

HUMANITIES INSTITUTE

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AFTER THE DOWNPOUR / NOSHORDON KIYIN (1976)

Asanbek Stamov (1938-2010)

References:

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Stamov, A. (1980). *Posle livnya* (L. I. Lebedeva, Trans.). Molodaya gvardiya.

OVERVIEW

Author

Asanbek Stamov, a People's Writer of the Kyrgyz Republic, was born on August 28, 1938, in the village of Murake in what is now Moscow District of Kyrgyzstan.

He graduated from the Department of Kyrgyz Language and Literature at Kyrgyz State University in 1962. That same year, he began his career as a teacher at the Toktogul Boarding School in the city of Tokmok.

From 1964 to 1966, Stamov worked as an editor and senior editor for the State Radio Committee. From 1967 to 1969, he served as a senior editor at the Kyrgyz State Publishing House.

From 1969 to 1971, he worked as an instructor on the staff of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Kyrgyzstan, the republic's principal political institution within the Soviet system. From 1971 to 1973, he served as director of the Kyrgyz State Publishing House.

In 1973, Stamov was appointed First Deputy Minister of Culture of the Kyrgyz Soviet Socialist Republic (Kyrgyz SSR). From 1985 to 1987, he served as chairman of the republic's State Committee for Television and Radio Broadcasting. From 1985 to 1990, he was also elected to the Supreme Soviet of the Kyrgyzstan, the republic's legislative body under the Soviet system.

In 1987, Stamov became director of the Bureau for the Promotion of Fiction under the Writers' Union of Kyrgyzstan. In 1989, he was appointed editor-in-chief of *Chalkan* magazine. From 1990 until his retirement in 1992, he served as chairman of the *Uchkun* State Concern.

Stamov died on August 7, 2010. On September 17, 2013, the National Library of Kyrgyzstan opened a book and visual exhibition commemorating the 75th anniversary of his birth.

Writing and Literary Work

Asanbek Stamov began his literary career in 1959, when his novella *Ata (Father)* was published in the literary magazine *Ala-Too*. His first book, *Taanyshuu (Introduction)*, was published by Kyrgyzstan Publishing House in 1966. In 1975, he received the Lenin Komsomol Prize of Kyrgyzstan for his novella *Jany tuugan (A New Relative)*.

His collections of short stories and novellas, including *Taanyshuu (Introduction)*, *Kech kuzdo (Late Autumn)*, *Jany tuugan (A New Relative)*, *Noshordon kiyin (After the Downpour)*, *Ak kar (White Snow)*, *Jol boyunda jalgyz tam (The Lone House by the Road)*, *Egiz tal (The Twin Trees)*, and *Chuy Bayany (Tales of Chuy)*, were published in Moscow and included in the *Anthology of Kyrgyz Writers*.

He also translated works by Turkish writer Aziz Nesin and Tatar poet Musa Jalil. His own works were translated into several other languages.

After Kyrgyzstan gained independence, Stamov devoted nearly two decades to researching the history of the Kyrgyz people, focusing particularly on the period from the 16th century onward.

Drawing on this research, he wrote the historical novel *Khan Teyish*. After his death, his family published his complete works in a 12-volume edition.

Novella

Asanbek Stamov's novella *After the Downpour* (*Noshordon kiyin*) was first published in 1976 by *Mektep* Publishing House in Frunze, the capital of the Kyrgyz Soviet Socialist Republic, now Bishkek. It was later translated into Russian by Larisa Lebedeva under the title *Posle Livnya* (*After the Downpour*) and published in Moscow in 1980.

Background

After the Downpour (*Noshordon kiyin*) can be placed within the tradition of urban prose in Soviet Kyrgyz literature, which developed especially in the 1960s–1980s as cities grew and literature began to move beyond mainly rural and folkloric subjects. Much of this writing focused on Frunze, now Bishkek, the capital of Soviet Kyrgyzstan, and on the experiences of educated urban people.

Urban prose often explored the personal and moral struggles of modern city life. Writers examined questions of ambition, loneliness, family, social expectations, and the tension between traditional values and a changing society.

Stamov's novella reflects these themes through its portrayal of artists and opera singers in Frunze. The world of painting, opera, and the Artists' Union provides the setting for conflicts over artistic integrity, professional success, love, and family responsibility. Through his characters, Stamov presents the cultural life of the Soviet city and the challenges of balancing personal values, professional ambitions, and family obligations.

MAIN CHARACTERS

Dyikanbek — a painter and the protagonist

Kalemkan — Dyikanbek's wife

Nina Bichurina — an opera singer and Dyikanbek's former acquaintance

Argyn Chalkalmakov — Dyikanbek's friend and fellow painter

Atyrgul — Argyn's wife

Aisuluu — Dyikanbek and Kalemkan's adopted daughter

Bakbergen — Argyn and Atyrgul's son

SYNOPSIS

As a young art student in Moscow, Dyikanbek meets Nina Bichurina, a young woman who dreams of becoming an opera singer. He recognizes her natural talent and encourages her to pursue her dream. They eventually lose touch.

