Boy With his puppy by his side, the boy felt proud among his friends. One day, while children played in the valley, a boy named Jamshit shouted, "Let's train it like an *Ovcharka*!" He remembered how other players' dogs once performed tricks—jumping, biting props, and following every command perfectly. Everyone watched in awe. The boy felt proud of his own puppy, laughing at its playful antics and clever tricks. The puppy made him feel important and happy, and he could not stop sharing its cleverness with friends, proud of the bond they shared.

Training the Puppy Jamshit's idea pleased everyone. They tried training the puppy like a real show dog, but it had its own mind! They tried placing a small stick in its mouth, but it spat it out, wagging its tail defiantly. Finally, they tied strings to the stick, fastening it to its back. As the puppy stumbled and ran, they laughed, imagining it had mastered the trick. The boy, proud of his puppy yet amused by its clumsiness, was about to intervene when Jamshit suddenly shouted, "Watch out! The dog shooter is coming!" Everyone froze, hearts racing, then laughed at the puppy's boldness.

Meeting Ulukbek He hugged his puppy as the children lined up, teasing him playfully. Ahead, he saw Ulukbek, the dog shooter approaching on a black donkey, a double-barreled rifle slung across his chest, and his bow ready. The donkey trotted along the path to meet them. From a distance, the children called out together, "Assalamu alaikum, Ulukbek ake!" He nodded with a smile, laughing, "Hey, troublemakers, running the river basin with your dog again?" His dark face lit up with a wide grin. "You haven't come to see me since spring?" he asked. One child whispered shyly, "We've just been busy."

Ulukbek and the Village Dogs Jamshit shouted again, "Ulukbek Ake, where are you going?" Ulukbek, calm and serious, smiled, "I'm checking on a dog reported in the further village," flashing his teeth. As he passed, the village's stray dogs barked and followed, sometimes crossing paths with his donkey. If they got too bold, he raised his rifle and shot, "Bang!" Though his shots rarely hit, everyone respected him. Older children whispered, "The authorities are collecting many dog skins this year; he doesn't miss." Small children quickly tied up their dogs. The boy, once carefree, now felt cautious excitement with his puppy nearby, while they resumed training their mischievous dog *Jolbors*.

The Little Pond They had built a small pond by damming a shallow stream with stones. It became their secret swimming spot, where the children spent the whole day, calling their mothers from the water. *Jolbors* followed one boy, eager to join, but couldn't manage it—he only stuck his red tongue out, whining and splashing at the edge. Once, a duck had a single chick mixed with a hen's egg. The lonely chick imitated

the ducklings, following the mother duck into the water. But when the ducklings swam, the chick could not join and stood sadly on the bank, peeping helplessly.

Jolbors Learns to Swim When they splashed into the pond, Jolbors, frozen with fear, reminded them of the lonely chick. The children fed him soaked bread, giggling at his hesitant attempts. One day, the boy offered bread to Jolbors, teasing him closer. The puppy shivered, then, with a daring leap, plunged into the water. He paddled awkwardly, surfacing in bursts, peering at the boy, splattering water on the children. Jolbors scrambled to the shore, shaking his fur, splashing water everywhere, his small body trembling with excitement. With patience and encouragement, the children soon taught him to swim confidently, turning the fearful puppy into a playful water companion.

Autumn arrived He started third grade, attending classes after lunch. Until then, he spent mornings on the bridge, with Jolbors following faithfully. Midway across, he perched on a plank, kicking a small log, while Jolbors wagged his tail by the water. He watched the playful ripples, amused by the round eddies, the bubbling stones, and floating algae. Dark fish swam in groups, suddenly darting and twisting, teasing him. He tossed a pebble; the fish shimmered in the sunlight before diving again. Warm sunlight touched his back as he gazed at the moving patterns, letting the bridge and the current guide his thoughts.

Growing Apart Jolbors and the boy had once been inseparable, but by midwinter their bond began to cool, and by spring it had faded completely. The puppy grew fast, maturing into a full-sized dog, while the boy remained a child. Jolbors no longer followed him everywhere, indifferent to his calls. When the boy tried to scold or prod him, Jolbors gave a sharp, disapproving look and walked away, pretending not to care. He still performed tricks for praise, but now favored the older neighbor, Tumen, who had returned after the grandmother's passing. Jolbors' childhood loyalty had quietly shifted, leaving the boy wistful.

Chasing Solace He felt frustrated and hurt by Jolbors' indifference, his heart heavy with longing and worry. Anger and sadness twisted together, leaving him restless. Finally, unable to stay indoors, he ran into the street to seek comfort, watching pigeons flutter and peck. Their simple play eased his troubled thoughts, giving him a brief, quiet escape.

Jolbors Grows Up By his second year, Jolbors had grown tall and strong, shedding the soft, gray-black fur of puppyhood for long, thick, coarse hair. His chest protruded proudly, neck thickened, and his entire posture was commanding. His lion-like face and large, bristly head made him even more impressive. Even while resting at the door, he commanded respect, making strangers cautious. Though his appearance could intimidate, Jolbors was gentle and calm, showing kindness to those he knew. He no longer barked at everything he saw, nor attacked aimlessly—he had grown into a measured, loyal, and protective companion.

Jolbors Was Lost

Jolbors Went Missing Strangers drew Jolbors' deep, commanding bark—never frantic like a wild dog, but measured, powerful, and steady. Even while warning outsiders, he remained calm, never chasing or attacking, keeping a respectful distance. His bark alone conveyed strength and presence, and neighbors admired his noble temperament. His owners felt proud: their careful care had shaped a gentle, disciplined dog. By his third year, Jolbors had grown tall, impressive, and dignified. Yet one day he vanished. Three or four days later, his absence became clear. His departure left worry and grief, his family saddened by the loss of their loyal companion.

Mother's Sickness His uncles and aunts tried to speak cheerfully in front of his mother, who was very ill, hiding their worry. But the moment they stepped outside, anxiety took over. "The dog ran away!" they exclaimed, troubled over Jolbors' disappearance. Surprisingly, the dog's absence seemed to worry them more than his mother's illness. One day, the boy overheard two older women speaking sadly: "Poor Mayrambu... she may not recover, and now the dog ran away too." "It's true, it's terrible! Dogs never run away for good," said the other.

