

HUMANITIES INSTITUTE

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IN THE MOUNTAINS / TOO ARASYNDA (1955)

Tugolbay Sydykbekov (1912–1997)

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OVERVIEW

Author

Tugolbay Sydykbekov (1912–1997) was a Kyrgyz writer born in Keng-Suu, in present-day Issyk-Kul Region. Because his official birth date was unknown, he later chose May 14 as his birthday through a family tradition involving his daughter selecting a date at random.

He studied at the Agricultural Technical School in Frunze (1928–1931) and later at the Central Asian Veterinary Institute in Ashgabat, the capital of Turkmenistan. He worked at the newspaper *Leninchil Jash* (1931–1936), served as a consultant for the Union of Writers of Kyrgyzstan (1937–1947), and worked as an editor at *Kyrgyz mambas* publishing house (1949–1951).

In the Soviet period, he was labeled a “nationalist writer,” but his earlier Stalin Prize recognition limited political repression against him. He supported objective study of Kyrgyz history, promoted the development of the Kyrgyz language, and openly criticized official shortcomings, leading some scholars to describe him as a Soviet-era Kyrgyz dissident.

Sydykbekov remained a major figure in Kyrgyz literature for nearly seventy years and died in Bishkek on July 19, 1997.

Literary career

He began his literary career as a poet. His first poem, *Who Are These People? (Bular Kimder?)*, was published in the newspaper *Leninchil Jash* on May 1, 1930. Soon afterward, he wrote *The Old Komuz Player (Chal Komuzchu)*, which appeared in the magazine *Chabuul*. His first poetry collection, *Struggle (Kurosh)*, was published in 1933, followed by *Heroes (Baatylar)*, 1936) and *Poet-Nightingale (Akyn-Bulbul)*, 1938). During this period, he also began working actively in prose.

Like many writers of his generation, Sydykbekov's early works reflected social changes in Kyrgyz society, including the new socialist system, labor, and changing social relations.

In 1937–1938, his novel *Keng-Suu (Keng-Suu)* was published in two volumes, becoming one of the first novels in Kyrgyz literature. In the 1950s, he revised it and republished it as *In the Mountains (Too Arasynda)*, with volumes appearing in 1955 and 1958.

During this period, he also wrote *Poet-Nightingale (Akyn-Bulbul)*, 1938), the essay *Ala-Toodon Je-too* (1939), the poem *News from the Night Watchman (Tun Jarchysynan Kabar)*, 1939), and the verse tale *The Greedy Father (Ach Koz Ata)*, 1940).

His collection of stories *During the War Days (Sogush Kundorundo)*, 1943) reflects wartime unity and patriotism during World War II.

Between 1938 and 1940, he wrote the novel *Temir (Temir)*, published in 1946, depicting the establishment of Soviet power in southern Kyrgyzstan.

His novel *The People of Our Time* (*Bizdin Zamandyn Kishileri*, 1948) marked a major stage in his career. It was first published in *Sovetskii Kirgizstan* (*Ala-Too*) and later in Moscow in Russian. In 1949, it received the Stalin Prize, making him one of the leading Kyrgyz writers.

After the war, he contributed to children's literature with *Mountain Children* (*Too Baldary*, 1953). Later, after *In the Mountains*, he wrote the major novel *Women* (*Zayiptar*). Its first part, *Batiyna*, was published in 1962, and the complete version, including *Mountain Pass* (*Ashuu*), appeared in 1966.

His later works include *Friends* (*Kurbular*) and *Confession* (*Syr Achuu*, 1977), focusing on youth, and *Yimanbay's Character* (*Yimanbay Peyili*, 1980), which continues a character from *Among the Mountains* (*Too Arasynda*).

In his autobiographical works *The Road* (*Jol*, 1982) and *Over the Mountain Passes* (*Bel-Beleste*, 1996), he reflects on his life and experiences.

Novel

The novel *In the Mountains* (*Too Arasynda*) was first published in 1937 under the title *Keng-Suu*. Keng-Suu was the native village of Tugolbay Sydykbekov.

Critics of the earlier version argued that it focused too narrowly on the life of a single village, Keng-Suu.

In response, the author revised the text and republished it in 1955 under a new title, *Too Arasynda* (*In the Mountains*).

The novel was later translated into several languages, including Russian, Kazakh, Tajik, Uzbek, and Ukrainian. The Russian translation appeared in 1948, followed by Tajik in 1959, Kazakh in 1961, and Ukrainian in 1962.

This study is based on the Russian translation under the title *Sredi Gor* (*In the Mountains*) of the novel, translated by K. Kuliev and O. Orozbaev and published by *Izvestiya* Publishing House in Moscow (1965).

Background

The novel *In the Mountains*, a novel that brought fame to Tugolbay Sydykbekov, introduced not only the author but also Kyrgyz literature as a whole to the wider Soviet Union and even to foreign readers.

The work depicts important social and historical changes of the 1920s–1930s, presenting an epic portrayal of Kyrgyz life during a turning point in history, including everyday life, social relations, and national character.

Characters such as Soke the elder, Imanbay, Saparbay, and Samtyr represent strong and memorable images of people from that period.

Keng-Suu—the writer's native village—serves as the setting through which the author shows the arrival of Soviet power in Kyrgyz society and the complex consequences of this political transformation. Literary scholar Abdykerim Muratov notes that many of the characters were based on people the author personally knew in his village.

He emphasizes that figures such as Saparbay and Samtyr are carefully developed, and that Soke the elder is one of the most deeply realized characters. According to him, the novel is successful not only in portraying collectivization but also in revealing the character of the Kyrgyz people.

MAIN CHARACTERS

Saparbay – The protagonist; grows from a simple village youth into a principled defender of justice.

Saadat – Ambitious village official who becomes corrupt and later joins the rebels.

Sharshe – Radical activist who enforces collectivization through violence and fear.

Kalpakbaev – Harsh government official who imposes forced collectivization.

Imanbay – Ordinary villager representing confusion and weakness during social change.

Soke – Wise elder who values fairness and moral balance.

Samtyr – Former poor shepherd who becomes educated and politically aware.

Bubush – Educated woman and later chair of the village council.

Zaina – Saparbay's supportive and courageous wife.
Ayna – Young woman who resists forced marriage and symbolizes women's freedom.
Berdibay – Influential traditional elder defending old clan authority.
Shooruk – Conservative clan leader opposed to reform.
Mullah Barpy – Religious leader who justifies inequality as divine fate.
Kaseyin – Clan figure involved in Ayna's marriage conflict.
Dosumbek – Wealthy older man who seeks to marry Ayna through bride price.
Batyrbek – Clan head connected to the forced marriage dispute.
Karymshak – Village notable involved in political struggles.
Kurman – Activist torn between loyalty and fear; later joins the rebels.
Jakyp – Political rival falsely accused during power struggles.
Matai – Local executor who enforces orders and taxes.
Osmon – Village activist supporting reforms.
Isak – District official investigating village conflicts.
Larion – Leader of the volunteer detachment.
Uket – Outlaw who fatally wounds Saparbay.
Maria – Samtyr's wife, representing a new social family model.
Batiy – Woman who challenges tradition by marrying Kurman.
Vasyli – Russian settler respected by villagers.
Kiyizbay – Wealthy livestock owner accused during collectivization.
Mendirman – Collective farm chairman during turbulent reforms.
Bermet – Saparbay's mother.
Umsunay – Soke's wife, reflecting women's fears during repression.

SYNOPSIS

The novel begins in the summer pastures, where village elders gather in Berdibay's yurt and defend traditional authority. Mullah Barpy preaches that wealth and poverty are written in the "Book of Fate," justifying social inequality. Saadat, a young official educated in the city, appears to represent the new Soviet order but secretly cooperates with the elders and protects elite interests. Social tensions surface during the Kurban festival, where rich and poor are visibly divided.

Saadat becomes involved in the case of Ayna, a young woman promised to the wealthy old Dosumbek. Presenting himself as her defender, he organizes her escape, provoking conflict between clans. After violent confrontations and legal hearings, Ayna rejects the forced marriage and declares her love for Saadat. Meanwhile, Saadat increasingly abuses his authority, manipulates elections, and silences opponents.

Saparbay, at first inexperienced and influenced by Saadat, gradually recognizes corruption and injustice. During village elections, reform-minded candidates like Bubush and Samtyr gain leadership roles, while Saadat loses influence. As collectivization begins, outside activist Kalpakbaev imposes harsh policies, spreading fear through arrests, confiscations, and accusations of "kulaks." Saparbay defends fairness and legality, opposing coercion. For this, he is arrested but released after his wife Zaina bravely protests.

Extremist Sharshe intensifies repression, humiliating villagers and pushing some, including Saadat, into open rebellion in the mountains. Saparbay organizes a volunteer defense unit to prevent violence and urges peaceful surrender. However, Saadat plans revenge and attacks the village at night. During the clash, Saparbay is mortally wounded while trying to persuade him to surrender.

After Saparbay's death, the village mourns. Yet change continues: rebels are driven away, and the arrival of a tractor symbolizes modernization and a new era. The novel ends with sorrow and hope intertwined, portraying the painful transformation of mountain society during collectivization.

SCENES

Old Traditions, Religion, and Social Inequality

The Book of Fate In the lush summer pastures, elders gathered in Berdibay's yurt to enjoy kumis and avoid their chores. Saadat, a young official, mocked the impoverished Imanbay, whose horse was covered in sores. This prompted Mullah Barpy to deliver a sermon on predestination. He argued that wealth and poverty were written by Allah in the "Book of Fate." By justifying social inequality as divine will, the Mullah defended the wealthy classes against Communist reforms. He insisted that everyone must accept their lot, whether it was a life of luxury or one of lifelong, wretched labor.

The Reins of Tradition In Berdibay's yurt, the village elders celebrated the return of traditional influence. Mullah Barpy argued that Saadat's political appointment had been divinely predestined, justifying the rule of the "worthy" elite. The elders mocked Duyshombay, a former servant whose brief attempt at leadership they viewed as a clumsy failure. They were satisfied that their own "children" now led the local Soviet and Komsomol, seeing them as extensions of their own power. Shooruk emphasized unity, warning that while they supported the youth at present, they expected total obedience. If the new generation chose Party ideology over traditional wisdom, the elders vowed they would resist.

Tradition and Treachery Shooruk counseled Saadat to use his new power to protect the clan's interests. Submitting to tradition, Saadat promised the elders that he would ignore Soviet restrictions and allow the Kurban feast. He even asked the atheist Kurman to hide his disbelief in order to keep the peace. Outside, the jatakchy—the poor laborers—mocked the Mullah's claims about fate. They realized that despite his official title, Saadat was merely a "wolf" protecting the elite. While the elders drank kumis and spoke of destiny, the workers saw the reality of their exploitation, knowing that the new government still favored the old masters.