Dyikanbek later moves to Frunze and marries Kalemkan. After several miscarriages, they adopt a baby girl, Aisuluu. Dyikanbek becomes deeply attached to her and loves her as his own daughter.

Years later, Dyikanbek learns that Nina has moved to Frunze and is working at the opera theater. Thirteen years after they first met, he sees her performing the title role in *Carmen*, the famous opera by Georges Bizet. Nina has become a successful opera singer. They reconnect, and Dyikanbek is inspired by her. He paints her portrait and gradually falls in love with her.

Dyikanbek is also close friends with Argyn Chalkalmakov, a fellow artist, and Argyn's wife, Atyrgul. Argyn was once a promising painter, but he has given up serious painting to make money creating monuments and gravestones. After Dyikanbek completes *The Day of the Melon Grower*, Argyn and Atyrgul visit his workshop. Atyrgul notices Nina's portrait and becomes curious about her. She is also somewhat envious of Dyikanbek's artistic success. She asks him to help Argyn advance his career, and Dyikanbek agrees, even helping him obtain a position on the Artists' Union council.

Dyikanbek tells Argyn that he has fallen in love with Nina. Argyn grows more ambitious and tries to gain recognition through paintings that Dyikanbek considers dishonest and lacking in artistic integrity. Dyikanbek openly criticizes his work, and their disagreements grow into serious conflicts. Out of jealousy, Argyn tells Atyrgul about Nina and Dyikanbek's relationship. Atyrgul then deliberately tells Kalemkan about the affair and asks her to come to the country house.

Nina asks Dyikanbek to stop seeing her several times because she does not want to destroy his family. When Kalemkan arrives, she finds Dyikanbek with Nina, but she does not make a scene. Instead, she calmly suggests that she and Dyikanbek get a divorce.

Nina later visits Kalemkan at home. After seeing that Kalemkan is a devoted wife and that she and Dyikanbek have a daughter, Nina realizes that leaving with Dyikanbek would destroy the family. Although she loves him, she decides not to come between them. She tears up the divorce papers Dyikanbek has prepared and leaves him. Dyikanbek returns to Kalemkan and Aisuluu.

Later, Argyn and Atyrgul's son, Bakbergen, cruelly tells Aisuluu that Dyikanbek and Kalemkan are not her biological parents. The shock causes Kalemkan to become seriously ill, and she dies. After her death, Atyrgul, who had been having a long-term affair while still married to Argyn, finally divorces him.

Dyikanbek is still grieving Kalemkan. He visits her grave with Aisuluu and decides to return to the mountains with her. He continues painting and finds hope in their future.

SCENES

The Meeting between Dyikanbek and Nina in Moscow

A Chance Meeting at the Station Dyikanbek watched the rooks among the bare trees, reminded of Savrasov's painting *The Rooks Have Arrived*. He later walked deep into the forest and lost his way. By the time he returned to the station, it was dark, cold, and empty. Three trains passed without stopping. Then he noticed a young woman with a black bag. She had also missed the last train and needed to walk eight kilometers to another station. Dyikanbek explained that he was from Moscow and had been walking in the forest. The girl laughed, surprised that anyone would wander there in such cold weather. Dyikanbek assured her that he was a student and an artist.

Nina's Story and Her Dream The young Russian lady's name was Nina Bichurina. She invited Dyikanbek to stay at her family's dacha, a Russian country house after they both missed the last train. As they walked, they introduced themselves. Nina worked at a repair factory, where workers repaired machines and equipment, and she had finished school three years earlier. She asked about Dyikanbek's homeland, and he told her about Kyrgyzstan, the Tien-Shan mountains, mountain pastures, and kymyz. Nina then told him about her family. Her mother was a doctor who died of tuberculosis in 1945 at only thirty-five. Her father returned from the war and raised Nina and her younger sister alone. Nina dreamed of becoming an opera singer but had failed her first conservatory entrance exam. Dyikanbek encouraged her to try again.

Nina's Voice Dyikanbek encouraged Nina to try the conservatory again. She explained that she had to work because her family could not afford for both sisters to study. Her father, a former professor, had died after suffering from rheumatism and heart problems caused by the war. When they reached the dacha, Nina prepared potatoes while Dyikanbek made a fire and brought water. Soon the cold house became warm and comfortable. Nina began singing while cooking. She sang folk songs, romances, and opera arias. Her voice was strong, warm, and natural, though untrained. Dyikanbek was deeply impressed by her beautiful singing and realized that Nina had real talent.

Nina Enters Preparatory Conservatory Courses After their first night at the country house, Dyikanbek and Nina continued meeting occasionally while he studied at the institute. Dyikanbek liked Nina and enjoyed spending time with her, but he did not feel romantic love for her. Before leaving for Kyrgyzstan to work on his diploma painting, he called Nina. She happily told him that she had passed the commission and been accepted into preparatory conservatory courses. They went to the country house and spent a summer evening together. They talked about their future careers, and Dyikanbek wished Nina success as an opera singer. Nina also believed that Dyikanbek would become a famous painter.