He Worried Although he had seen many long-term sick people eventually pass away, he had never imagined that his bedridden mother might die one day. At that moment, he realized that the dog's disappearance

might be linked to his mother's illness, and thinking she too might be buried like his aunt made him shiver with fear. He ran toward his older brother Tumon, who had gone to the field to water the corn. He wanted to reach him before telling what he had overheard from the older women. On the narrow path, Tumon was carrying a bucket of water on his shoulder; seeing him, he hesitated briefly, then ran toward him again...

Neither Alive Nor Dead Jolbors must have gone somewhere else; neither the living nor the dead of the dog was found in the village. The boy's father, speaking as if he had seen nothing, said, "The dog followed someone who went to the highlands," insisting it was true. A reliable report came from someone returning from the market in Ozgon town: "I saw a dog in the Kakyr field; it ran into the river when I chased it—it seemed like your dog." Later, a relative who had gone to the highlands reported, "There's a stray dog in Salam-Alik village; it looks like Jolbors." Angry Tumon searched for the missing dog in both directions but could not find him.

Mother Died On the seventh day of mourning for his deceased mother, Jolbors returned quietly on his own. The boy was the first to see him. The dog looked thin and weary, his fur matted and worn, his body small and fragile like a sorrowful puppy. Jolbors avoided affection, could not meet the boy's eyes, and carefully curled up at the foot of the bed. Resting his paws on the floor, his sad eyes seemed lost in thought. Seeing him, the boy's anger at his disappearance faded, replaced with compassion. Inside, the family stirred, and his father's eldest sister whispered, "He must have known and came back."

They Tried to Kill Jolbors When Tumon returned from work, he looked at Jolbors, lying pale and exhausted in the corner, with a mixture of joy and sorrow, and stood there turning his back for a moment. Then he took a long rope from the house, tied one end into a knot, and put it around the dog's neck. Jolbors, sensing no harm would come from his owner, did not pull back, quietly following Tumon while wagging his tail gently. Tumon turned to the boy and said, "Come, we'll hang him on the big walnut tree."

"Stop! Don't kill him!" The boy hesitated, wanting to step back, but when Tumon gave him a stern look, he had no choice but to follow. At the base of the tree, the boy tied the rope to a branch and stepped down. Jolbors stood in the shadow of the leaves, his red tongue hanging out, eyes full of trust, quietly watching as if he understood everything. The boy felt a moment of fear; when Tumon pulled the rope tight, he asked, "He's like he's facing death—shouldn't we stop?" Tumon was resolute: "No, I won't stop. I'll do it!" and swung the rope to direct the dog. Just then, a familiar shout rang out: "Hey! Stop!" It turned out his uncle had come quietly, and his aunts had sent him.

Terrifying Night of Fire On that dark summer night, the boy lay in bed with his father and stepmother. Suddenly, a scream rang out, and someone tugged at him, shouting, "Get up!" When he opened his eyes, Jolbors was standing at a distance, nervously barking, while bright red flames leapt beside the oven. His father rushed forward, waving his hands and throwing a bucket of water. His stepmother followed, adding more water. The flames split, smoke rose, and the boy jumped out of bed, running about. Jolbors stayed back, anxious but curious, watching everything from a safe distance.

Jolbors Warned His Father as the Fire Flared The boy ran to fetch water from the kitchen, tripping slightly as his father and stepmother, each with a bucket, hurried behind him. Stepping over the threshold, he groped in the dark and barely managed to reach the stove. His parents poured water into the channel behind the house, dousing the fire. Darkness swallowed most of the flames, leaving only flickering red sparks. Smoke and the smell of burning filled the air. His father muttered prayers, and his stepmother lit a lamp. "The wind is calm, or the whole village would have burned!" he said. Near the stove, a heap of straw had nearly ignited. He praised Jolbors: "He acted like a man and saved the day."

Jolbors and the Twist of Fate Jolbors, usually healthy through summer and winter, had never seen a neighboring dog. At home, his daily meals were mostly bones and scraps, and I often watched him forage. In the fields, he scavenged small bits, though even what he found outside was usually insignificant. His greatest prize was the warm blood of a slaughtered sheep when honored guests arrived—a rare occasion, as visitors came only once a year, sometimes for twenty days or even a month. During harvest, he would disappear into the tall, dense corn, only his rustling giving away his location. Jolbors chewed tirelessly day and night until the corn kernels hardened. One day, sleek, gleaming, red-tongued, and energetic, he

emerged—but fate suddenly turned when Anar, a mentally ill woman, intervened, changing everything for him.

Anar

Anar's Mental Breakdown After the war, “letters” of death began arriving in the village, bringing cries and mourning to many homes. Though people grieved, life slowly went on. But for Anar, who lived alone at the edge of the village, the news was devastating. After learning of her son's death, she lost her Ozgon town, then to a mental hospital in Tashkent. Three months later, she returned. Some said she was healed, others believed madness still lingered in her eyes.

Anar's Endless Laughter They said Anar was still not well—she spoke clearly, then suddenly lost herself. The village talked about her. The boy both longed to see her and feared it. One day, Anar came to their house. She seemed like any ordinary woman, greeting his mother and speaking calmly. But soon, she began laughing nonstop, her words losing meaning. The boy laughed, others joined, yet her laughter never ceased. It grew louder, more tangled, carrying her into her own world. The laughter finally faded, leaving only her broken, lingering voice in the quiet room.

Anar's Lingering Madness With a weak voice, her mother scolded, “Calm down, Anar, take a breath.” Reluctantly, the sisters guided Anar outside, giving her some bread. The room fell silent. Her mother explained that Anar had suffered this madness before, long ago, and it had returned after grief triggered old wounds. Despite daily life and chores, Anar never fully recovered. She roamed the village, scavenging food, eating from neighbors, and carrying small bundles of bread. In winter, she stayed home for months. Though she survived, her path kept her distant from the boy's neighborhood, always slightly apart from others.