Eid Holiday At the Kurban Eid Holiday many villagers gathered for prayer at the foot of Ortok Mountain. Everyone was expected to pay money before joining the prayer. Rich men sat proudly in the front, while poor people struggled. Imanbay arrived on his weak mare, Aysarala, and people laughed at her poor condition. He asked Saadat, the village chairman, to lend him one ruble, but Saadat ignored him. Finally, the old man Soke lent him the money, joking that he would collect the debt in the next world if necessary.

Kurban Prayer and Village Traditions The Kurban prayer brought the whole village together. Everyone paid money before joining the prayer, while Mullah Barpy secretly watched the growing pile of donations with satisfaction. After the prayer, people greeted one another, exchanged blessings, and invited friends to future celebrations. Soon the field became empty as families returned to their villages. Older men rode calmly, but young boys raced their horses across the hills. One rider fell when his frightened horse jumped aside, and the other boys chased after the loose horse. The festival reflected both religious traditions and the lively spirit of village life.

Saadat Visits Berdibay After the prayer, Saadat, Kurman, Osman, and Saparbay visited Berdibay, a respected former village leader. Because during the Eid holiday it was a custom to receive guests. During tea, they joked about religion, although Berdibay reminded them to respect Islamic traditions. The conversation soon turned to the day's entertainment, including horse races, wrestling, kok boru, and a bridal chase. Saadat confidently promised that their young men would win every competition. Before leaving, they decided to visit Vasyli, a wealthy Russian settler who had earned the trust of the Kyrgyz people. He respected local customs, spoke Kyrgyz, welcomed guests warmly, and generously shared food and gifts with everyone.

Holiday Games and Hidden Inequality After visiting families during the Kurban holiday, the villagers gathered for traditional games organized by the Komsomol. Saadat announced wrestling, horse races, oodarysh, kok boru, and a bridal chase. Although the celebration was full of excitement, poor young men struggled to provide their share of the opium required to pay for the festival expenses and prizes. Some explained that they had no poppy fields and could not afford the payment, but Saadat insisted that everyone must contribute or face expulsion from the Komsomol. The games began with great excitement as wrestlers and horsemen competed before a cheering crowd.

Saadat's Rise and Abuse of Power

Saadat Misuses His Authority While resting on a mountain ridge, Saadat and his companions discussed strengthening their control over the village. Instead of helping farmers with the hay harvest, Saadat focused on expanding his political influence. He proposed admitting loyal young men into the Komsomol without following proper procedures and prepared false meeting records to make the decisions appear legal. When a newspaper criticized his leadership, Saadat blamed his rival Jakyp and planned to expel him from the Komsomol. Before returning home, Saadat also secretly discussed using literacy classes as a way to bring Ayna closer to him without raising suspicion.

The District Soviet Representative Defends Samtyr One day, a district Soviet representative visited the village and encouraged poor laborers to defend their rights. Inspired by his speech, Kurman and other workers became more confident in dealing with wealthy landowners. At a public meeting, the representative investigated Kiyizbay, who falsely claimed that his shepherd Samtyr was a relative instead of a hired worker. Soke, Omur, Sharshe, and Sayakbay exposed the deception and confirmed that Samtyr had worked without fair payment. The district Soviet representative ordered Kiyizbay to pay Samtyr and sign a legal employment agreement, demonstrating the Soviet government's effort to protect poor workers.

Jakyp Was Punished after False Accusations In Saadat's yurt, Kalpakbaev, the government official listened to Saadat, Kurman, and Saparbay. They accused Jakyp of stealing Komsomol money, saying he had collected higher membership fees and had not reported them correctly. Kurman also claimed that Jakyp had traded opium and caused conflict in the village. They said Jakyp had sent a newspaper note insulting Saadat and other Komsomol members. Jakyp showed a receipt from the volost office, but Kalpakbaev ignored it. Believing the accusations, he became angry and called Jakyp a fraud. Kurman and Saparbay held Jakyp down. Kalpakbaev beat him with a whip while Saadat pretended to calm him down.

Education, Power, and Conflict in the Village At a village meeting, Saadat, the village council chairman, defended Soviet education policies, arguing that schools must be open to girls and all children, including those from wealthy families. Sharshe opposed him, insisting that only poor people should serve socialism, while the rich would remain enemies of the people. Soke and others mocked both sides, turning the debate into humor and provocation. Kurman and Osmon also joined the discussion, revealing tensions between tradition and new ideology. Saadat tried to control the meeting and promote literacy among women. The gathering exposed deep divisions in the village about class, knowledge, and social change. Ayna, who resisted a forced marriage to an older rich man, symbolized the struggle for women's freedom in this changing society.

The Red Yurt and the Struggle for Women's Education Kurman and the Kunchygysh village Komsomol members went from yurt to yurt demanding that girls and women attend the "Red Yurt" literacy school. They ordered Aymjan-ene to send her daughter and daughter-in-law to study and warned that anyone refusing education must "curse God" as proof of change. Afraid of punishment, the women finally agreed, though with hesitation. Ayna, already controlled by relatives and watched closely by her younger sister, also began attending classes, but her freedom remained strictly limited and she was constantly supervised at home and in school. Kurman insisted that education was a state duty and registered names for compulsory learning.

The Accusation Sent to the District Under Saadat's direction, a formal "resolution" was drafted and sent to the district authorities. It accused Kaseyin, son of Jainak, of arranging the marriage of the orphan girl Ayna for a bride price of sixty horses to the wealthy old Dosumbek. The document described Dosumbek as a man over fifty with two wives, claiming that he intended to take Ayna as a younger wife by exploiting his brother Batyrbek's influence. It stated that Kaseyin, after receiving the bride price, was provoking inter-tribal conflicts and encouraging violence among neighboring ails. The report presented him as the main instigator of disorder there.

Kaseyin's Reaction and the Gathering In response to the report, Kaseyin immediately gathered the leaders of his clan. About fifteen men sat in a semicircle inside his yurt, listening as he paced angrily. He denounced Saadat for humiliating his family and claimed the accusation was a political attack on the Eshim lineage. Kaseyin argued that the bride price was lawful custom and that Ayna's marriage concerned only family affairs. He urged his supporters to defend their honor and resist interference from the

ail council and the Komsomol activists. Tension rose between the two clans as voices grew louder and the meeting prepared for confrontation with Saadat's supporters ahead.

The Investigation and the Confession Confusion Under pressure from Kasein's accusation, a formal complaint against Saadat was drafted and supported by many poor villagers, though Kaseyin himself avoided signing it. Soon after, district police chief Bakas arrived to investigate. He questioned villagers one by one, but most wealthy men denied involvement while the poor were frightened. Oskonbay and Imanbay gave confused, emotional testimonies, misunderstanding the questioning and exposing village tensions. Bakas initially leaned toward protecting his influential relatives, but Saadat's evidence forced him to reconsider. In the end, he argued that both rich and poor who stirred conflict were enemies of Soviet order and must be controlled.

Autumn of Decisions Saadat warned Kurman that Ayna's situation was worsening after Kaseyin had pressured Batyrbek, the clan leader to proceed with marriage arrangements. Ayna was barred from literacy lessons and feared being taken away. Saadat urged his comrades to support him believing that his honor and the Komsomol's reputation depended on rescuing her. Meanwhile tensions between the Batyr and Eshim clans remained fragile after militia Bakas had briefly released the arrested men to appease the elders. Saadat continued to plan cautiously from his home and gathered trusted youths. Although portrayed as a champion of the poor, his motives were strategic, aiming to secure Ayna influence clans.

Ayna's Case and Clan Conflict

Ayna's Escape Saadat and Kurman secretly led a group of riders to rescue Ayna from her home at night. While the village slept, they helped her quietly escape from the yurt. Her mother woke up and shouted for help, and soon the alarm spread through the camp. Saadat lifted Ayna onto his horse and rode away with his companions. The opposing clan quickly discovered the escape and became furious. Kaseyin called for revenge and demanded that Ayna be returned. Tensions between the two clans grew stronger, and both sides began preparing for violent confrontation and retaliation.

Village Conflict In the village, people argued about the conflict between Saadat and Kaseyin. Saadat had saved Ayna from being forced into marriage with an old rich man. After this, Ayna was taken away and stayed with her mother's relatives for safety outside the village. She did not return to the village during the dispute. Villagers later spread different rumors about her and Saadat. Some said Saadat had hidden her, while others said he went to the town. The village leaders Kaseyin, Karymshak, and Isak discussed the case at the council, trying to stop the growing tension between the two villages.

Imanbay's Journey as a Messenger After Ayna was taken away, the two clans remained in conflict. The elders decided to send Imanbay to Kaseyin to ask for peace. Imanbay felt both proud and afraid, but he agreed and took a strong whip for protection. On his old horse, he rode slowly through the hills, thinking about food, life, and fate. He believed that Saadat's actions had started all the trouble, but also brought him an important mission. After crossing a river with difficulty, he continued his journey, hoping to avoid fighting and bring calm between the two hostile clans.

Imanbay's "Death" Imanbay escaped from Kaseyin's village after a violent chase across the river. He fell from his horse and lost consciousness. His family believed he was dead and cried for him. News quickly spread through both clans. The Batyr group declared that Kaseyin had killed a messenger sent for peace. They sent a report to the authorities and demanded justice. Kaseyin became afraid, realizing the situation had grown serious. Both sides gathered armed riders for a meeting on a hill. The conflict between the two villages became more dangerous, and tension grew stronger each day.

Divided Assembly At the riverside assembly, supporters of Saadat and followers of Kaseyin argued about Ayna's abduction and the reported death of Imanbay. Kurman accused the opposing side of defending old customs and violence. The crowd split along two river banks shouting accusations and counterclaims about justice and honor. Officials tried to calm the conflict and prevent bloodshed by urging peace and investigation. Rumors spread that Imanbay had died from injuries causing panic among both clans and increasing hostility. Finally elders decided to report the case to authorities and end the feud before it turned into war throughout the divided mountain valley.

The official Isak At the village meeting, many people argued about recent events between the two villages. Soke said that the conflicts had harmed poor people and called for justice. Omur agreed, saying that village leaders had caused disorder. The leaders mentioned were Saadat, Kaseyin, and Karymshak. Saadat had been the village head, while Kaseyin and Karymshak defended themselves against accusations of violence and responsibility for the clashes. During the assembly, Kurman argued with Mendirman about religion, youth, and old customs. The official Isak calmed the crowd and investigated the truth. He condemned violence, oppression, and corruption in the village.

Imanbay Speaks the Truth Imanbay spoke the truth when Isak arrived. He explained that village leaders Kaseyin, Karymshak, Shooruk, Berdibay, and Saparbay had spread fear and controlled the people. They forced him to pretend he was dead and tried to hide the truth from Isak and the doctor. Kaseyin's side and Karymshak's clan also pressured witnesses to change their statements. Shooruk and Berdibay agreed to calm the conflict after hearing about the official investigation. Imanbay then told Isak that the poor received little help while the rich kept most resources. He insisted everything had been arranged by powerful men there.