Nina and Dyikanbek Say Goodbye During their last summer evening together, Nina and Dyikanbek joked about becoming famous in the future. Nina believed Dyikanbek would become a great painter, while he wished her success as an opera singer. They promised to remember each other and created a special password: "The gypsy who once told your fortune." Nina asked Dyikanbek to call her someday using these words. Before returning home, she asked him for a kiss because she considered the day special. Dyikanbek

kissed her, but he still did not have romantic feelings for her. A year later, Nina entered the conservatory, while Dyikanbek graduated and left for Kyrgyzstan. They soon stopped communicating.

Many Years Later: “*The Day of the Melon Grower*” Painting

The Completed Canvas Dyikanbek had worked for many hours without rest and finally completed the painting he had dreamed of creating for a long time. He called it *The Day of the Melon Grower*. The painting showed an early autumn morning in the Chuy Valley after a night of rain. A farmer sat on a cart loaded with ripe golden melons while his young daughter listened to his instructions. Nearby, a young horseman stood on a hill singing. Snow-covered Ala-Too mountains shone in the distance. Dyikanbek was extremely happy with his work and hoped that everyone who saw the painting would feel its warmth and beauty.

A Lonely Celebration After finishing his painting, Dyikanbek felt extremely happy but lonely because there was no one to share his joy with. He called his best friend Argyn, but Argyn’s wife, Atyrgul, answered the phone. She explained that Argyn had been working for three days and did not want to be disturbed. During their conversation, Dyikanbek told her excitedly that he had completed a new painting. Atyrgul congratulated him and then asked about his wife, Kalemkan, wondering where she was and whether she still wrote to him. Before ending the call, she also mentioned that her best friend often asked about Dyikanbek.

A Midnight Visit On a cool autumn night, Dyikanbek could not sleep, so he went for a walk. Lost in thought, he unexpectedly arrived at his friend Argyn’s house. Argyn was surprised and slightly displeased to see him so late, but invited him inside. Dyikanbek apologized and explained that he had come because he wanted to share his happiness. He told Argyn that he had finally completed his painting, *The Day of the Melon Grower*, and asked his friend to congratulate him. Argyn shook his hand and said it was wonderful, but his voice sounded bitter. He seemed unable to share Dyikanbek’s happiness, and both friends fell silent.

A Hidden Side of Argyn Argyn was a proud and self-conscious artist who cared greatly about his appearance and the impression he made on others. He behaved with dignity, spoke thoughtfully, and often used grand gestures, making people believe he was serious and deep. Dyikanbek had long considered him a respected and admirable friend and had never paid much attention to these qualities. However, Argyn’s distant and indifferent attitude that night hurt Dyikanbek and cooled his excitement. Feeling embarrassed, Dyikanbek looked around the workshop. He was surprised by what he saw. Although he had often visited Argyn’s home, he had never entered the workshop because its door was always securely locked.

Argyn’s Secret Art Dyikanbek was shocked when he entered Argyn’s workshop. The room was dirty, damp, and filled with old clothes, broken objects, bottles, and useless rubbish. However, what surprised him most was the collection of sculptures made from marble and granite. There were also large blocks of stone and many tools for carving and polishing. Argyn looked completely different from his usual elegant self. Tired and dressed in dirty work clothes, he explained that he had been secretly practicing sculpture. Dyikanbek wondered why he had never shown these works at an exhibition. Argyn replied confidently that he was a trained professional and had the right to work in different artistic genres.

The Artist’s Responsibility Dyikanbek calmly explained that an artist should not hide his work from the public or fear criticism. He asked Argyn why he worked secretly and why he did not exhibit his sculptures. Argyn finally admitted the truth. He had struggled with painting for several years and had produced nothing he considered successful. Instead, he secretly made gravestone sculptures because there were many customers and the work paid well. His family needed money, and the customers only wanted simple likenesses. Dyikanbek reminded him that monuments should preserve people’s images and become part of history. He believed that true art required responsibility, honesty, and courage. Argyn agreed with him.

Talent and Craftsmanship Dyikanbek and Argyn discussed the difference between true talent and ordinary craftsmanship. Dyikanbek said that a talented artist is demanding, honest with himself, and works from the heart rather than for fame. A craftsman may know technique but usually creates nothing truly original or moving. Argyn agreed but added that society should support talented artists and protect them from commercial pressure. He criticized art organizations for accepting too many craftsmen and allowing quality to

decline. Dyikanbek admitted there was some truth in Argyn's words. Then Argyn suggested they drink together. He secretly took a bottle of cognac from a hidden place in the shed.

Thoughts after the Visit After Dyikanbek left, Argyn could not sleep. He was angry that his friend had come at night to boast about his new painting. He doubted that the work was truly special and felt jealous of Dyikanbek's growing success. Meanwhile, Dyikanbek thought about Argyn with sympathy. He understood that Argyn had become unhappy because of money and believed his wife had influenced him to choose easy work. Argyn complained bitterly about his wife and blamed her for destroying his talent. Although Dyikanbek thought some of his complaints might be true, he disliked hearing him insult the mother of his children.