Jolbors and the Bread In May, when the small river rose, a bridge was washed away, and a new one was built downstream. Anar began walking through the neighborhood, but she was rarely seen; the tall corn hid the path. Jolbors, ever cautious, barked and hesitated along the road, then retreated, repeating his usual ritual. Only Anar truly understood him. One evening, as she passed by, she offered him bread from her bundle. Jolbors took it, and she scolded him gently, as if he were a person. From then on, Anar left bread along her route, teaching Jolbors to trust, and their bond grew quietly among the fields and footsteps.

Jolbors' Mischief Not satisfied with merely watching Anar, Jolbors began seeking attention from others. He chased familiar faces, barking loudly to unsettle them. Every day, girls running to school would scream and scatter at the sight of him, which only made him more playful. They started throwing bread for Anar, letting the dog pass safely. In winter, Jolbors would sprawl across the road, ignoring warnings and observing passersby. Even when called from home, he ignored treats and shouted back. My father sighed, “This dog has grown wild, clever as a trickster. Tie him up at last!”

Jolbors' Wild Spirit They tried to restrain Jolbors by tying him with strong ropes to a deep stake, but the stubborn dog thrashed violently, snapping his bindings. Even chained, he spun around the stake defiantly, refusing to yield. Only exhaustion forced him to accept his fate. By midwinter, his temper flared: he growled at neighbors, lunged at strangers, and could not control his fury. Day and night, he prowled village paths, chasing passersby and leaping at riders. Once, he lunged at our old man, teeth grazing his cloak. Tumon tried to teach him discipline, but Jolbors' wild heart remained untamed.

Beisheke Urgaziev and Joro

Beisheke Urgaziev He was district police chief. During spring field work, Beisheke Urgaziev came to the kolkhoz and stayed at the house of the boy. Small and delicate, with slender limbs and soft gestures, he spoke politely, giggling like a young colt. He loved books, read constantly, and even spoke like the characters he admired. The villagers, accustomed to stern and loud officials, were captivated by his gentle presence and careful speech. Everyone marveled at how such a frail-looking man could command respect with charm rather than force.

Joro's Boastful Tales Since Beisheke Urgaziev arrived, Joro the Trickster seemed luckier than ever. One day, overhearing the elders in the workshop, he began to rant and boast. He joked about Beisheke, imagining that God had made him a woman but then changed His mind. If Beisheke were a woman, Joro claimed he would marry him, effortlessly charming him. He even boasted that his beautiful wife, Jarkynai, would be won over if Beisheke were a woman. His words swung between humor and audacity, revealing a man both bold and shameless, who wove mischief and bravado into every story he told.

Coro's Tale of Beisheke Coro told a story, twisting and leaping, making everyone laugh. He spoke of Police Chief Beisheke, joking how even a brave chief could be startled like a shy girl. "I greeted him, and he blushed, giggling nervously," Joro said, exaggerating. He mimicked the chief trembling, stammering, overwhelmed by Joro's antics. The villagers laughed as Joro described hugging and teasing him, repeating greetings with playful insistence. "Even a fierce police chief must sometimes bow to mischief!" he added. The tale ended with Beisheke mounting his horse, flustered, and Joro grinning proudly, the master of laughter and bold stories.

Jolbors Tried to Bite Beisheke Joro the Trickster wasn't entirely lying. He hadn't hugged the chief for long, just pressed his paw once in jest, and yet managed to rile him up. The next day, father summoned Joro and scolded him thoroughly. His father admired Beisheke Urgaziev, protecting his honor from gossip. The new chief charmed everyone—soft-spoken, wise, and gentle, never harsh to the unlearned. One night, Beisheke stayed out, returning after many hours. Jolbors, free from his tie, leapt unexpectedly onto the chief, claws patting his chest. Beisheke yelped, coat torn, and even Jolbors seemed proud of the chaos he'd caused.

Jolbors' Mischief Irritates the Father Jolbors' antics had the father completely flustered. By the time the child awoke, Jolbors was already growling at the door. Even during tea, the dog alternated between being scolded, frustrating the father further, and causing complaints about his torn coat. The stepmother, mending the coat, joined in the fuss. Finally, Beisheke Urgaziev could not remain calm. "Please, calm down!" he said gently. "I know the dog hanging around is inconvenient, but there is no need for all this drama." The father, clutching his teacup, muttered in exasperation that Jolbors had embarrassed the family enough and threatened to have the dog catcher deal with him.

Jolbors and Aidaraaly Jolbors had not yet met his end; he survived once again. Soon after, the dog bit Aidaraaly, a war hero who had spent four years fighting in World War II and had recently received the "Dank" medal. In the village, there were two men named Aidaraaly. To tell them apart, the villagers called one Aidaraaly Shouting and the other Aidaraaly Short. Jolbors targeted Aidaraaly Short. On the very day he bit him, Jolbors' father decided that the dog deserved the death penalty.

Preparing for the Dog Shooter That afternoon, after school, his father set him to work arranging for the dog to be shot. "Tell him to come early tomorrow and shoot," his father said. He went to the kitchen, grabbed some bread, and headed toward Ulukbek ake. The Dog Shooter was one of the five renowned marksmen in their village. Whenever someone's livestock or dog went mad, he was called in. He was truly an expert: no matter the animal, he always hit the target. Once, he shot a mad cow tied to a pole, the bullet piercing perfectly through its eyes. After the war, Ulukbek Ake, now salaried, secured the position by bribing the head of the regional "Raw Materials Procurement" office, with help from the boy's father.

Ulukbek ake, the Dog Shooter

Ulukbek ake's Mischievous Ways Each month, Ulukbek ake rode to the district center with piles of hides stacked on his donkey, returning tipsy, perched on its back. Along the way, he called to his wife, "Oh, wife! Wife!" while the weary donkey plodded, head high, tail stiff, stumbling occasionally with a clumsy clatter. At home, the donkey sometimes tumbled in the yard. Ulukbek had another odd habit: he raised many chickens, and whenever one faltered, he would shoot it. Children or his son tossed the chicken for him to fire. Bullets flew, chickens fell—sometimes alive, usually dead. Ulukbek's humor mingled with skill, strange, precise, and laughable.