Night Pursuit and Saadat's Plan That night, Saadat returned to his village after escaping pursuit. He was angry and determined to take revenge for Ayna. He planned to bring a legal case against Dosumbek, and if that failed, to gather armed men and attack the rival village. Meanwhile, Dosumbek and his armed horsemen arrived at Bayberyu's house. They surrounded the place at night, searching for Saadat and Ayna. During the raid, they broke into the house and discovered Ayna hiding under bedding. The men pulled her out and forcibly took her away despite her struggle and cries. Saadat arrived later at night, woke his brother Zamanbek, and ordered him to call Saparbay, Osman, and Kurman. He urgently demanded help, saying that Ayna had been taken. He hid his full plan, but his thoughts remained focused on revenge and power.

Saadat's Complaint Matai told Imanbay that he had invented the tax order because Saadat forced him to collect money. Imanbay protested, saying he had never been taxed since returning from Kulja, China. Angry, he threw his old coat over the executor's horse, forcing Matai to leave. The villagers supported Imanbay and told him to complain to higher authorities. Meanwhile, Saadat collected the money and wrote a formal "judgment" accusing Batyrbek of kidnapping (future) his wife, Ayna. He sent it to the district office. Soon, tensions increased as both sides prepared for conflict and tried to protect their interests.

Ayna is Found Policemen arrived in the village with Kurman to search for Ayna and Dosumbek. They questioned Baatyrbek, but he denied hiding them. The search moved through houses and fields. In the wheat fields, Kurman finally saw Ayna struggling with Dosumbek. She managed to break free and ran toward the riders. Kurman helped her escape and took her on horseback while Dosumbek was detained. They returned to the village. Ayna refused to accept forced marriage and declared she preferred death to living with an old man.

Hearing on Ayna's Case The village case of Ayna was taken to the district center, where many people gathered. Officials, elders, and youth attended the hearing in the district building. Saadat stood before the court, defending his marriage and saying he acted out of love against old customs. Dosumbek claimed Ayna went with him willingly and denied forcing her. Ayna clearly stated she loved Saadat and rejected the forced marriage arranged by her family. The adherents of old customs insulted Ayna, saying it was shameful that she stood before the authorities and declared, "I love this one, I do not love that one," claiming she first ran away with one man and then another, and that she had caused enmity between clans, calling her shameless and cursed.

Village Mutual Aid and Wedding Feast Saadat prepared a feast by slaughtering a colt and a sheep, inviting elders led by Shooruk and Berdibay. After serving food and fermented grain drink (bozo), he asked for mutual help, saying he needed support. The elders declared unity and encouraged everyone to contribute livestock for Saadat. Some villagers agreed, while poor families like Omur, Soke, and Oskonbay refused, saying they had nothing to give. Pressure and public questioning were used to force contributions. Fourteen days later, Saadat held a grand wedding with feasting, games, and gifts. The rich celebrated, while the poor were left resentful and accused. Saadat blamed Omur for the resistance for the forced "mutual aid" contributions.

Shift of Power

First Kyrgyz Newspaper and Public Assembly In 1920, the first Kyrgyz-language school opened in the village, and later the first Kyrgyz newspaper “Erkin Too” arrived. A large public meeting was held to discuss it. Saadat, now a local official, chaired the gathering. Representatives of different groups and villagers filled the area. Kurman demanded that poor shepherd Samtyr be included in leadership decisions, exposing Saadat’s poor organization. Debate arose among villagers about fairness and representation. The meeting ended with strong revolutionary speeches, distribution of the newspaper, and excitement among villagers who saw it as a symbol of a new era.

Aysarala and the Snow Journey Aysarala, Imanbay’s horse, had long been weakened by hunger and neglect. Kept in a small open-sided shed beside his earth hut, she rarely received enough grain or hay. As winter deepened, her food supply disappeared, and she survived on whatever she could find. She ate the remaining straw from her shelter roof and even pulled apart the nearby stacked hay until it formed a hollow passage through the pile. Villagers mocked Imanbay, saying that when people began slaughtering livestock for winter, Aysarala had already been “fattened” by starvation. The once-strong horse grew thin, exhausted, and barely able to stand, carrying the weight of neglect and hardship.

Village Dispute and Collapse of Order The conflict erupted when village officials attempted to take Omur’s horse for Saadat’s use, claiming it was needed for official purposes. Omur resisted, insisting on his ownership, and a heated argument quickly spread among the villagers. Saadat’s supporters backed the officials, while poorer villagers defended Omur’s right, turning the dispute into a broader clash over authority and justice. The situation escalated into a violent fight with whips, stones, and blows. Imanbay, still disoriented from drinking, arrived and became entangled in the chaos. Amid the turmoil, Omur was struck by a stone and collapsed, shocking the crowd into sudden silence.

The Horse Seized Saadat ordered Matai to take Omur’s horse, claiming it was needed for official travel. Matai obeyed and led the animal away, though Omur resisted and followed them to Saadat’s place. When Omur demanded his horse back, Saadat lost his temper and struck him with a whip. Omur immediately struck back, injuring Saadat’s face. This incident escalated into a wider conflict between villagers, turning a personal dispute into a public fight. The elders later forced Omur to submit in the name of tradition and peace and give up his horse. Under pressure, Omur finally agreed to reconciliation. He sacrificed a sheep, placed a coat on Saadat’s shoulders, and even knelt before him.

Saparbay at the City Market Saparbay arrived in the city and decided to continue his search for education and a new path. He brought his young horse to the busy bazaar to sell it and gather money for his plans. The market was crowded with traders, wealthy buyers, and dishonest middlemen who tried to cheat inexperienced sellers. Saparbay felt confused and angry when they offered very low prices and treated him like a child. He refused to sell his horse and realized how unfair the city trade system was for poor people. He left the bazaar determined to seek education and truth instead forward.

City Evening Return Saparbay and Imanbay walked through the bazaar where traders and middlemen cheated sellers. Imanbay sold his grain cheaply, then followed Saparbay around the shops, confused by city life. In the evening they went to a club where young people performed a play about bays and workers. After the performance, they left together. On the way back, a group of hostile boys surrounded Saparbay and Larion, but the attackers scattered when Larion spoke firmly. They returned to the house and found Imanbay asleep. Saparbay lay down beside him, thinking about what had happened that night.

Elections

Winter Elections and Power Struggle During the severe winter known as *childe*, elections for the local council approached. Saadat tried to keep his position by bribing the election official and relying on wealthy supporters. Saparbay observed his manipulations and did not trust him. Poor villagers grew worried about corruption and sent Samtyr to listen in secretly. At night, Saparbay, Bubush, and Bozgunchu discussed how to stop Saadat and decided to support honest candidates such as Bubush and Samtyr. They agreed to challenge the old power structure through the elections. Outside, a dog barked, reflecting the tension and uncertainty as the struggle for authority and justice intensified in the village.

Kalpakbaev's Conduct at the Election Feast Kalpakbaev, a visiting official, attended Saadat's election feast. During the gathering, he behaved arrogantly and made inappropriate remarks about Bubush. He wrote a note to Saadat and Saparbay, asking them to arrange access to her. Saadat, eager to gain influence during the elections, agreed and pressured Saparbay to cooperate. Saparbay pretended to accept but did not intend to follow through. Later that night, Kalpakbaev followed Saparbay across the frozen river toward Bubush's house, believing he would meet her. However, Bubush remained independent, and the situation did not unfold as Kalpakbaev expected.

Kalpakbaev's Night Humiliation At night, Kalpakbaev hid in a small shelter near the barn while Saparbay went into the house. He intended to go toward Bubush's house, but Saparbay delayed and misled him. A large dog discovered Kalpakbaev and began barking loudly, causing panic. Kalpakbaev tried to drive the dog away and claimed he was an official, but the dog kept attacking him. Saparbay finally came out and calmed the animal. Kalpakbaev, cold and frightened, complained and threatened to report them. Saparbay pretended to cooperate and gave false explanations. In the end, Kalpakbaev never reached Bubush's house and returned humiliated.

The Election Meeting People gathered at the school for the election during a heavy winter storm. Men, women, and children came from different homes as officials called them to vote. Saparbay and Matai urged everyone to leave their houses and join the meeting. Oskonbay and Kalima arrived reluctantly, followed by a small dog. At the square, villagers discussed leaders and criticized Saadat for past abuses. Speeches explained that both men and women could vote. Tension rose as accusations were made. Some defended Saadat, while others demanded change. The meeting continued with heated arguments, and the crowd waited for the final decision to come.

The Fall of Old Authority At the village election meeting, tension grew as Saparbay read the list of those deprived of voting rights, including Shooruk, Berdibay, Mullah Barpy, and Kiyizbay. The hall fell silent. Berdibay objected, defending Barpy as not a real mullah and insisting he owned nothing and harmed no one. Some villagers supported him, arguing Barpy should not be excluded. Others debated loudly, exposing confusion between old social labels and new political rules. Despite protests, the atmosphere shifted toward change. The meeting revealed how former elites still tried to protect their status while ordinary people slowly questioned inherited authority and embraced new order.

Election of Village Council Representatives Isak, as the representative overseeing the process, explained the rules for nominating candidates to the village council. The villagers proposed several names, including Osmon, Saadat, Bubush, Karymshak, Jakyp, Sharshe, and Kurman. Soke suddenly suggested Saparbay, which stirred excitement in the crowd. Later, Saparbay proposed a final list including Bubush, Soke, Jakyp, and Samtyr. The assembly approved the nominations enthusiastically. Soke was elected despite his objections, followed by Samtyr, the humble shepherd. Nervous and confused, he even voted for himself, causing laughter, yet the villagers warmly accepted him as a representative of ordinary people in the new village council.

Election Results During the final meeting, the villagers discussed the remaining candidates for the village council chairman. Saadat Zarpekoy was strongly criticized. Samtyr and Soke spoke openly about his unfair treatment of poor villagers, and Isak concluded that Saadat should be removed from the candidate list. The assembly agreed unanimously. After that, attention turned to Bubush Kanimetova. Oruzbay proposed her as a fair and honest candidate who could represent equality and women's rights. The villagers supported the idea and elected Bubush as chairman of the village council. Saparbay became secretary. Other positions were also distributed among poor villagers, while Kurman was excluded from leadership.

Samtyr Returns from the City After spending a year in Frunze on special courses for former poor landless village laborers who used to work for wealthy families, Samtyr returned to his native village. He was no longer the timid shepherd boy who once served the rich households. His appearance had changed: city clothes, polished boots, and a neat scarf gave him the look of a confident young official. The villagers greeted him with curiosity and respect, and even the elderly offered blessings, praising the new life that had transformed him. Samtyr walked calmly through the village, visiting homes, including that of his former masters. He listened politely, speaking modestly, without arrogance or pride.