Dyikanbek Remembers His Wife, Kalemkan

Memories of His Wife Although Dyikanbek had drunk cognac, he could not sleep that night. He kept thinking about Argyn, their friendship, and his own behavior. Then his thoughts turned to his wife Kalemkan, who had left three months earlier to Moscow with his daughter. He remembered what a deep, sensitive, generous, and devoted woman she was. She understood his artistic work and always valued it. Dyikanbek knew he could be difficult: sometimes he became angry, rude, or stubborn like a child. His wife never held these things against him. Instead, she patiently calmed him with tenderness, almost like a mother. Remembering his mistakes, Dyikanbek felt ashamed and wanted to ask her forgiveness.

A Heartfelt Letter to Kalemkan Dyikanbek decided to write his wife a heartfelt letter. He thanked her for her patience, understanding, and constant support, especially for accepting his need to be alone sometimes. After sending the letter, he went to his workshop because being alone at home felt painful. Among his paintings and ideas, he felt comforted. He examined *The Day of the Melon Grower* carefully, then covered it and suddenly remembered another painting. He brought a portrait in a golden frame from the storage room and hung it where the light fell softly. He stared at it for a long time. At dawn, he opened the window, breathed the fresh air, and looked at the portrait again in the sunlight.

Kalemkan Loses Her Baby After marrying Dyikanbek, Kalemkan desperately wanted a child, but her first two pregnancies ended in miscarriages. During her third pregnancy, Dyikanbek insisted that she quit her job and carefully protected her from stress. At seven months, she was hospitalized. When labor finally began, both Kalemkan and the baby were in serious danger. Because Kalemkan had a weak heart, doctors performed an emergency operation to save her life. The baby, however, died. Kalemkan and Dyikanbek were devastated. Doctors told her that she could never have children again. They suffered quietly, each knowing the other's pain but unable to talk about it.

Kalemkan Hears about another Pregnant Girl Years later, Kalemkan began to hope that the doctors might have been wrong. She secretly visited several doctors, but they confirmed that she could not become a mother and suggested adopting a child. At a women's clinic, she noticed a wealthy, worried-looking woman with her sixteen-year-old daughter. The doctor later explained that the girl was four months pregnant. Her parents had brought her from another city and wanted an abortion to avoid shame because she was still in ninth grade. The doctor opposed the idea, saying the procedure was dangerous and that the girl should have the baby instead. Kalemkan listened silently, deeply affected by the painful contrast between their situations.

Kalemkan Finds Hope After hearing the doctor's story about a pregnant sixteen-year-old girl, Kalemkan could not stop crying. While walking through the city, she suddenly had an idea: perhaps she could raise the girl's child as her own. That evening, she explained her plan to Dyikanbek, who listened carefully and supported her. He immediately contacted a friend in Moscow who owned a cottage near a medical center, where Kalemkan and the girl could stay during the pregnancy. Encouraged by this good fortune, Kalemkan met with the girl's mother and, after an emotional conversation, persuaded her to agree. The next day, Kalemkan, the girl, and Dyikanbek traveled to Moscow.

The Birth of Aisuluu Five months later, a dark-eyed baby girl was born. Dyikanbek and Kalemkan named her Aisuluu and raised her as their own daughter. The baby's young mother seemed calm and almost

indifferent to everything that had happened, perhaps because of her age. She spent several months at the cottage with Kalemkan before returning home. Dyikanbek helped her prepare for the journey and accompanied her to the airport. The girl left without looking back, while Dyikanbek silently wished her happiness. In December, Dyikanbek, Kalemkan, and little Aisuluu finally returned to Frunze as a complete family.

Dyikanbek Becomes Attached to Aisuluu At first, when Aisuluu was only a helpless baby, Dyikanbek felt almost indifferent toward her. But as she grew, smiled, learned to sit and stand, and reached her arms toward him, he became deeply attached to her. He carried her, kissed her warm forehead and dirty cheeks, and loved her unique baby smell. Little by little, Aisuluu became a source of comfort whenever he faced problems in his creative or personal life. After a disappointing day at the workshop or an argument at the Artists' Union, hearing her excitedly say "Papa" made everything seem meaningful again. With Aisuluu in their lives, the Abdiev family finally felt complete.

Nina Sokolova, a Famous Opera Singer

The Mysterious Portrait The portrait that fascinated Dyikanbek was of a beautiful, slender woman in her early thirties. He had finished it a year earlier but had never exhibited it or shown it even to his closest friends. The painting had a special story that began when Dyikanbek was a young student preparing to graduate. He was hardworking, ambitious, and deeply interested in art. One spring day, while traveling toward Borodino, he unexpectedly left the train at a small station. Sitting beneath an old birch tree, he watched the snowy forest, wet fields, and people coming and going. He felt that leaving the train had not been accidental.