Joro's Wild Explanation Whenever gossip began, Joro the Trickster would jump in loudly. He claimed he knew exactly why Ulukbek ake, Dog Shooter had gone strange. According to him, during the war, the man parachuted down—but while everyone landed on their feet, he landed on his head, “testing the ground with his skull.” That, Joro insisted, shook his brain forever. Later, the father dismissed this, saying Ulukbek had always been odd. He remembered how the man lied so skillfully that if he repeated your own story the next day, you wouldn't even recognize it. Truth bent, words twisted—Ulukbek turned every tale into a new, ridiculous story.

Lies That Caused Trouble The father said careless lies were one thing, but Ulukbek mixed them with kolkhoz affairs and made a mess. Without knowing, he spoke in the father's name, spreading words never said. People began acting strangely offended. One day, a man came upset; it turned out he had believed Ulukbek's lies. The father summoned the Ulukbek and scolded him harshly, but the man shrugged it off. Another day, Shouting Aidaraaly stormed in, calling the father a dog and demanding his medal was hidden by him. After loud arguments and confusion, they finally realized the truth: Ulukbek's lies had twisted everyone's words into absurd quarrels.

The Farmer of Lies The father realized the poor man never meant harm. Ulukbek simply could not live without lying. Just as some farmers cannot stop working the soil, he could not stop shaping words. If he did not lie, the father thought, he might fall ill—or even die. Watching him closely, he understood: Ulukbek was a farmer too, but a farmer of lies. Children loved him; truth or falsehood did not matter, as long as the story was lively. And Ulukbek, with a boiling heart, poured out tales like harvest. The elders said no one in the whole district could surpass him. Even Coro admitted, laughing, that everyone exaggerated—but beside Ulukbek, all their lies seemed small.

Joro Teases the Dog Shooter Among the villagers, almost no one spoke to Ulukbek ake without teasing him. Even clumsy guests who could barely form a sentence, and proud men who stomped about in heavy boots, joked at his expense. “Hey, Dog Shooter!” they would call. “Why not let a couple of your ducks fly (lie a little bit)?” Such shameless jokes meant nothing to him; he brushed them off like flies. But Joro the Trickster was the worst. Wherever he went, he clung to Ulukbek with jokes, and even in his absence, he invented stories to make people laugh. Seeing any duck, wild or tame, he would say, “That must be the Dog Shooter's duck—what is it doing here?” The whole village laughed.

The Man Who Smiled Only at Children Ulukbek Ake had a dark, stern face that could frighten anyone at first glance. His nose looked as if someone had pinched it hard and pulled it downward, then left it frozen in a permanent grimace. It seemed he disliked everything he saw, always wrinkling his nose in quiet disgust. When he frowned, it was as if the whole bright world had disappointed him. Yet with children, he was different. Among adults, he stayed distant, but with the little ones he softened. At the sight of them, his face lit up, a shy smile flickered, and even his stubborn nose seemed to relax. In that moment, the harsh man became strangely gentle—and quietly funny.

Ulukbek's Story Hour By the time the boy reached Ulukbek ake's house, dusk had settled. Slipping quietly through the open door, he saw a lively scene. Ulukbek sat proudly, talking nonstop, surrounded by small children sitting shoulder to shoulder. A dim reddish lamp flickered on the windowsill. An old cloth lay in the middle, scattered with dry bread and chipped teacups, untouched. Only Ulukbek's wooden bowl was empty, stained with *bozo*, a fermented drink. No one noticed the boy; all were lost in the story. Ulukbek waved his arms wildly, as if he might fly away, his shadow dancing on the wall. His stern face glowed, eyes wide, teeth flashing—half frightening, half hilarious.

Lost in the Story, Lost in Trouble Passing behind the listeners, the children stretched their necks and stared wide-eyed at Ulukbek ake. He spoke with fire, waving his hands, his shadow dancing wildly on the wall. At first, the boy only watched—his flushed face, restless arms, and the spellbound children. Slowly, without noticing, he too was pulled into the story, swallowed by its magic. When night came, the children burst outside together. The boy joined three others, suddenly acting older—bumping heads, teasing, grabbing a shiny yellow soldier's belt and making one cry. Laughing, he played on, forgetting everything. Only near home did he remember, like a sudden sting, the task he had been sent for. His father had said, ‘Tell him to come early tomorrow morning and shoot the dog.’

Even the Skeptics Listen The adults mocked Ulukbek without ever truly listening, calling his stories pure lies and laughing from afar. Yet if they happened to hear him, they listened more eagerly than children. He remembered one evening when Ulukbek was telling stories and an old man named Baiymbet came in. After greetings, he sat down quietly, saying he had business but would speak later. At first, the boy watched the old man's worn face and tangled beard. Soon, the story took hold. Baiymbet leaned forward, eyes fixed, mouth slightly open, even drooling a little in his fascination. Then, suddenly aware, he laughed, smacking his lips, and said, "Well now, you really tell it well!"

Better Than the City Last year, Tumon went to Andijan with Ulukbek ake to sell sunflower seeds. When he returned, he could barely tell what he had seen; his words ran out quickly. Ulukbek ake, however, spoke for nearly a month about everything he had experienced in the city, never finishing. Tumon even came along with his brother for three days just to listen. On the third day, as they walked home, Tumon sighed and admitted that going to Andijan had been unnecessary. Hearing the stories from the Dog Shooter was far more exciting than seeing the city himself.

Early Morning at Ulukbek The next morning, the boy ran to Ulukbek ake's house. At the gate, Ulukbek appeared in his white shirt with a loose coat flapping, dragging his long slippers behind, spitting and grumbling. He noticed the boy's greeting, laughed, and asked: "Ah, boy! You arrived before sunrise—are you okay?" When the boy explained his father's wish to have Jolbors shot, Ulukbek raised an eyebrow and asked about the dog's crimes. "Don't worry, I won't take this too seriously," he joked. "I'll handle it after breakfast." Even in chaos, Ulukbek's humor made the morning lively.

Tied Up and Ready: Ulukbek Ake's Dog Adventure Ulukbek ake rode in on his black donkey, a shotgun resting at his side, looking every bit as sharp and serious as the tales suggested. As he drew near, he asked, "Where did you tie the dog?" The boy ahead of Tumon replied, "To the big walnut tree in the yard." Ulukbek squinted, eyeing the tree carefully, then pointed to a single young branch. "Tie him here—he won't escape!" Kneeling, Tumon guided Jolbors to the branch and looped the long chain securely around it. Ulukbek nodded in approval. "Even here, he wants everyone to see him," Tumon muttered, stepping back. The dog strained against the chain, the branch quivered, and chaos was only moments away.