Samtyr's Marriage Proposal At the village committee meeting, officials encouraged Samtyr to justify the trust of the people after his year in the city. Bubush and Saparbay praised his transformation from a poor shepherd into an educated young man and proposed that he should start a family. They even suggested finding him a bride, arguing that in the new society marriage should depend on personal choice rather than bride-price or rich men traditions. Samtyr, embarrassed, left the decision to others. Bubush soon chose Maria, the eldest daughter of a poor family who had carried heavy domestic responsibilities since childhood. The news unsettled Maria, who quietly grieved the thought of leaving her home and siblings.

Samtyr and Maria: Marriage and New Life Samtyr and Maria finally married with the support of their friends, villagers, and local activists like Bubush and Saparbay. After the wedding, they lived for a time in the house of friends, but soon decided to build their own home. With help from neighbors, they received timber from the forest ranger and organized collective work to build a small house. The whole village participated, showing solidarity between former poor people and new village leaders. Old traditions of poverty and dependence began to fade as Samtyr, once a shepherd, became a settled family man with his own "smoke," symbolizing independence and a new social life.

Bubush and Samtyr: Change and Responsibility Since then, a great deal of time had passed. Bubush, once barely able to read syllable by syllable, had become a confident writer. In her free time, she read and copied texts, drafting "orders," "reports," and "minutes," practicing them repeatedly. The more she learned, the more confident she became. After being elected chair of the village council, she dealt with many people's problems: laborers, women suffering abuse, and unpaid debts, even from wealthy landlords. As her authority grew, even elders came to her for help. Realizing the importance of education, she decided to study further and went to a six-month training course. During her absence, Samtyr temporarily carried out her duties as chair.

Collectivization and Growing Fear

Rumors of Change in the Village In the village, fear spread about a new plan to force people into collective life. It was said that authorities intended to unite households into cooperative farms, and Samtyr's summons to the district office made the rumors stronger. Elders and influential villagers gathered at Mendirman's house, drinking traditional fermented drink and discussing the news with growing anxiety. The local religious leader spoke at length, mixing religious teachings with warnings about punishment and social change. His words deepened confusion among the villagers, especially the simple and uneducated. Many began to imagine losing their property and families, and panic slowly replaced everyday life.

Growing Conflict In the village, people gathered in homes and on the hills to discuss a frightening rumor that authorities planned to force everyone into collective living. Some believed it was false and said the government would not act against ordinary people. Others trusted the elders and the mullah, insisting the news must be true. Women repeated the rumor with fear and excitement, imagining loss of homes, families, and private life. At the women's gathering, the discussion turned into argument. Surmakan openly challenged others, refused to stay silent, and accused women of gossiping. The meeting became tense, filled with fear, suspicion, and personal conflict.

Village Dispute and Social Breakdown The situation in the village becomes tense when respected figures like Karymshak and Mendirman spread alarming reports about forced collectivization. A major conflict erupts among women, especially between Surmakan and Batiy, who argue over loyalty to local leaders and the new authorities. Their disagreement quickly turns into a physical fight, shocking everyone and intensifying fear in the community. At home, Umsunay panics and argues with her husband Soke, blaming him for possible danger due to his political involvement. Soke tries to reassure her, insisting the government protects poor people and that the stories are unreliable.

The Weight of Fears Villagers gather as fears spread about forming a communal system. Some, like Oskonbay, panic and pray, while Chakibash doubts the rumors but Matai mocks them, describing exaggerated benefits. Others argue fiercely: women will lose homes, livestock, and dignity. Surmakan and Batiy clash, turning talk into a violent fight, confirming growing tensions. Meanwhile, Soke and Imanbay try to calm fears, but their jokes reveal deeper anxiety. Men worry about wives, property, and authority, unsure what the future brings. The dispute centers on whether communal life is justice or loss, exposing distrust between villagers, officials, and spreading fear of social change.

The Truth of the Article A crowd gathers on a windy hill between two villages, where poor herders and farmers debate alarming rumors about forced collectivization. People fear that all livestock, land, and even families will be taken into an *artel*, a cooperative organization. Women spread anxiety, men argue, and disputes break out, reflecting deep confusion and mistrust. Characters like Saparbay, Soke, and Matai represent different attitudes: Saparbay tries to calm the crowd with official explanations, while Matai jokes cynically. Tensions peak when a newspaper is read aloud, revealing that collectivization is voluntary and not destructive. Gradually, fear gives way to cautious relief and debate about land, property, and authority.

Conversations about the Collective Farm After a village meeting and newspaper reading, news spread that Soviet officials had arrived to organize collective farms. The community became anxious and divided as poor and wealthy villagers reacted differently. At meetings, activists debated which households should be included, revealing rising class tensions. Some, like Sharshe, pushed aggressively for strict measures against wealthier villagers, while others called for unity and careful judgment. The visiting official Salamat-uulu urged cooperation between communists and poor peasants, warning that internal conflict would weaken them.

Debate at the Village Meeting At the meeting in the school yard, the activists argued fiercely about collective farming. Sharshe, emboldened by support from officials, attacked Saparbay with sharp remarks, questioning his background and loyalty. Saparbay restrained himself, insisting that time would reveal the truth and urging patience. Tension rose as villagers split between caution and urgency. Kanimet-uulu intervened, warning against division and stressing unity among party members and poor peasants. He emphasized that collectivization required discipline, clarity, and collective responsibility rather than reckless confrontation. Gradually, the crowd calmed, though suspicion and uncertainty still lingered. The debate exposed deep social tension during a moment of transformation.

The Decision and Growing Uncertainty At the end of the discussion, Samtyr announced that he would join the collective farm and urged others to follow his example. The crowd remained silent for a moment, then slowly began to respond with questions about land, livestock, and fairness. Some villagers hesitated, while others stepped forward to register their names. Kanimet-uulu clarified the policy, stressing unity, discipline, and long-term commitment to collective work. Despite explanations, doubts continued, especially among cautious elders and wealthier households. Kurman, waking confused from drunken sleep, raised his hand in the turmoil of the crowd. The meeting continued, revealing both hope and anxiety.

Pressure at the Collective Farm Meeting At a village meeting on collectivization, tensions rose as activist Kalpakbaev arrived with strict directives from the center. He demanded the rapid formation of collective farms and treated any opposition as hostility toward the party. Saparbay questioned inconsistencies in the policy and was accused of sabotage and Trotskyism. Fear spread among villagers as open debate was suppressed and loyalty to authority was enforced. The meeting ended in uncertainty about justice and the future of collectivization. Kalpakbaev consolidated control, urging immediate compliance and threatening exclusion from land and party membership. The villagers remained silent, unsure how to respond further.

Collectivization and Love in the Village People in the village accepted collectivization and followed the new rules. Saparbay worked as an official and spoke at meetings. He told everyone to join the collective farms quickly. The villagers listened but felt confused. Zaina worked as a teacher in the school. Saparbay visited her and they slowly fell in love. People in the village began to talk about them. Old customs made their relationship difficult. Zaina was already promised to another family. However, Saparbay and Zaina continued to meet and hoped for a future together.

Saparbay and Zaina Zaina stayed close to him and supported him in silence. Over time, despite social pressure and traditions, Zaina chose her love for Saparbay. Her mother finally agreed after much struggle and tears. In the end, Saparbay and Zaina married, built a home, and began their life together, staying strong through all difficulties in the village. Saparbay returned home late and was troubled after a difficult village meeting where he was accused and insulted. Zaina waited for him and noticed his sadness. She gave him food and tried to comfort him, but he stayed silent and worried about the situation in the village. That night both of them could not sleep, thinking about the growing conflict and fear among people. The next morning, the village was already talking about what had happened, and Saparbay's family became anxious.

Fear Spread by Kalpakbaev As collectivization began, fear spread throughout the ail. Kalpakbaev accused many villagers of being enemies of the new Soviet policy. He threatened wealthy families and even suspected poor people who owned houses or livestock. Samtyr and the other activists did not fully understand his accusations but were afraid to oppose him. Saparbay was unfairly labeled an opportunist because he questioned harsh policies. At night, village elders gathered in secret, fearing exile from their ancestral land. Even ordinary people, such as Imanbay, panicked about losing their only horse. Only the wise elder Soke tried to calm people and prevent unnecessary conflict.

Saparbay's Awareness

Saparbay's Integrity amid Political Persecution Kalpakbaev repeatedly denounced Saparbay as politically unreliable because he opposed the forced and hurried implementation of collectivization. Although Saparbay supported Soviet reforms, he argued that the mountain communities required patience and persuasion rather than coercion. His speeches were silenced, colleagues gradually withdrew from him, and even his family feared for his safety. Yet his wife Zaina remained his greatest source of strength, comforting him with songs and quiet encouragement, while his mother pleaded with him to avoid confrontation with the authorities. Despite loneliness, doubt, and increasing political pressure, Saparbay refused to abandon his principles, convinced that justice and the Party would eventually recognize the truth.

Batiy's New Life with Kurman While Saparbay struggled with political persecution, Batiy faced social condemnation for leaving Berdibay and marrying Kurman. Villagers criticized her for violating traditional customs, yet she remained determined to prove that her decision had brought her happiness. She carefully maintained their modest home and devoted herself to raising their young son, Tilek. Kurman's mother adored her grandson, but the family's fragile stability was undermined by Kurman's alcoholism and irresponsible behavior. Although Batiy worked hard to preserve her family's dignity, poverty, gossip, and her husband's drinking continually threatened the peaceful life she hoped to build.

Samtyr's Growing Understanding As Kalpakbaev's harsh policies created fear throughout the village, Samtyr struggled with doubt. Although he had supported the official campaign as the local Party secretary, he realized that Kalpakbaev's actions did not match the Party's stated policies on collectivization. Villagers questioned him about forced enrollment, confiscation of property, and threats of exile, placing him in a difficult position. Gradually, Samtyr recognized that his responsibility was to serve both the Party and the people. Encouraged by the villagers' continued trust, he resolved to follow Party principles rather than blindly obey Kalpakbaev, marking an important stage in his political and moral development.

The Power of the Executor Matai, the local executor, rode through the village wearing an oversized military coat and delivered official summonses to households. His appearance was both comic and intimidating, and people feared his arrival, wondering whose fate would be next. Following strict orders from Kalpakbaev and the meeting of the poor, he warned that those with higher incomes must pay heavy taxes or face punishment as "class enemies." As he moved from one influential family to another, panic spread across the village. Even the wealthy Kiyizbay was struck with terror when he received a demand for money and grain, realizing that the new authority now controlled their fate.