Atyrgul Discovers Dyikanbek's Hidden Portrait The next afternoon, Argyn and Atyrgul unexpectedly visited Dyikanbek's workshop after he returned from the Artists' Union. Dyikanbek was in a gloomy mood and did not want to talk. Atyrgul cheerfully explained that Argyn wanted to congratulate him and be the first to see his new masterpiece. While walking around the workshop, she suddenly noticed the unfinished portrait Dyikanbek had forgotten to hide. She admired the woman's beautiful neck, proud face, and expressive eyes, saying the portrait seemed painted with love. Atyrgul tried to remember where she had seen the woman before. Embarrassed, Dyikanbek tried to lead her toward his finished painting, but she refused to leave the portrait.

Argyn and Atyrgul React to Dyikanbek's Painting Dyikanbek quietly moved the portrait to a corner, but Atyrgul laughed and said such beauty should not be hidden. She encouraged him to exhibit it because everyone would praise it. When Argyn entered, he remained silent and looked unhappy, as if he had been forced to come. He barely paid attention to the painting and seemed unwilling to recognize its qualities. Atyrgul pretended to admire Dyikanbek's *The Day of the Melon Grower*, although she did not really like it. Dyikanbek disliked her false praise. He asked them not to discuss the painting and raised his glass, proposing a toast to sincere friendship and humanity.

Atyrgul Raises a Toast to Kalemkan Argyn often pretended that he did not want food or wine, although he really wanted them. He enjoyed being persuaded because he always wanted attention from others. At Dyikanbek's workshop, he again acted as if he disliked even the smell of cognac. Dyikanbek understood that Argyn was only pretending and, feeling irritated, deliberately ate and drank with great enjoyment. The three sat silently, eating as sadly as if at a funeral. Atyrgul criticized Argyn for his behavior and told him to stop pretending. Then she asked Dyikanbek about his wife, Kalemkan. He said she had called a week earlier and that he had written her a letter. Atyrgul raised her glass to Kalemkan's health.

Atyrgul Recognizes Nina Sokolova After the toast, everyone became more cheerful, and Argyn finally approached *The Day of the Melon Grower* to look at it. Suddenly, Atyrgul remembered the woman in the separate portrait hidden in the corner. She recognized her as Nina Sokolova, a famous opera singer. Atyrgul jokingly teased Dyikanbek, suggesting that Nina must have been interested in him. Dyikanbek blushed and explained that he had worked on the portrait for three years but was still dissatisfied with it. Then Atyrgul began proudly talking about her own honesty and loyalty. Dyikanbek quietly told her that a truly faithful person does not need to prove it. He added that happy couples should give each other freedom and generosity. Atyrgul felt embarrassed.

The Life of Atyrgul and Argyn

Atyrgul's Secret Meeting with Maybash Dyikanbek spoke to Atyrgul without any hidden intention, but she blushed because she feared he knew about her secret meeting with Maybash, a former student admirer. Years earlier, while collecting research data for her dissertation in her trip to Rybachye town in Ysyk-Kol region, Atyrgul unexpectedly met Maybash, who had become an important official. As a student, she had rejected him because he seemed ordinary and unsuccessful. Now she was impressed by his confidence and position. She went with him to his house and stayed there overnight. Afterwards, she deeply regretted betraying Argyn and promised herself never to repeat it. At home, she pretended to be ill, but rumors about the meeting soon spread.

Atyrgul Asks Dyikanbek to Help Argyn Dyikanbek did not realize that his words about loyalty had offended Atyrgul. She secretly felt angry with him but now asked him to help Argyn. She explained that recently Argyn had begun drinking too much, had lost his motivation, and was wasting his artistic talent on cheap work. She believed he needed a new purpose and more contact with people. Since Argyn trusted Dyikanbek more than anyone else, Atyrgul asked him to help Argyn become active in public life. She specifically suggested that Dyikanbek help him join the presidium of the Artists' Union. Dyikanbek agreed that Argyn was talented but was destroying his abilities. Atyrgul begged him to help his friend.

Argyn's Toast to Dyikanbek When Argyn returned from the balcony, Atyrgul immediately stopped talking about his problems and changed her expression. She cheerfully suggested that they drink to Dyikanbek's success and asked Argyn to make a toast. She secretly encouraged him with her eyes, and Argyn finally spoke. His toast was sincere and emotional. He praised Dyikanbek's success as an artist and spoke warmly about their friendship. Dyikanbek was deeply moved by his words. He embraced and kissed Argyn, showing how much he valued their friendship. Before leaving, the two friends hugged and kissed again. Atyrgul watched them with satisfaction, pleased that Argyn had spoken so warmly about Dyikanbek.

Dyikanbek Promises to Help Argyn After the Chalkalmakovs left, Dyikanbek slept well and woke feeling energetic. At the Artists' Union, he had a busy day with a secretariat meeting, a discussion of government art orders, and the opening of an artist's exhibition. Then Atyrgul called him. She first complained that Argyn was lying sick after drinking while Dyikanbek was perfectly well. Then, without being asked, Atyrgul told him about her female friend. When Atyrgul and Argyn returned home from Dyikanbek's workshop, the friend was waiting for them. Atyrgul told her that Dyikanbek's wife was away. The friend asked Atyrgul to call Dyikanbek and invite him over. Atyrgul called, but he did not answer. She said he could have come to have some fun. Dyikanbek rejected the invitation. Then Atyrgul reminded him about Argyn, and Dyikanbek promised to raise Argyn's case at the secretariat and help him.