Tamed Chaos Before he could calm down, Jolbors leapt with all his strength. The branch bent, and the chain slipped from where it was tied. The dog growled and jumped again in fury. Ulukbek ake panicked, tumbling onto the grass. Jolbors pressed down and bit him sharply on the backside. Ulukbek ake howled in anger, unable to move properly, thrashing his legs, and clung desperately to the rifle. The gun went off, and the donkey brayed.

Escape Tumon jumped twice and reached the boy's side. Ulukbek struggled, holding his rifle, stumbling and falling, not looking back. The end of his coat and his loose pants flapped as he moved. Ulukbek glanced quickly at the dog, which was tugging again, and shouted, "Run!" Tumon and the boy ran to opposite sides. When the gun fired, Jolbors yelped and fell, then got up with all his strength. The tree shook, Jolbors barked, hit the base, and rolled on the ground, breaking branches around him. Seeing this, Ulukbek ran away too.

Jolbors' Last Fall Jolbors couldn't stay steady and tumbled, twisting as he fell. The boy shouted, "He's down! He's down!" Ulukbek ake turned anxiously, pulled a bullet from his cartridge belt, and fired his rifle at the dog. Jolbors yelped and, hitting his head, fell dead. Ulukbek ake screamed, "Hit! Hit! Another hit!" and dropped the rifle. Then, trying to see the spot where Jolbors had bitten him, Ulukbek bent and twisted, but no matter how he turned, he couldn't. He spun in place like a top, completely confused.

Checking the Bite Tumon and the boy ran to Ulukbek ake. He showed them the spot where Jolbors had bitten. "Is it bleeding? Did the tooth go in?" Tumon bent down, looked closely, and laughed. "It's fine. No blood. The tooth just grazed the skin. Nothing serious." Ulukbek ake picked up his rifle, pressed his hand on the ripped spot of his pants, and checked it carefully. "What about the dog's skin?" asked Tumon. "You can bury it," Ulukbek muttered. They walked over to the black donkey tied to the tree, Ulukbek still holding the ripped area, worried.

Drinking Tumon asked, “Won’t you have some tea?” Ulukbek Ake shook his head. “No, I’ll drink another day.” Tumon offered vodka, but Ulukbek muttered angrily, “Give me that strong drink! Even if it’s bitter!” He adjusted his pants, tied his scarf over the ripped area, and slung the rifle over his shoulder. Then he jumped onto the donkey, checked the chain, and looked at the tied spot. Tumon arrived carrying a glass of vodka. Ulukbek drank quickly, grimacing. “You didn’t bring a snack for the vodka!” he said, joking. The donkey stood still. Everyone calmed down a little.

Jolbors’ Last Rest Tumon carried a mattock, and the boy held a shovel. They walked carefully toward the spot. Under the broken branch of a lone tree, Jolbors lay still. The dog’s body was stretched out, one leg stiff, its nose hidden in the blood-stained grass. Blood from its head and belly had matted the fur and soaked the plants around him. The bullet wound on his belly still dripped dark blood. Flies swarmed over the body. The boy could not look at him for long and turned away, feeling uneasy.

Digging the Grave Tumon bent low and hit the ground with his mattock. Each strike shook the grass and broke the dirt. The sunlight shone on the blade. The roots cracked, but he cut through the soil. Soon the top layer was removed, and Tumon dug deeper. The boy helped with a shovel, taking out dirt and making the hole bigger. They worked together carefully. It was hard, but Tumon kept going until the hole was ready.

Moving Jolbors The boy dragged the broken donkey while Tumon freed Jolbors from the chain. Tumon lifted one leg and swung the dog over the grass. He carried it to the hole and lowered it carefully. Then he lifted the other legs and set the body in place. The boy shook the chain to help settle Jolbors. Tumon checked that all four legs lay right. The grave was ready. He stepped back and looked at the body. The work was finished, and the job felt heavy.

Burying Jolbors Tumon started covering Jolbors with dirt and grass using his mattock. A clump of soil fell on the dog’s head, mixing with wet blood. Tumon worked quickly, pushing dirt from both sides to hide the body. They didn’t speak while they worked. When he finished, Tumon smoothed the small mound and leaned on his mattock, wiping sweat from his forehead. His eyes looked sad. The boy felt the same. Jolbors was not just any dog; he had grown up with them and was like part of their family. They both felt heavy-hearted.

Praying and Laughing Suddenly, Tumon knelt and quietly recited a Quran prayer over Jolbors’ grave. The boy watched, serious too. Tumon’s voice was steady and respectful, like the village elders reading the holy book. The boy joined in, reading the prayer aloud. After a while, they both laughed softly, feeling relief. They jumped up, picked up the chain and the mattock, and carried them together. The sunlight shone on the green hills, and birds sang everywhere. For a moment, the sadness lifted, and the day felt calm and alive again.

CHARACTER ANALYSIS

The Boy, Narrator (Sarybash) – The Village Messenger

The boy’s real name is unknown. He is simply called Sarybash. This name means “fair-complexioned head.” He is the sharp-eyed witness and quiet heart of the story.

He is the owner of the dog Jolbors. Other people play their roles in his dog story: Ulukbek is the stubborn and funny dog shooter; Joro is the trickster; there is also his father and his brother Tumon. Sarybash moves between them as the village messenger. He is friendly but gently sarcastic. He is observant but not arrogant. He sees the comedy and contradictions in the adults. Yet he never fully condemns them. Instead he records their foolishness with amusement and affection.

Sarybash is not a hero in the traditional sense. He is an ordinary boy. He understands human nature through everyday village gossip, common sense, and quiet laughter. He loves his dog. But later he becomes deeply disappointed by its aggressive behavior. After losing his mother, his whole life turns around Jolbors.

The dog was his closest friend and emotional anchor. Like most boys his age, Sarybash is naturally drawn to animals. He does not just have Jolbors. He loves the dog. He talks about it with the quiet excitement of a child. He feels proud to be its owner. Jolbors gives him status among other boys. It also gives him a sense of responsibility that makes him feel older.