Suppression and Forced Collectivization At the morning meeting, Kalpakbaev gathered the village activists to discuss collectivization. Despite growing doubts, he insisted that the decisions of the party must be followed. Saparbay openly challenged him, saying that innocent people were being labeled as enemies and "opportunists" without evidence. Kalpakbaev reacted angrily and ordered that Saparbay be arrested and taken to the cellar. Samtyr stayed silent, afraid to intervene, while Saadat supported Kalpakbaev and accused Saparbay of sabotage. The meeting ended with a decision to form a collective farm and confiscate livestock and property from listed households.

Zaina's Protest and Saparbay's Release Zaina, Saparbay's wife, went to the village council and demanded his release. She accused Kalpakbaev of injustice and said she would take her complaint to Moscow if needed. Kalpakbaev was shocked but tried to act powerful, calling Saparbay an "opportunist." However, Zaina's strong protest made him nervous. To avoid trouble, he ordered Saparbay to be released from the cellar. When Saparbay came out, he did not apologize or change his opinion. Instead, he returned to the council with anger and determination, still standing against Kalpakbaev's decisions and the unfair treatment in the village.

Saparbay's Defiance and Kalpakbaev's Threats Saparbay confronted Kalpakbaev before leaving and openly declared him a tyrant. He refused to submit and said he would become Kalpakbaev's enemy. The room fell into heavy silence after his words. Samtyr secretly felt satisfied, admiring Saparbay's courage. Kalpakbaev, furious, threatened everyone, accusing them of conspiracy and warning that he would bring secret police officers and arrest them all. He ordered strict enforcement of collectivization and blamed Samtyr for betrayal. Fear spread among the officials. Kalpakbaev then left in anger, leaving confusion behind. Men soon began gathering livestock by force, escalating chaos throughout the village.

Radicalization, Rebellion, and Collapse of Order

Repression, and Everyday Life in the Village The violent confrontation between Imanbay and Sultan over the sheared horse tails quickly turned into a public spectacle, revealing the growing chaos in the village. Accusations, laughter, and rage spilled into collective disorder. Meanwhile, Surmakan moved through the village with unsettling confidence, while gossip about morality, authority, and "improving" society circulated among the women. At Saadat's house, a celebration for a newborn became a space where fear and rumor merged, including fantastical claims about "pedigree men" and state plans. Together, these scenes exposed how uncertainty, propaganda, and rumor destabilized trust and turned daily life into anxiety and suspicion.

Spring Awakening and Tension Spring arrived from the west with warm, moist winds, and the melting snow. Bermet stood in her yard watching the children, moved by their carefree happiness. Their innocence reminded her of her son, Saparbay, who had once been just as joyful. Now he was troubled, drawn into conflict and spending sleepless nights writing reports against Kalpakbaev. Bermet worried constantly and begged him to stop, but he insisted he was fighting for justice. As discussions about authority and collective life spread through the village, uncertainty and anxiety grew alongside the arrival of spring.

Return of Bubush Bubush returned from city studies with her friend, filled with hope and concern for her native ail. During the journey, the driver of the horse-drawn cart spoke about unrest, collectivization, and growing tensions between activists and local elites. Bubush remembered a letter from Saparbay describing conflict with Kalpakbaev and uncertainty about his fate. As they approached home, she felt both excitement and worry. The spring landscape seemed peaceful, yet people whispered about arrests and disappearances. Upon arrival, she learned that Saparbay and Samtyr had vanished.

Saparbay's Letter to Bubush Saparbay wrote to Bubush during a period of intense tension in the ail. He described how people were restless, anxious, and divided because of the ongoing collectivization process. He explained his direct conflict with Kalpakbaev and suggested that either he or his opponent might soon be removed or punished. Saparbay said he felt isolated, fighting almost alone for what he believed was justice. He urged Bubush to complete her studies successfully and return quickly to help guide the work in the village. He also noted confusion, fear, and weak leadership in the local administration, which deepened the instability in the community.

Bureau Meeting: Voices and Decision Isak Termekchikov, the official opened the discussion with a report on Kalpakbaev's actions in the village, accusing him of coercive collectivization practices. Kalpakbaev repeatedly interrupted, defending himself and blaming "enemies of socialism." Kanimetov, as chair, restored order and emphasized procedural discipline. Medetbekov supported the commission's findings, adding testimonies from villagers and even citing a critical song about Kalpakbaev's rule. Saparbay Sa-kaev sharply opposed Kalpakbaev, describing how his orders caused fear, livestock loss, and distrust among villagers. Despite Kalpakbaev's defiant refusal to admit guilt, the bureau voted to remove him from office and expel him from the Communist Party.

Kalpakbaev's Fall outside the Committee After the decision, Kalpakbaev left the volost committee building in anger and humiliation. Kanimetov's ruling still echoed inside as he stepped outside into the courtyard. Near the tavern, a group of horsemen watched with amusement. One rider mockingly called to him, and others laughed about cattle, drinking, and authority. Kalpakbaev tried to assert control again, shouting at them for behaving improperly in front of the committee building. The riders only mocked him further, sensing his loss of power. His authority had collapsed completely. Without support or respect, Kalpakbaev walked into the tavern, swallowed by silence, anger, and defeat.

Women Decide about the Meeting Bubush, Samtyr, Saparbay and other activists came to the village again. They spoke calmly with the people and asked them to attend a meeting about the artel. They visited houses and tried to explain things without pressure. Women listened but gave excuses. One said she had to take care of her child. Another said her cow had just calved. A third said her dough would go bad if she left. Bubush only smiled and did not force anyone. After they left, the women talked among themselves. Some were afraid, others were curious. In the end, they slowly began to think about going to hear the news.

The Old Carpenter and the Gathering Every spring the old carpenter Seyit moved to the summer pastures with his simple tools and lived a modest life. He made yurts and saddles, working quietly while his deaf wife shared village rumors. People feared a new order and refused meetings because of false stories about inspections. Activists arrived, explained the truth, and invited everyone to a community gathering peacefully. Gradually villagers calmed down, listened, and began to attend the meeting without fear. Even the carpenter and his wife decided to go, realizing that the rumors were wrong and that important decisions about the cooperative would be discussed there.

Division of the Village and the Fate of the Artel At the village gathering, the debate over collectivization reached a peak. Villagers complained about livestock losses and injustice, while Imanbay defended himself by referring to official orders. The crowd split: some moved to the hill refusing to join the artel, others remained uncertain, caught between fear and hope. Isak urged voluntary participation and explained the state policy, but doubts persisted. Soke was torn between his family and duty; at first he considered leaving, but ultimately stayed. The village stood at a turning point: old traditions were collapsing, new ones had not yet taken root, and people struggled to find their place in a rapidly changing world.

Chaos Abdy and Sultan continued fighting in the village despite repeated calls to stop. The villagers remained divided over the formation of the collective farm (artel). Chairman Mendirman tried to impose order with a strict and forceful style, but many villagers resisted giving up their livestock and tools. Arguments spread over ownership, responsibility, and fear of punishment. Some villagers supported collectivization, while others felt they were losing everything they owned. Chaos intensified when Abdy stormed into the yard, insulted the collective system, and attacked Mendirman, who narrowly escaped injury. Despite the unrest, authorities organized the work, and the first collective plowing eventually began.

Tensions and Change in the Village When Bubush returned from her courses and began work, villagers visited the village council to greet her warmly. They praised her education and hoped she would bring order. Soke also visited and recalled past unrest and confusion during Kalpakbaev's rule, warning that instability still remained. Bubush listened carefully and became more attentive to people's moods, while maintaining a balanced relationship with her husband. At the same time, the village stood at a turning point. Old customs and fears still held strong, and rumors spread easily among the people.

Decline of Labor Discipline in the Fields During spring plowing, the second brigade stopped working and lay down on the field, refusing to continue. Despite arriving with Bubush and Saparbay, Mendirman's orders were ignored. Workers complained that there were no seeds to sow and mocked the chairman, saying he had "sold the grain to the mill." Some planned to abandon collective farming and migrate to the summer pastures (jailoo). Others argued that the artel brought no benefit and that traditional nomadic life was better. As tensions rose, discipline collapsed completely, and the plows remained idle while debates, insults, and accusations replaced real agricultural work in the fields.

Imanbay's Escape to the Jailoo amid Collectivization Rumors Imanbay abandoned farming and devoted himself entirely to preparing for migration to the jailoo, even though he had no proper yurt. He rode his old horse daily, carrying ropes and tools, and confidently rejected the collective farm as dangerous. He believed that joining the artel would lead to punishment or loss of his property. In the village, rumors spread that the collective system would soon collapse, causing widespread hesitation and inactivity. Wealthier families secretly moved livestock and prepared to leave. As fear and uncertainty grew, agricultural work weakened, and activists became increasingly alarmed by the rising resistance and disorder.

Livestock Inspection and Confiscation Order Isak, Samtyr, Osmon and two militiamen rode into the mountains to execute a state order against Kiyizbay. They followed his seasonal migration route through Koy-Tash into high pastures. At night they reached a nomadic camp and stayed in a yurt. At dawn Samtyr

inspected the herd and estimated numbers. Sheep, horses and cattle were counted but shortages appeared. Kiyizbay insisted he had distributed animals among relatives or sold them for tax. Officials rejected his explanation and continued the audit. Samtyr prepared documentation for confiscation. The inspection confirmed missing livestock and strengthened the decision to seize property and detain Kiyizbay him.

Confiscation of Kiyizbay's Cattle Kiyizbay lowered his head, too weak to stand, while his wife and relatives cried. Osmon urged the commission members to sign the act quickly. Four members signed; the old man left fingerprint instead of signature. Enraged, the wife struck the old man with a wooden dog bowl. She cursed him and the others, screaming in helpless rage. Samtyr ordered the herd seized and the camp cleared immediately. Kiyizbay was placed on a weak mare and escorted by a militiaman. His wife ran after him, crying until she collapsed on the path. At the river Kaseyin shouted in despair and fury.

Breakdown of the Ploughing Brigade Soke, the brigade leader, faced growing resistance among his ploughmen during the spring sowing. After a drunken villager provoked a fight and disrupted the work, the laborers abandoned the fields, leaving only a few behind. Soke's attempts to restore order revealed deep dissatisfaction: some refused collective work, arguing that they also had to tend their own farms, while others compared their hardship to that of wealthier herders who were preparing for seasonal migration to the pasture. Despite Soke's insistence that the collective farm was "their own," not foreign, tensions rose between individual survival needs and collective labor demands, and the brigade remained fragmented with reduced productivity.

The Confrontation Active members arrived at the upper ails and confronted the local leaders. Saadat tried to ride away but was forced to stop. The officials ordered him to dismount and treated him as a class enemy. Berdibay and Shook were humiliated in front of their people, while tensions rose among villagers who watched in silence. Sharshe aggressively enforced the political orders, accusing them of resisting collectivization and planning to flee to the mountains. Despite objections from some officials, he struck Saadat and insisted on strict punishment. The community was left shocked and divided as authority was imposed through fear and violence.