Dyikanbek Thinks about Atyrgul's Family During the day, Dyikanbek thought several times about Atyrgul. He found her difficult to understand because she often changed her behavior and seemed full of contradictions. He wondered what kind of person she really was and whether she was truly kind and humane. At the same time, he believed that she had been honest with him about Argyn's problems. He felt sorry for her because her family life had become complicated and unhappy. Dyikanbek wanted to help Atyrgul, but he understood that helping only her would not solve the problem. He wanted to help the whole family, especially Argyn, who had lost his motivation and was wasting his artistic talent.

Atyrgul's Childhood and Student Years Atyrgul was not entirely a bad person. She had humanity and kindness, but these qualities gradually became weaker. Her character was influenced partly by Argyn and partly by herself. As an only child, she was spoiled and rarely refused anything. Until school, her parents dressed her as a boy to protect her from evil spirits. She played with boys, fought, and used rough language. Later, girls did not immediately accept her. She matured early and often dreamed about love and marriage, although she was ashamed of these feelings. In Frunze, she studied well, became a group leader, read widely, loved poetry, and wrote poems. She also became deeply interested in romantic relationships and imagined herself in love scenes.

Atyrgul Chooses Argyn At the institute, Atyrgul was ambitious and wanted to marry a famous writer, artist, composer, or important official rather than an ordinary man. She dressed carefully, learned to use cosmetics, and enjoyed talking with men about art. She rejected local students who tried to court her. A young poet admired her, but she rejected him after seeing his poor home. Five years later, he became a famous poet, and she bitterly regretted her decision. She then liked Jambul, a popular and confident student leader. They went to the cinema, danced, and kissed. One evening, while Atyrgul and Jambul were embracing under a poplar tree, a tall veterinary student whom Atyrgul had previously rejected approached them. He pulled Jambul by the sleeve and, when Jambul ignored him, turned him around and slapped him hard. Jambul did not dare follow him. Atyrgul felt humiliated and stopped seeing Jambul. Later, her friend Botogoz introduced her to Argyn and praised his talent, intelligence, and tact. Atyrgul eagerly waited to meet him and finally asked, "When will you introduce me to your genius?"

Atyrgul and Argyn Get Married Atyrgul and Argyn married six months after meeting, although they did not fall deeply in love. They carefully watched each other. Atyrgul behaved modestly, and Argyn admired her intelligence and beauty. One evening, while listening to Ravel's *Bolero* at Botogoz's home, Atyrgul described the music as a caravan crossing a hot desert and finding a false oasis. Argyn was deeply impressed, and soon he visited her often. Atyrgul sometimes made him wait because she wanted to test his feelings. Eventually, they decided to marry. After submitting their marriage application, Atyrgul prepared for the wedding and became happily excited about her future family life.

Argyn's Friends Humiliate Atyrgul After arriving at Argyn's village, Atyrgul followed the old custom of sitting behind a curtain with a scarf over her head. That evening, Argyn brought four male friends to her. They drank vodka and made vulgar jokes. One of them, Bolotbek, behaved especially disrespectfully, touching Atyrgul's knee and later painfully pressing her thigh. Argyn was drunk and laughed at his friends' behavior. Atyrgul was shocked to see him behaving like a crude village man instead of the educated and thoughtful person she had known. When she gave him an angry look, he finally sent his friends home. That night, Atyrgul cried because she felt deeply humiliated and disappointed in her husband.

Atyrgul Befriends her Mother-in-Law During the three days in the village, Atyrgul's dreams about family life completely collapsed. Argyn spent most of his time with his noisy, half-drunk friends, who continued drinking and behaving rudely around her. Atyrgul began to hate them and wondered whether her husband was really like them. She secretly decided that she must somehow separate Argyn from this bad environment. The only person who made her feel comfortable was Argyn's mother, Bereke. The lively old woman treated her kindly and never tried to control her. She brought Atyrgul food, sat beside her, and told amusing stories to improve her mood. During those three days, the friendship between the young wife and her mother-in-law began.

Bolotbek Insults Atyrgul Life in the city was not what Atyrgul had imagined. She and Argyn lived in a tiny, cold apartment, and Atyrgul avoided inviting friends there. She also tried to control Argyn's life and keep him away from his old friends because she believed they distracted him from his artistic career. One day, Bolotbek came to visit and brought vodka. He mocked Argyn for doing housework and insulted Atyrgul for not cooking. Atyrgul became furious and ordered him to leave. Bolotbek then told Argyn to come with him and accused Atyrgul of separating him from his friends. He praised another woman, Onoltai, and tried to persuade Argyn to return to her.