Moral Sarybash shows moral honesty and quiet strength. He is proud of his dog and loves it deeply. After losing his mother, Jolbors became his main friend. When the dog turns aggressive, Sarybash feels sad and disappointed. Still, he accepts that the dog must be removed, as the dog bit several people, getting used to bread and food by people. He does not hide from this hard choice. He learns that love sometimes requires tough decisions.

Wise Sarybash represents the gentle wisdom that comes from love, loss, and disappointment. Although he begins as an ordinary boy — proud of his dog and full of childish interest in pets — suffering has given him deeper insight. The death of his mother and the later betrayal of his only friend Jolbors force him to mature beyond his years. Unlike the stubborn adults around him, Sarybash learns that pride and affection must sometimes give way to reality. He becomes the emotional heart of the story, showing that true wisdom does not require philosophy or age. It grows naturally from loving deeply, being hurt, and still choosing to observe life with quiet humor and understanding.

Protecting Sarybash's final acts are those of a protector of both memory and dignity. Even though he is only a boy, he carries the heavy responsibility of deciding his dog's fate. He protects the pride of his childhood by trying to handle this loss with courage and sarcasm instead of tears. Through his observant eyes and storytelling, he safeguards the simple realities of village boyhood — the joy of owning a pet, the pain of losing a friend, and the confusion of growing up. His quiet narration becomes a way of protecting the truth of his own experience and the honest picture of life in the village.

Ulukbek aka – The Stubborn and Funny Dog Shooter

Ulukbek is a strange and funny man. He is known as the Dog Shooter. He has many odd habits. Every month he rides to the district center with hides on his donkey and returns drunk. He sits on the donkey and loudly calls to his wife. He raises chickens and shoots them when they get sick. He is a compulsive liar who twists every story into something ridiculous. His face looks stern and scary to adults. But with children he becomes gentle and smiles. He tells stories with wild energy, waving his arms and making shadows dance on the wall. Children love him. Adults tease him constantly but cannot resist listening when he speaks. Even when his lies cause trouble, he simply shrugs and continues.

Eccentric Ulukbek is highly eccentric. Every month he rides home drunk on his tired donkey, shouting “Oh, wife! Wife!” while the animal stumbles and sometimes falls in the yard. He has another strange habit — when one of his chickens gets sick, he shoots it with a gun while his children or son throw the chicken into the air for him. According to Joro, during the war he parachuted down but landed on his head, “testing the ground with his skull,” which supposedly shook his brain forever. These odd behaviors make him different from everyone else in the village.

Compulsive Ulukbek is a compulsive liar and storyteller. He cannot live without twisting the truth. The boy's father says Ulukbek lies so skillfully that if he retold your own story the next day, you would not even recognize it. His lies often create real trouble — he speaks in the father's name without permission and causes angry quarrels. One man came shouting and calling the father a dog because he believed Ulukbek's false words. The father finally understood that Ulukbek is like a “farmer of lies” — if he stopped lying, he might become ill or even die.

Charismatic Ulukbek is surprisingly charismatic and entertaining. At night, children sit shoulder to shoulder around him, listening with wide eyes while he waves his arms wildly and his shadow dances on the wall. Even adults who mock him cannot resist — old man Baiymbet came for business but ended up leaning forward with his mouth open, almost drooling as he listened to the stories. When Tumon went to Andijan with him, he could barely describe the trip, but Ulukbek talked about the same journey for nearly a month. Tumon later admitted that listening to Ulukbek's stories was far more exciting than seeing the city himself.

Tender Ulukbek has a surprisingly tender side that only children see. To adults, his face looks dark, stern, and frightening. His nose appears pinched and pulled downward, giving him a permanent look of disgust.

However, the moment he sees children, his face completely changes. His eyes light up, a shy smile appears, and even his stubborn nose seems to relax. While he stays distant and cold with grown-ups, he becomes gentle, warm, and playful with little children. This soft side makes the village children adore him.

Clumsy Ulukbek ake's clumsiness makes him a comically heroic figure. When Jolbors attacks, he tumbles, flails, and panics, spinning uncontrollably—not just to aim his rifle but even to check his own backside where the dog bit him. His exaggerated movements, shouting, and awkward struggle with his coat and pants turn a dangerous moment into chaotic comedy. Even as he tries to act brave, the gun firing accidentally, the donkey braying, and the tree shaking amplify the humor. This clumsy heroism shows that courage can be messy, dramatic, and hilariously human, making Ulukbek both funny and memorable.

Fussy He asks careful, fussy questions about the bite ("Is it bleeding? Did the tooth go in?") as if inspecting every detail. He needs exact answers before moving on. The moment Tumon says the bite is fine with "No blood. The tooth just grazed the skin," Ulukbek immediately forgets about the dog and becomes obsessed with his torn pants. He picks up his rifle, then presses his hand over the ripped spot and checks the tear carefully. Even while walking to the donkey, he keeps holding that ripped area, worried. A dog just bit him and he shot it, yet he fusses over his torn pants like that is the real problem. This makes him funny because his worry is completely out of proportion to what actually matters.

Jolbors – The Dog Who Grew Wild

Jolbors begins as a tiny, helpless puppy brought home by the boy in late winter, just before the war ended. He is soft, gray-black, and trembling with fear. The boy's little sister loves him immediately, offering him bread and milk. The puppy cannot even drink properly, milk spills on his face and fur. But slowly, with patient teaching, Jolbors learns to swim, to play, to trust.

He becomes the boy's closest friend. They are inseparable through spring and summer. The puppy follows faithfully, wagging his tail, barking at strangers, racing through streets and fields. The boy feels proud of him.

But as autumn arrives and Jolbors grows into a full dog, everything changes.

By his second year, Jolbors transforms into a tall, strong animal with a lion-like face and commanding presence. His soft puppy fur becomes long and thick. His gentle nature hardens.

By his third year, he is impressive and dignified — but also dangerous and wild. He bites people. He chases girls. He ignores commands. He becomes the village problem. In the end, he is killed by Ulukbek ake, shot while trying to bite him. He dies under a broken tree branch, and the boy must help bury him.