Class Terror and Ideological Clash Sharshe thought he must inspire fear. He mounted Saadat's horse and drove Shooruk, Berdibay, and Saadat toward the prison. He struck the horse and paraded powerfully. Villagers gathered, confused. Imanbay fled in panic. Bubush and Saparbay resisted taking women and families. Sharshe resented their hesitation and swore revenge. He forced the arrested toward the cellar, mocking them for past wealth and exploitation. Saadat was humiliated and enraged, dreaming of retaliation. Inside the dark cellar, the men suffered despair, prayer, and anger. Above them, officials argued: Sharshe demanded strict class punishment, while Bubush insisted on lawful, fair interpretation of policy rule.

Rumors Spread by Two Young Men in the Village Two young men from the Upper village—a dark-skinned tall man and his companion—had ridden through the village and spread false rumors about impending "kulak" arrests. They had told Umsunay that Soke, Omer, Imanbay, Murat, and others were already on a secret list and would soon be punished by order from above. Their invented stories had quickly frightened the villagers. Umsunay had been deeply shaken and had begun to weep, believing that Soke was truly in danger. As the rumors spread, women of the ail had repeated them, turning confusion into collective panic, fear, and growing mistrust among neighbors.

Escape from the Cellar Hearing Imanbay's drunken confession about a secret oath and past conspiracies, Saadat realized their situation had become even more dangerous, yet he also saw a chance to escape. Inside the dark cellar, panic and bitterness grew among the prisoners. Shook and Berdibay, exhausted and resigned, accepted their fate, while Saadat and Kurman began secretly breaking a weak spot in the wall. Kurman agreed to help Saadat escape, motivated by revenge against Sharshe. Shook refused to flee, accepting death with calm dignity. Eventually, Saadat and Kurman slipped out through the opening into the night, leaving the old men behind in the darkness of the cellar.

Omor's Dilemma and the Advice of Soke Omor, deeply troubled by rumors of being labeled a kulak, cannot find peace and reflects on his loyalty to the Soviet system that once uplifted him. At night, he meets Sultan and learns that Saadat's group is gathering and planning resistance. Confused and fearful, Omer seeks advice from Soke. Soke warns him not to flee to the mountains or join armed rebellion, argu-

ing that such actions would make them enemies of the people. He urges honesty and consultation with authorities instead. Despite Umsunay's fear, Soke insists they must not hide the situation and should confront it responsibly together.

Kiyizbay was Arrested That evening Isak and his group of officials returned from the mountains, bringing the dispossessed rich man Kiyizbay. The villagers had waited all day, watching the road in silence. When Kiyizbay arrived on a worn-out mare, he looked pitiful and broken. Even those who once hated him now felt pity. Confused rumors spread, and people gathered near the village council, unsure what would happen next. Some believed the arrests were unjust, others feared worse punishment. Isaak soon ordered a review of the situation and criticized the excesses of Borukchiev. He declared firmly that there were no "poor kulaks," and justice must be based on facts, not fear.

Saparbay's Integrity under Suspicion After Saadat fled into the mountains, Saparbay organized a volunteer unit to prevent frightened villagers from joining him and urged Saadat's supporters to return peacefully. Rejecting Sharshe's harsh methods, he believed justice should replace fear. Enraged by his exclusion from command, Sharshe secretly wrote a report accusing Saparbay of protecting "bandits," collaborating with enemies, and planning to flee to China. Although some details about Saadat's activities were true, the accusations against Saparbay were fabricated. Summoned by the regional official Sergeyev, Saparbay arrived exhausted but confident, determined to speak honestly because his conscience was clear despite the growing political suspicion surrounding him.

Saadat's Revenge and Kurman's Doubts As Saadat's band hid in the mountains, Kurman grew increasingly regretful. Realizing that his imprisonment would likely have been temporary, he now saw himself transformed into a true fugitive. Though longing to surrender, he was trapped by fear and loyalty. Saadat, consumed by hatred toward Saparbay and Sharshe, rejected any thought of reconciliation and vowed violent revenge, ordering Kurman to lure Saparbay into an ambush. After Saadat departed with his mounted followers, Kurman concealed the encounter from the frightened young Samat, inventing a harmless story about meeting the village patrol while struggling with his own growing doubts and despair.

Saadat and Kaseyin: Exile, Resentment, and Lost Honor At dawn, Saadat and Kaseyin met secretly in the mountains, both living as fugitives after fleeing their village. Saadat, consumed by anger and humiliation, vowed revenge against Saparbay and the local activists whom he blamed for his downfall. Kaseyin, older and more experienced, tried to calm him, urging him not to turn his hatred against ordinary people. As they looked down on the village from a mountain ridge, memories of their former lives filled them with sorrow. Kaseyin reflected on how power, status, and fortune had vanished, leaving them isolated men struggling between revenge, pride, and survival.

Saparbay's Clever Disguise Saadat finalized his plan to murder Saparbay and other activists before leading his relatives into the mountains. Most of his followers, including Murat, were unaware that the invitation to dinner was part of an assassination plot. During the gathering, the conspirators prepared to strike, but the timely arrival of Osman and other activists forced Saparbay to leave unharmed. Learning of the conspiracy, Saparbay devised a daring counterplan. Disguised as Saadat, he secretly visited Sultan and Kerim at night, convincing them to reveal their preparations, supplies, and escape plans, thereby exposing the hidden conspiracy without violence.

The Struggle for Seed Grain After Kalpakbaev's disappearance, the village gradually stabilized as more families voluntarily joined the collective farm. Yet collectivization also attracted opportunists. Former elites such as Karymshak secured influential positions through flattery and gifts, while self-appointed activists avoided manual labor and abused their authority. The greatest challenge came with collecting seed grain. Peasants hesitated to surrender their last reserves, fearing famine, whereas local officials resorted to pressure and coercion. At a crucial village meeting, the respected elder Soke inspired voluntary contributions through personal sacrifice. His example encouraged others to donate grain, though mistrust, rumors, and resentment toward corrupt activists continued to spread throughout the community.

The Abuse of Power As seed shortages worsened, local activists intensified pressure on villagers to surrender their remaining grain. While Saparbay appealed for voluntary cooperation, Sharshe relied on threats, intimidation, and arrests, accusing reluctant peasants of being kulaks or enemies of Soviet power. The confrontation reached its peak when Imanbay openly defied Sharshe, exposing the hypocrisy of

privileged activists who demanded sacrifices from others while contributing little themselves. The respected elder Soke likewise condemned corrupt local leaders for exploiting ordinary people instead of serving the collective good. The gathering ended in fear and disorder, as villagers dispersed, increasingly disillusioned by injustice carried out in the name of collectivization.

The Road to Rebellion Sharshe's growing fanaticism and abuse of power deepened divisions within the village. Convinced that nearly everyone was an enemy of Soviet authority, he harassed peasants, humiliated former rebels seeking reconciliation, and drove many toward renewed resistance. His persecution of Kurman and the violent searches of Sultan's household destroyed hopes for peaceful reintegration. Meanwhile, Saadat, hiding in the mountains, abandoned thoughts of surrender and instead prepared for armed escape with his followers and their families. Torn between fear and loyalty, Kurman ultimately joined the fugitives, while others secretly awaited the planned flight, convinced that Sharshe's tyranny had left them no alternative.

Preparing for the Inevitable Clash As rumors of Saadat's planned attack spread, Saparbay quietly organized the village's defense. Suspecting betrayal, he recalled Bubush and Samtyr, warned trusted comrades, and divided the volunteer detachment into three groups to protect the village and collective herds. While some villagers gathered to defend their homes, others secretly prepared to join the rebels. Under the cover of darkness, Saadat and Kaseyin led their armed followers toward the village, determined to rescue their families and livestock before fleeing across the mountains. Meanwhile, Saparbay's men waited in silence, uncertain where the rebels would strike first.

The Final Clash and Tragic Resolution

The Fatal Night Battle Saadat's band reached the village from an unexpected direction and began driving away horses before the volunteer detachment discovered them. Saparbay made one final attempt to persuade his former friend to surrender peacefully, promising that no harm would come to him. As Saadat hesitated, the outlaw man rejected any compromise and opened fire, wounding Saparbay. A fierce battle followed as the volunteers surrounded the raiders, forcing them to flee into the mountains. Despite his mortal wound, Saparbay urged his comrades to continue the pursuit. He died on horseback, bidding farewell to his family, friends, and beloved homeland.

The Death of Saparbay and the Aftermath of the Raid Kasein's men raided the collective farm's horse herd and attempted to seize villagers and livestock, but Samtyr's volunteer detachment forced them to flee. News of Saparbay's mortal wounding spread grief throughout the village. Terrified by the violence and fearing retaliation from both Soviet authorities and the basmachi, Imanbay fled into the mountains, only to return after a night of confusion and self-deception. By dawn, the village mourned its losses, counted stolen horses, and searched for the missing. Despite reassuring his family, Saparbay died from his wounds, honored by friends as a martyr who sacrificed his life for the people.

The Loss of Aysarala and the Mourning of the Village At dawn the village was filled with grief after Saparbay's death. People gathered at his house and looked toward the mountain passes where the pursuit continued. On the snowy slopes, faint figures of riders appeared—both their own men and the bandits, tangled in chaos. Larion's detachment moved upward, finding traces of escape: abandoned horses, dead animals, and signs of violence. Tension grew in the mountains as the confrontation became inevitable. Meanwhile, Imanbay mourned his mare Aysarala, realizing she had died. In the village, people said farewell to Saparbay, recognizing the meaning of his sacrifice.

The Arrival of the Tractor and the New Dawn A powerful, unknown roar suddenly spread through the air, growing louder and closer. The villagers froze in fear and wonder, unable to understand what was coming. The mullah declared it a sign of ancestral spirits, but as the sound approached, he rode toward the hilltop cemetery. There he discovered a strange iron machine — a tractor — shaking the earth as it moved. Behind it came villagers, laughing and celebrating, led by Isaak and others. Imanbay, amazed, forgot his fears and praised the Soviet power that brought such a miracle. The tractor plowed the field, and hope replaced sorrow in the village.

CHARACTER ANALYSIS

Saparbay

Saparbay is the central character of *In the Mountains*, and the moral heart of the novel. At the beginning, he is an ordinary village youth with little education and limited life experience. He is not naturally a leader, nor does he fully understand politics at first. However, as events unfold, Saparbay gradually develops political awareness and moral strength. Through conflicts with Saadat, Kalpakbaev, and Sharshe, he grows into a principled and responsible figure. His journey reflects the painful transformation of society during collectivization. Saparbay represents the struggle to remain just and humane in a time of fear, corruption, and violence.