Atyrgul Defends Her Marriage Bolotbek shocked Atyrgul by revealing that Onoltai had been Argyn's lover. He described her as a clever woman who treated Argyn well and claimed that she had been heartbroken when he married Atyrgul. He insulted Atyrgul by comparing their homes and suggesting that Onoltai was a better wife. Atyrgul remained calm and took Argyn's hand. She firmly told Bolotbek that Argyn was her husband and ordered him to leave. She warned that if he returned and tried to lead Argyn into trouble again, she would report him at his workplace. Bolotbek stepped back, surprised by her confidence. Finally, Argyn asked him to leave, saying it was shameful to fight with a woman.

Argyn Apologizes and Arpachy Arrives After Bolotbek left, Atyrgul fell onto the sofa and cried bitterly. Argyn tried to calm her, apologizing for his past relationship with Onoltai and promising never to betray her again. From that day, Atyrgul understood that she had gained power over her husband, who no longer

dared to contradict her. After they reconciled, someone suddenly knocked loudly at the door. A large, cheerful man entered with a heavy suitcase full of smoked and fresh meat and several bottles of cognac. He was Arpachy, Atyrgul's maternal uncle from Naryn. Atyrgul was delighted to see him, and Argyn also became cheerful. They quickly prepared a feast and began drinking cognac together.

Arpachy Asks Argyn to Make a Monument After their quarrel, Argyn and Atyrgul sat happily at the table with Arpachy and did not think about their problems. Eventually, Arpachy explained why he had come to the city. A respected uncle from Choktal village had died six months earlier, but his grave still had no monument. The family had collected two thousand rubles and wanted a good monument made of stone, ready for the anniversary memorial feast. Arpachy showed Argyn the uncle's photograph and asked him to make the monument himself or find another artist. Atyrgul immediately insisted that Argyn should do it. Although Argyn said he was not a sculptor, Arpachy placed one thousand rubles on the table.

Argyn Becomes a Monument Maker After receiving Arpachy's order, Argyn began making profitable stone monuments through his acquaintances. He gradually learned the craft and focused on making monuments look exactly like photographs so customers would be satisfied. Within five years, he built a beautiful house surrounded by a brick wall, with carpets covering the floors and walls. Atyrgul also became focused on wealth and social status, inviting successful and influential people to their home and giving them gifts. Argyn broke contact with his old village friends, considering them ordinary people. However, Atyrgul knew that money could not buy fame. Argyn wanted to become famous, but he did not work hard enough. Dyikanbek realized that he had left art for a craft.

Dyikanbek and Nina Meet Again After Thirteen Years

Sokolova's Name Dyikanbek and Nina had not seen each other for thirteen years and would meet again by chance, just as they had the first time. Dyikanbek was not interested in opera and believed it was a conservative art with little future. He rarely attended the opera and stopped going completely after musicians strongly criticized his views. His wife, Kalemkan, often watched famous opera singers on television and especially admired Nina Sokolova. She praised Sokolova's beautiful voice, appearance, acting, and talent. Dyikanbek joked that Kalemkan was in love with the singer. Although he remained skeptical, he began to notice Sokolova's name.

Dyikanbek Buys Tickets to Carmen One day, Dyikanbek passed the theater and noticed a poster for *Carmen*, the famous opera by Georges Bizet, with Nina Sokolova performing the main role of Carmen. Curious about the singer his wife admired so much, he went inside and bought two tickets. Only seats in the last row of the amphitheater remained because the performance was almost sold out. He returned to his workshop and called Kalemkan at work, telling her they would go to the theater that evening. However, Kalemkan was on duty at the boarding school until nine and had already seen Sokolova perform *Carmen* twice. She encouraged Dyikanbek to go alone, but he asked her to leave work early. She refused because she could no longer ask for time off.

Dyikanbek Recognizes Nina on Stage Dyikanbek went to the opera alone. He remembered seeing *Carmen* five years earlier, but he had disliked the famous singer's performance, even though he admitted that her voice was excellent. Now Sokolova began singing *Carmen*, and Dyikanbek was deeply shocked. He suddenly recognized her as Nina Bichurina, the girl he had met many years before, who had dreamed of entering the conservatory and becoming a singer. She had changed greatly, but he was certain it was Nina. Her natural and confident acting helped him finally appreciate opera as an art form. He began attending the theater often, especially performances featuring Sokolova.

Dyikanbek Draws Nina's Portraits Dyikanbek was fascinated by Nina's growing fame because he remembered her old dream of becoming a singer. After her performances, he sometimes waited outside the theater and secretly watched her, trying to recognize the young girl he had once known. He thought about asking permission to paint her portrait, but felt it would be too intrusive. Instead, he began drawing her from memory after each performance. For almost two years, he made many sketches while continuing his other work. One Saturday, Kalemkan showed him a newspaper announcing that Nina had become a People's Artist. Deeply excited, Dyikanbek went to see *Carmen* that evening.

Dyikanbek Calls Nina to Congratulate Her After the performance, Nina was called onto the stage many times and received flowers and congratulations. Dyikanbek did not approach her. Instead, he returned to his workshop, drank cognac alone for the first time, and then found Nina's home telephone number. He called and congratulated her on becoming a People's Artist, explaining that he had just watched her performance. Nina politely asked who was speaking. Dyikanbek reminded her that he was the one who had once predicted her future. After a short silence, Nina recognized him. Their conversation briefly stopped, but she returned to the phone and quietly thanked him: "Thank you, Dyikanbek."