Loyal Jolbors shows deep loyalty, especially in his early years. When the boy's mother dies, Jolbors vanishes for days. But on the seventh day of mourning, he returns quietly on his own. He looks thin, weary, matted, and fragile — like a sorrowful puppy. He avoids affection and cannot meet the boy's eyes, but he curls up at the foot of the bed. His father's sister whispers, "He must have known and came back." Later, when a fire breaks out in the middle of the night, Jolbors is the one who warns them. He stands nervously barking while flames leap by the oven. His barking wakes the family and saves the house. The boy's father says, "He acted like a man and saved the day." Even when Tumon tries to hang him with a rope, Jolbors does not resist or struggle. He trusts his owner completely, wagging his tail gently while being led to his death.

Abandoned Jolbors becomes abandoned in his own home. As he grows from puppy to adult, the boy loses interest in him. Jolbors grows fast, maturing into a full-sized dog while the boy remains a child. Jolbors no longer follows everywhere. He becomes indifferent to the boy's calls. When scolded, he gives sharp, disapproving looks and walks away, pretending not to care. He favors Tumon instead. The boy feels frustrated, hurt, and abandoned by his own dog. He runs into the street seeking comfort from pigeons instead. Later, when Anar the mentally ill woman offers him bread, Jolbors finds affection from her instead of his family. The boy who once loved him no longer plays with him. The family that raised him now sees him only as a problem.

Tragic Jolbors' death is tragic because it was not entirely his fault. He was raised with love but then abandoned when he grew. He was given affection by a mentally ill woman who taught him to beg for bread from

passersby. He was chained and restrained when his wild energy needed a real home and purpose. The boy who once loved him deeply no longer cares. The family views him as an embarrassment. When Ulukbek ake comes to shoot him, Jolbors fights for his life, biting Ulukbek in desperation. But in the end, he falls under a broken tree branch with a bullet in his belly. The boy who buried him felt "heavy-hearted" because "Jolbors was not just any dog; he had grown up with them and was like part of their family." Even in death, Tumon kneels and recites a Quran prayer over his grave, treating him with dignity and respect. Jolbors' story is a mirror of the boy's own loss — just as the boy lost his mother, he also lost the dog who was his closest friend.

Parallels: Jolbors and Mumu: A Literary Comparison

Both are dogs deeply loved by their owners

In Turgenev's "Mumu," Gerasim, a deaf-mute serf, finds his only source of joy and connection in a small dog he names Mumu. She becomes his entire world, his companion, his reason to smile, his proof that he can love and be loved. Similarly, Jolbors is the boy's closest friend after the boy loses his mother. The boy talks about Jolbors "with the quiet excitement of a child" and feels "proud to be its owner." Jolbors gives the boy status among other boys and a sense of responsibility that makes him feel older. Like Gerasim, the boy pours all his affection into this dog because he has lost so much else. Both owners treat their dogs not as mere pets, but as family — as the most important living being in their lives.

Both grow from playful puppies into mature animals

Mumu begins as a small, weak dog that Gerasim finds and cares for. As he feeds her and protects her, she grows stronger and becomes part of his daily life. Jolbors also arrives as a tiny puppy who trembles with fear and cannot even drink milk properly. Milk spills on his fur and face. The boy and his little sister teach him patiently. Jolbors learns to drink, to swim, to play, and to trust. Through spring and summer he runs through streets and fields, follows the boy, and brings joy to everyone. In both stories, the dogs change from helpless puppies into strong animals. That growth makes the bond feel real, but it also makes the later loss more painful.

Both are ultimately killed because of circumstances beyond their control

Mumu is killed because the landlady orders it. Gerasim carries out the order, but the decision is not his. He lives under a system where disobedience brings punishment. Jolbors is killed because he becomes dangerous in the village. He bites people and creates fear. The boy does not decide his fate. The father orders the dog to be shot, and Ulukbek ake carries it out. In both stories, human society creates the situation. The dog becomes a problem in the eyes of authority. The dog pays the price.

Both deaths are emotional turning points for the human characters

After Mumu's death, Gerasim's inner world collapses. He loses the one living being that gave him warmth and meaning. The story makes the reader feel that something in him dies too. In Jolbors's story, the boy is also changed by the dog's death. He helps dig the grave and bury Jolbors. He cannot look at the body for long. The burial feels heavy because Jolbors grew up with them and felt like part of the family. The death becomes another loss added to the boy's grief after his mother's death. In both narratives, the dog's death marks the end of innocence and the start of a harder emotional reality.

Both stories show the tension between love for an animal and social or practical necessity

In Mumu, the conflict is between pure love and cruel social power. Gerasim loves Mumu, but the landlady values control and comfort more than his feelings. Social hierarchy demands obedience, so love is crushed by authority. In Jolbors's story, the conflict is between love and community safety. The boy loves Jolbors, but Jolbors bites people and becomes a threat. The father must choose safety over attachment. The boy must accept that love cannot undo danger. In both stories, affection is real, but it is not strong enough to defeat the rules and pressures of the human world.

One important difference

Mumu is mostly innocent and harmless. Her death feels completely unjust. It exposes cruelty and the abuse of power. Jolbors becomes genuinely aggressive and difficult to control. His death is still tragic, but it is also presented as necessary because real harm has happened. This makes Jolbors's story more morally complicated. The reader can grieve for the dog while also understanding the fear of the villagers.

THEMES

Humor as Coping Mechanism: The novella is full of humor even during painful and difficult moments. The villagers, especially the boy Sarybash, use laughter as a way to survive hardship, loss, and awkward social situations. Ulukbek ake's odd behavior, torn pants, stubborn pride, and dramatic storytelling become constant sources of amusement. Joro the Trickster exaggerates stories about Ulukbek landing on his head during the war, turning a possible tragedy into comedy. Even in the serious event of shooting Jolbors, the scene is filled with absurd comedy — the branch breaks, the donkey brays loudly, and Ulukbek spins in circles like a top trying to see the bite on his own backside. Through the narrator's gentle and sarcastic tone, the story suggests that humor is not mere entertainment. It is a coping mechanism that helps the characters face grief, disappointment, and the harsh realities of village life. After the boy loses his mother and later his beloved dog, humor becomes a shield that softens sadness and prevents bitterness. The novella shows that in a world full of hardship, laughter brings people together, eases tension, and allows them to accept painful truths without being destroyed by them. Ultimately, humor is portrayed as an essential tool for emotional survival.