Principled Saparbay is deeply principled, even when it costs him safety and status. Unlike Saadat, who manipulates power for personal gain, Saparbay believes authority should serve the people. During collectivization, he supports reform but rejects coercion and injustice. He openly challenges Kalpakbaev when innocent villagers are labeled as enemies. Even after being arrested and humiliated, he does not change his position. His commitment to fairness isolates him politically, yet he refuses to compromise his values. In the final confrontation with Saadat, he seeks peaceful surrender instead of revenge. His principles ultimately lead to his death, but also define his moral victory.

Courageous Saparbay shows both moral and physical courage throughout the novel. He dares to question powerful officials like Kalpakbaev and Sharshe, even when others remain silent out of fear. When villagers panic under accusations of being “kulaks,” he tries to calm them and defend justice. His bravery is most visible during the final night attack. Instead of hiding, he organizes the village defense and personally confronts Saadat, offering him a chance to surrender peacefully. Even after being mortally wounded, he continues thinking about the safety of his people. His courage is not aggressive, but steady and responsible.

Evolving Saparbay is an evolving character whose growth shapes the entire novel. At first, he follows Saadat and trusts his authority. He lacks political understanding and confidence. However, through experience, conflict, and observation, he begins to think independently. He recognizes corruption, questions radical policies, and develops his own sense of justice. Unlike static characters such as Sharshe or Saadat, Saparbay changes internally. His development mirrors the awakening of social consciousness in the village. By the end, he is no longer a simple follower but a thoughtful leader. His evolution makes him realistic and human rather than idealized.

Saadat

Saadat is one of the central and most complex characters. Educated in the city, he returns to the village as a representative of the new Soviet order. At first, he appears progressive, confident, and modern. He speaks about reform, education, and social change. However, as the story develops, his ambition and pride begin to dominate his actions. Instead of serving the people, he uses his position to strengthen his own power and influence. His gradual moral decline contrasts sharply with Saparbay's growth. Saadat represents the corruption of authority and the tragic consequences of pride and revenge.

Ambitious Saadat is highly ambitious and constantly seeks influence and recognition. He wants to be respected as a leader and intellectual in the village. He manipulates meetings, controls the Komso-mol, and removes rivals like Jakyp to protect his position. Even in Ayna's case, although he defends her from forced marriage, he also uses the situation to increase his authority and reputation. His ambition blinds him to ethical limits. Instead of cooperating fairly with others, he prioritizes status and control. Over time, his desire for power becomes stronger than his commitment to justice, leading him toward conflict and eventual rebellion.

Manipulative Saadat often manipulates people and situations for personal advantage. He cooperates with traditional elders when it benefits him, despite presenting himself as a modern reformer. He falsifies documents, pressures villagers financially, and supports false accusations against opponents.

During political conflicts, he pretends to act for the good of society while secretly protecting his own interests. His ability to speak confidently helps him persuade and influence others. However, this manipulation damages trust within the community. Eventually, when he loses power, his inability to accept responsibility pushes him toward revenge instead of reconciliation.

Proud Pride is Saadat's most destructive trait. He cannot tolerate criticism or loss of authority. When elections weaken his influence, he feels humiliated rather than reflective. Instead of accepting change peacefully, he becomes resentful. His wounded pride drives him to join the rebels in the mountains. Even during the final confrontation, when Saparbay offers him a chance to surrender, he hesitates but cannot overcome his pride and anger. This stubbornness isolates him morally and politically. Unlike Saparbay, who grows through hardship, Saadat becomes trapped by his ego. His pride ultimately leads to his downfall and tragic transformation.

Possessive Saadat presents himself as Ayna's defender, saving her from a forced marriage to Dosumbek. However, his actions are not entirely selfless. Although Ayna loves him, Saadat also treats the situation as a matter of personal pride and ownership. He wants to prove that he can defeat traditional authority and win her. His decision is partly about love, but also about control, honor, and status. He does not fully consider the wider consequences for the village or the clan conflict that follows. This shows that his love is mixed with ego and possessiveness.

Sharshe

Sharshe is one of the most radical and controversial characters. Unlike Saparbay, who seeks justice and balance, Sharshe represents extreme ideological rigidity during collectivization. He is a passionate supporter of Soviet reforms, but he interprets them in the harshest possible way. For him, anyone who questions policy becomes an enemy. As political tension grows in the village, Sharshe gains influence through fear and aggression. His character reflects the dangerous side of revolutionary enthusiasm when it turns into fanaticism. Through Sharshe, the author shows how good intentions can become destructive when guided by intolerance and hatred.

Fanatical Sharshe is deeply fanatical in his beliefs. He sees collectivization not as a policy to implement carefully, but as a battlefield between friends and enemies. Anyone who hesitates, doubts, or asks questions is labeled a "kulak" or traitor. He does not tolerate compromise or discussion. His thinking is rigid and absolute. This fanaticism prevents him from understanding the complexity of village life and human fear. Instead of persuading people, he tries to break them. His blind devotion to ideology turns him into an instrument of repression rather than a servant of justice.

Ruthless Sharshe enforces political decisions through intimidation and humiliation. He arrests villagers, insults elders, and publicly shames those accused of resisting collectivization. He even humiliates former local leaders to demonstrate power. Fear becomes his main political tool. Unlike Saparbay, who believes reform should be lawful and humane, Sharshe believes terror ensures obedience. His ruthlessness deepens division within the community and pushes some villagers toward rebellion. Although he claims to act in the name of equality, his cruelty damages trust and creates chaos. His actions reveal how violence can corrupt revolutionary ideals.

Authoritarian Sharshe believes authority must be unquestioned. He values discipline and control over dialogue. When Saparbay challenges excessive measures, Sharshe interprets it as betrayal. He sees disagreement not as political debate but as hostility. This authoritarian mindset isolates him from the villagers and even from fellow activists. He prioritizes loyalty to orders over understanding local conditions. His rigid leadership style contributes to fear, suspicion, and eventual rebellion. Through Sharshe, the novel illustrates how unchecked authority, even when justified by ideology, can destabilize society and undermine the very reforms it seeks to defend.

Bubush

Bubush is one of the most progressive and inspiring characters. She represents the new generation of educated Soviet women emerging in a traditional mountain society. At the beginning, she is modest and inexperienced, but through education and public service she becomes a confident and capable leader. Later elected chair of the village council, she works responsibly and fairly. Unlike radical figures such as Sharshe, Bubush believes in dialogue, patience, and justice. Her character symbolizes social change, women's empowerment, and the importance of education in transforming both individuals and society.

Determined Bubush is determined in her pursuit of education and responsibility. She studies persistently, practices writing official documents, and improves herself through effort. Even when villagers doubt or underestimate her, she continues working seriously. As chair of the village council, she faces complex social and political problems but does not retreat. She balances firmness with fairness. Her determination allows her to succeed in a male-dominated environment. She proves that leadership is not about loudness or aggression, but about commitment and steady work. Through her determination, she becomes a symbol of women's strength during social transformation.

Fair-minded Bubush consistently seeks fairness and justice. Unlike Sharshe, who uses fear, she listens carefully before making decisions. She does not blindly accuse people of being enemies. During collectivization debates, she supports policy but resists unnecessary cruelty. Even when tensions rise, she remains calm and balanced. Villagers respect her because she does not abuse power. She understands that reforms must consider real human needs. Her fairness builds trust in the community. Through Bubush, the novel shows that true authority comes from integrity and respect rather than intimidation.

Progressive Bubush embodies progress in both social and gender terms. She supports education for women, public participation, and new forms of leadership. Her rise to the position of chair demonstrates the weakening of patriarchal traditions. She challenges old customs not through rebellion, but through competence and example. Her marriage and public life show that women can combine family and political responsibility. Bubush represents hope for a more equal society. Through her character, the author highlights the transformative power of education and the gradual emergence of modern values in the mountain village.

Imanbay

Imanbay is one of the most vivid and symbolic characters in *In the Mountains*. Unlike the powerful activists or wealthy elites, he represents the ordinary, impoverished villagers caught in the chaos of social change. He is a poor man whose weak, neglected horse, Aysarala, directly reflects his own desperate condition. Throughout the novel, Imanbay is often treated as a comic figure, manipulated by both traditional elders and new officials. However, his character is also deeply tragic. He embodies the confusion, fear, and struggle of simple people trying to survive when their familiar world is completely torn apart.

Submissive Imanbay is highly submissive, constantly yielding to those in power. Lacking the wealth of the elders or the education of the activists, he allows himself to be used as a tool by both sides. When the clan leaders need a messenger, they send him; when they want to stir conflict, they force him to pretend he is dead. He accepts these dangerous roles out of fear and respect for traditional authority. This submissiveness prevents him from standing up for his own rights. He remains a puppet of more powerful men, showing how easily the poor were exploited.

Vulnerable Imanbay is extremely vulnerable, both economically and emotionally. His poverty is symbolized by his starving horse, Aysarala, whom the villagers constantly mock. This economic vulnerability leaves him at the mercy of others, forcing him to beg for a single ruble to join the Kurban prayer. Emotionally, he is easily frightened by rumors of collectivization and arrests. Lacking political understanding, he panics and flees into the mountains during conflicts. His vulnerability highlights the psychological toll of rapid social change on uneducated peasants who had no protection against the harsh forces of both old clan traditions and new Soviet reforms.

Resigned Imanbay is deeply resigned to his low status and difficult life. Influenced by Mullah Barpy's sermons on predestination, he believes that his poverty is written in the "Book of Fate" by divine will. Instead of fighting against social inequality or embracing revolutionary change, he accepts his miserable lot as unchangeable destiny. Even when presented with new opportunities, his fatalistic worldview makes him highly suspicious and fearful of progress. This resignation reflects the deep psychological grip of traditional beliefs on the older generation, making them passive observers of history rather than active participants in their own liberation.

Comical Imanbay provides essential comic relief through the absurd contrast between his pride and his miserable reality. His attempts to ride with dignity on his skeletal, starving mare, Aysarala, make him the laughingstock of the village. His comical nature peaks when he is forced to pretend to be a corpse to fool Soviet officials, struggles to look intimidating as a peace messenger while terrified inside, and gets hilariously bewildered by city markets. These clumsy misadventures and his naive, easily manipulated behavior turn his genuine struggles into moments of farce, highlighting the sheer confusion of a simple man lost in historical change.

Absurd Imanbay's humor also shines in his absurd reactions to modern technology and authority. When a tractor first arrives, his superstitious terror turns to childish wonder; initially fearing the roaring machine as an ancestral spirit, he quickly praises this Soviet 'miracle.' His comical defiance appears when, angry at a tax collector, he throws his ragged coat over the executor's horse to chase him away. Additionally, after drinking bozo, he stumbles into serious political brawls, completely disoriented and turning tense drama into chaotic farce. His constant, naive misunderstandings of the rapidly changing world create genuine lighthearted warmth amidst the village's ideological struggles.

THEMES

Society

Gender: *Women's Rights:* Forced Marriage, Education, Activism, and Clan Conflict

The novel portrays a patriarchal society where women are treated as property, exchanged through bride price, and excluded from decision-making. Through Ayna, Bubush, and Zaina, the author shows how female awakening challenges not only family structures but the entire social order.

The issue of forced marriage is embodied in Ayna's story. Promised to the wealthy Dosumbek in exchange for sixty horses, she becomes the center of a fierce conflict between two clans. What should be a personal choice turns into a matter of honor and power. When Saadat helps her escape, the Batyr and Eshim clans prepare for violence. Riders gather, accusations spread, and even Imanbay is sent as a peace messenger. The clash proves that in traditional society a woman's fate is tied to male pride and clan rivalry. Ayna's refusal to accept the marriage is therefore revolutionary—not only against her family, but against an entire system of collective control over women's lives.

Education becomes another battleground. The "Red Yurt" literacy school challenges the belief that women belong only in the domestic sphere. Bubush represents the success of this transformation. Through education, she rises to become chair of the village council, governing with fairness and calm authority. Her leadership demonstrates that women can shape political life responsibly.

Zaina adds another dimension of activism. When Saparbay is unjustly arrested, she boldly confronts Kalpakbaev and demands justice, showing courage in the public sphere.

Through these intertwined struggles—forced marriage, clan conflict, education, and activism—the novel presents women's rights as central to social transformation. The liberation of women becomes inseparable from the modernization of society itself.

Illustrative moment: The room is filled with elders, officials, young activists, and members of both rival clans. The atmosphere is tense; the conflict between the Batyr and Eshim clans has already brought the village to the edge of violence. For the elders, the issue is not love but honor and bride price. They argue that Ayna was lawfully promised to Dosumbek and that tradition must be respected.

Then Ayna stands before the assembly and clearly declares: "I love this one. I do not love that one." Her simple words break the silence. Some elders shout in anger, calling her shameless for speaking publicly about love. They accuse her of dishonoring her family and causing clan conflict.

Politics

Conflict: Tradition vs. Modernization/The Clash of Eras

At the heart of *In the Mountains* lies the profound and often painful conflict between a centuries-old Kyrgyz nomadic lifestyle and the relentless force of Soviet modernization. This clash of eras is not merely a political struggle; it is a deep cultural and psychological disruption that divides families, uproots ancestral customs, and forces a traditional society into the modern, industrialized world.

The "Old Way" is fiercely defended by the village elders, such as Berdibay and Shooruk, and spiritually legitimized by Mullah Barpy. Operating from the comfortable sanctuary of summer yurts over cups of kumis, these figures represent the patriarchal clan hierarchy. For them, tradition is a tool to preserve their socioeconomic dominance. Mullah Barpy's fatalistic sermon on the "Book of Fate" serves as a spiritual shield for the wealthy, convincing impoverished laborers that their misery is divinely ordained. Even when the younger generation assumes official roles, the elders expect them to prioritize clan lineage and ancestral customs over communist ideology.

Conversely, the "New Way" slowly dismantles this ancient structure through education, political reform, and technology. The arrival of the Kyrgyz-language newspaper *Erkin Too* and the establishment of the "Red Yurt" literacy schools symbolize the dawn of a new consciousness, liberating women and the poor from feudal dependency. During winter elections, this modernization shifts from cultural influence to political reality as former elites are stripped of their voting rights, demonstrating that the old social hierarchies are no longer absolute.

The ultimate resolution of this clash is crystallized in the arrival of the tractor. Initially feared by the superstitious villagers—and even Mullah Barpy—as an ancestral spirit, the roaring machine quickly becomes a celebrated miracle. Its iron blades plowing the ancient fields represent the inevitable victory of modernization, leaving behind the fatalism of the past to cultivate a new, irreversible dawn in the mountains.

Illustrative moment: Komsomol members go from yurt to yurt demanding that women and girls attend classes. For the elders and conservative families, this is shocking. Traditionally, girls were expected to stay at home, prepare for marriage, and obey male authority. Education for girls threatens the patriarchal structure of the clan. Some families resist, hesitate, or feel ashamed to send their daughters.

Ayna's situation especially highlights this conflict. While she is being prepared for a forced marriage under old custom, she is also attending literacy lessons—symbolizing two opposing futures. The Red Yurt represents knowledge, independence, and equality, while the arranged marriage represents submission and tradition.

The Corruption of Power and Extremism

The novel offers a sharp and deeply human warning about the corruption of power and the dangers of political extremism. Through its characters, the story shows that revolution does not automatically produce justice—sometimes it simply replaces one form of oppression with another.

Saadat represents corruption from within. He returns from the city with education and political authority, appearing to embody progress and reform. The villagers initially trust him as a representative of the new Soviet order. However, behind his progressive language, Saadat hides selfish ambition and clan loyalty. He manipulates elections, falsifies documents, punishes personal rivals, and pressures poor families into contributing livestock for his own wedding feast. His involvement in Ayna's case reveals this duality most clearly: while presenting himself as her liberator from forced marriage, he simultaneously uses the situation to strengthen his personal reputation and political influence. Saadat's corruption is dangerous precisely because it wears the mask of idealism.

Kalpakbaev and Sharshe represent a different but equally destructive threat: ideological extremism. Kalpakbaev arrives from outside and imposes collectivization through fear, threats, and accusations. He labels innocent villagers as enemies, arrests those who question his methods, and treats any disa-

greement as treason. When he is finally removed, Sharshe fills the vacuum with even greater fanaticism. He publicly humiliates elders, imprisons families, and drives desperate villagers toward armed rebellion. His ruthlessness does not serve justice—it destroys trust and deepens division.

Ordinary people like Imanbay panic and flee. Families are torn apart. Communities that once shared meals and festivals now spy on each other with suspicion. Even principled figures like Saparbay cannot fully contain the damage caused by extremism.

Through these characters, the novel demonstrates that power without conscience becomes tyranny, and ideology without compassion becomes terror. True reform requires not only political change but also moral responsibility and genuine respect for human dignity.

Illustrative moment: One of the most striking scenes is when Kalpakbaev orders Saparbay's arrest during a morning meeting about collectivization. Saparbay speaks calmly and reasonably, arguing that innocent villagers are being falsely labeled as enemies without evidence. Instead of listening or debating, Kalpakbaev reacts with immediate fury. He refuses to tolerate any questioning of his authority and orders Saparbay dragged to the cellar like a criminal. Samtyr, who privately agrees with Saparbay, stays silent out of fear. Saadat, seeking political advantage, supports Kalpakbaev and accuses Saparbay of sabotage. Saparbay's wife Zaina storms into the village council and demands his release, threatening to take her complaint to Moscow. Her courage exposes Kalpakbaev's weakness—he is not truly strong but merely loud and threatening. Faced with a woman's fearless protest, he nervously agrees to release Saparbay rather than risk exposure.

Justice vs. Repression

The novel functions as a literary reflection of one of the darkest chapters in Kyrgyz and Soviet history: the Stalinist repressions. Although the events unfold in a remote mountain village and focus on everyday people, the novel's atmosphere—political persecution, fabricated accusations, and the silencing of honest voices—echoes the terror that swept through Kyrgyz society in the 1930s.

That decade destroyed a whole generation of Kyrgyz intellectual and political leadership. Kasym Tynystanov, the pioneering linguist who helped shape the literary language, was arrested and executed as an “enemy of the people.” Ishenaly Arabaev, the educator who created the first Kyrgyz alphabet and fought for national literacy, met the same fate. Statesmen such as Torokul Aitmatov and Imanaly Aidarbekov were also arrested and shot. And these well-known names were only the visible part of a much larger tragedy: figures like Jusup Abdrahmanov and Bayaly Isakeev, along with hundreds of teachers, writers, and specialists, were imprisoned on invented charges such as “Pan-Turkism” or “bourgeois nationalism.” In 1937–1938, 137 intellectuals were secretly executed and buried at Chong-Tash, today remembered as Ata-Beyit.

What makes the novel especially painful is its point of view. Sydykbekov does not narrate repression through official reports or elite debates, but through village life: rumors, fear, sudden arrests, and the breakdown of trust. When Kalpakbaev arrives and begins calling ordinary peasants “kulaks,” neighbors start watching one another, families panic, and even wise figures like Soke struggle to calm the spreading anxiety. Saparbay's story sharpens the message: a man who believes in reform, but insists on law and humanity, becomes a target precisely because he refuses to stay silent.

Illustrative moment: Sharshe arrests Shooruk, Berdibay, and Saadat and marches them publicly through the village to the cellar prison, riding Saadat's own horse to display dominance. The humiliation is deliberate: once-respected elders stumble forward under the whip of a young radical who mistakes cruelty for “justice.” In the dark cellar they face despair, prayer, and helpless anger—an image that closely resembles the fate of countless real victims who endured repression without surrendering their inner dignity.

Change

Transformation: Individual Awakening and Moral Conscience

One of the most compelling themes in *In the Mountains* is the gradual transformation of an ordinary person into a morally conscious individual. This journey is embodied entirely through Saparbay,

whose evolution from a passive village youth into a principled defender of justice forms the emotional backbone of the novel.

At the beginning of the story, Saparbay possesses no political understanding and no ambition beyond his simple rural existence. He has never left his mountain village, never questioned authority, and never imagined himself as a leader. When Saadat returns from the city with education and confidence, Saparbay naturally falls under his influence, trusting him as a representative of progress. He follows without questioning, accepts without analyzing, and remains content in the background.

However, lived experience becomes his true education. Watching Saadat manipulate meetings, silence opponents, and exploit his position for personal gain, Saparbay begins to feel a growing unease. This discomfort is not intellectual—it is deeply moral. Something inside him recognizes injustice even before he can articulate it. Slowly, observation sharpens into understanding, and understanding hardens into conviction.

His final sacrifice—dying while attempting to persuade Saadat to surrender peacefully—proves that his awakening was genuine and complete. Saparbay demonstrates that moral conscience is not inherited or taught in classrooms. It grows through suffering, observation, and the courageous decision to choose integrity over survival.

Illustrative moment: During the collectivization meeting when Kalpakbaev begins labeling villagers as “kulaks” and enemies without proper evidence. The atmosphere is tense; people are afraid to speak. Samtyr hesitates, others lower their eyes, and silence fills the room. In that heavy silence, Saparbay stands up and calmly argues that innocent people cannot be punished without proof. He reminds them that Soviet power should protect the poor, not terrorize them.

Kalpakbaev reacts with anger, interpreting disagreement as betrayal. He immediately orders Saparbay arrested and thrown into the cellar. This moment is crucial: Saparbay knows the risk of speaking, yet he chooses truth over safety. His protest is not dramatic or emotional; it is measured and principled. Even after his release, he does not apologize or withdraw his words.