Illustrative moment: One of the strongest examples occurs right after Jolbors bites Ulukbek ake. Instead of focusing only on the wound or the danger, Ulukbek becomes obsessed with the rip in his pants. He keeps pressing his hand on the torn spot and checking it carefully while walking to the donkey. Even after drinking vodka, he jokes, "You didn't bring a snack for the vodka!" The boy observes these absurd details with quiet amusement. Later, when burying Jolbors, the heavy sadness is gently relieved when Tumon recites a Quran prayer and both he and the boy end up laughing softly. These moments show how humor works as a coping mechanism. It allows the characters to face death, loss, and embarrassment without being overwhelmed by sorrow. The humor does not erase pain, but it makes life bearable.

The Cycle of Loyalty and Disloyalty (Abandonment): The novella explores the deep but fragile bond between a boy and his dog. The relationship begins with pure love and mutual dependence. The puppy Jolbors is the boy's only comfort after his mother's death.

The life of Jolbors follows a tragic circle. He starts as a helpless puppy who needs the boy for everything. The boy feeds him, teaches him to swim, and feels proud to own him. This is the golden time of their friendship. But as Jolbors grows into a strong dog, the dynamic changes. The boy grows up and finds other interests. The dog is no longer a cute pet but a responsibility that becomes a burden. When Jolbors becomes aggressive and bites people, the village turns against him. The boy, who once loved him deeply, now sees him only as a problem to be removed. This shift from love to indifference is painful. It shows how easily humans can discard the things they once cherished.

Despite this abandonment, the dog's loyalty never fully breaks. Even when he is wild and feared by others, he remembers his family. When the boy's mother dies, Jolbors disappears for days but returns on the seventh day of mourning. He comes home thin, weary, and sorrowful, as if he knows the family is grieving. He also saves the family from a fire, barking to warn them. These acts show that his heart remained loyal even when his behavior became difficult. The tragedy of the story is that this loyalty is rewarded with death. The dog is shot not because he is evil, but because he became inconvenient. The boy must help bury him, realizing too late that the dog who loved him was killed by the people he trusted. The novella suggests that the greatest tragedy is not the dog's death, but the fact that he died waiting for a love that had already moved on.

Illustrative moment: The most powerful example of this theme is when Jolbors returns on the seventh day of mourning for the boy's mother. He does not come back as a proud or aggressive dog. He comes back as a broken, sorrowful creature. He avoids the boy's eyes and curls up quietly at the foot of the bed. He

seems to understand that the family is suffering. He has traveled far and endured hardship just to be with them in their time of pain. This moment proves that despite the boy's neglect and the village's anger, the dog's loyalty was never truly lost. It makes his death shortly after even more heartbreaking.

Personality: *The Childlike Spirit in Adulthood* The novella presents Ulukbek as a man who never truly grows up. He is an adult with authority and a job, but he keeps the heart and habits of a child. He does not follow the serious rules of adulthood. He acts on impulse. He plays games. He seeks attention. He lies to make stories more interesting. He shoots chickens for fun, just like a boy might throw stones. He rides his donkey while drunk, singing and shouting. He does not care about dignity or appearances. He wears torn pants and does not fix them. He even checks his pants more than his wound after being bitten. This childlike quality makes him funny and endearing. It also makes him free. He is not trapped by the need to be proper or modern. He lives in the moment. The villagers accept him because they see the innocent spirit underneath his rough exterior. Even the children love him. They gather around him to hear his stories. He becomes a child among children. His face, which looks stern and scary to adults, becomes soft and smiling when he sees children. This contrast shows that his true self is not the strict hunter, but a playful spirit. In a world of hard work and sad events, Ulukbek aka represents the joy of staying young at heart. He shows that growing old does not mean growing serious.

Illustrative moment: The best example of this theme happens when Ulukbek aka tells stories to the village children. He sits in his house with a dim lamp. He waves his arms wildly. His shadow dances on the wall. He looks like a giant bird or a spirit. The children sit shoulder to shoulder, listening with wide eyes. Ulukbek aka is not a dignified elder in this moment. He is a performer. He is playing. He is making magic. He is more alive than any other adult in the village. This moment shows that his childlike spirit is a gift. It brings wonder and joy to the children. It keeps the village alive with laughter and stories. It proves that the best adults are those who never stop being children inside.

Superstition and Premonition: The novella is steeped in a world where the natural and supernatural are deeply intertwined. The characters, deeply rooted in old Kyrgyz traditions, do not view animals merely as pets or livestock but as vital messengers from the unseen world. Superstition is not just a background element; it is a living framework through which they interpret tragedy and loss. The belief that nature sends warnings before a calamity is central to the narrative. For instance, the arrival of a bird inside a house is not seen as a random accident but as a dire omen, a clear sign that death is approaching. This belief shapes the characters' emotional state, filling them with a sense of foreboding even before tragedy strikes. Similarly, the dog, Jolbors, is believed to possess a sixth sense, an instinct that allows him to perceive what humans cannot. The novella suggests that when a dog acts strangely or disappears, it is a sign that the dog is trying to avoid the weight of impending sorrow or death. This creates a tense atmosphere where the characters are constantly trying to read signs and interpret behavior. The family's reaction to Jolbors' disappearance is particularly telling; they worry about the dog not just because they love him, but because they intuitively understand that his absence is a warning. This connection between the animal world and human fate highlights a worldview where life and death are part of a larger natural cycle, announced by creatures who serve as bridges between the two realms. The superstitions provide a way to make sense of the unpredictable, giving the characters a sense of order in a world where death can come suddenly.

Illustrative moment: A clear example occurs when Jolbors vanishes while the mother is ill. The older women say, "Poor Mayrambu... she may not recover, and now the dog ran away too." They believe "Dogs never run away for good." The boy realizes the link and panics. The dog returns on the seventh day of mourning, confirming he had sensed the death and disappeared to avoid the tragedy.