Nina Remembers Dyikanbek Nina angrily asked Dyikanbek why he had never contacted her. She had visited his exhibition and spent half a day there, hoping he would invite her, but he never did. Dyikanbek was delighted to learn that she had remembered him. When he asked where her husband worked, Nina understood that he was really asking whether she was married. She explained that she was no longer married because they had separated. Nina invited Dyikanbek to come immediately and celebrate with her friends, but he refused. He did not want to disturb their gathering and suggested that they celebrate her award together another time.

Dyikanbek Works on Nina's Portrait After that conversation, Dyikanbek and Nina began meeting frequently, and their meetings became important to both of them. Nina visited his workshop while he worked on her portrait, and Dyikanbek sometimes visited her backstage in her dressing room. Although the portrait had already been completed, Dyikanbek did not exhibit it or show it to anyone. Nina believed it was finished, but Dyikanbek doubted his work because he had painted it surprisingly easily. He wondered whether a painting completed so quickly could really have no flaws. When he looked at the portrait alone, he was afraid that discovering even one mistake would make him unwilling to touch the painting again.

Atyrgul Teases Dyikanbek about Nina Atyrgul called Dyikanbek again and teasingly asked about Nina's portrait. Dyikanbek became angry, but controlled himself and answered calmly. He explained that he considered the painting unfinished because he was not satisfied with it. He firmly asked Atyrgul not to return to the subject or make jokes about it. He also insisted that he and Nina were only friends and that there was nothing more between them. Atyrgul was not convinced. She laughed and said that men and women's friendships often ended differently, warning him that other people would laugh if he said such things. Finally, Dyikanbek lost his temper and told her to go to hell.

Atyrgul Invites Dyikanbek to Dinner Dyikanbek returned home in the evening and discovered that he was very hungry. He decided to eat at home, finding cheese and caviar in the refrigerator and making himself a sandwich. While preparing tea, he remembered the day's presidium meeting and regretted going against the majority. The phone rang repeatedly, and finally he answered. Atyrgul asked why he sounded gloomy and invited him to their home. Argyn was preparing roast lamb and Armenian cognac to celebrate. She jokingly mentioned that her female friend could keep him company if he needed a woman. Dyikanbek realized he could not escape and agreed to come in about an hour and a half.

Dyikanbek Proposes Argyn for the Artists' Union Leadership Committee At a meeting of the Artists' Union leadership committee, Dyikanbek proposed Argyn Chalkalmakov as a new committee member. He described Argyn as a talented artist who had once shown interesting work but had later become inactive. At first, everyone remained silent. Barpy, a respected landscape painter, openly disagreed. He said Argyn was not a serious artist and that few people remembered his work. Dyikanbek objected, saying the issue should be discussed seriously. Another member supported Argyn, calling him honest and principled. Barpy finally agreed to vote for him, and the older artist also stopped objecting. With no further opposition, Argyn was elected to the committee.

Barpy Tells Dyikanbek the Truth After the meeting, Dyikanbek felt that the others were unhappy with his decision and was disappointed in himself. Barpy stayed behind and apologized for speaking too bluntly, but warned Dyikanbek that he was making another mistake by supporting Argyn so strongly. Dyikanbek asked when the first mistake had happened. Barpy reminded him that the previous year Dyikanbek had praised Argyn's unsuccessful attempts to paint in an abstract style, even though Dyikanbek himself was a realist.

painter. Barpy said he could not understand why Dyikanbek had praised those works. He shook Dyikanbek's hand and left. Dyikanbek realized how difficult it could be to accept painful but honest criticism.

How Dyikanbek and Argyn Became Friends Walking slowly down the street, Dyikanbek remembered how his friendship with Argyn had begun. They first met at an exhibition of young artists, where Dyikanbek's work was successful. At the closing event, Dyikanbek was asked to speak for the young artists, but he became so nervous that he forgot his prepared speech. Then he noticed Argyn in the audience and began praising two of his paintings for their depth and complexity. Once he relaxed, Dyikanbek gave an impressive speech that was later reported in newspapers. Argyn was deeply grateful. They walked together, talked for a long time, and visited a restaurant. Soon Argyn joined the Artists' Union, and their friendship began.

Argyn Gives up Painting for Money Argyn had once been a promising artist. Dyikanbek had sincerely admired two of his paintings, especially their vivid landscapes and strong sense of movement. After marrying Atyrgul, however, Argyn stopped developing his artistic talent and began making stone monuments for money. He knew he had chosen the wrong path, but each payment made him want more. Atyrgul carefully controlled the family's money and warned him against wasting it on women. Argyn dreamed that he would return to serious art after buying a car, but even after the car was purchased, he continued taking profitable orders. He became increasingly attached to money and secretly saved some for himself.

Atyrgul Discovers Argyn's Hidden Money While Atyrgul was away visiting relatives, Argyn secretly kept one thousand rubles from an extra monument and hid the money in the doghouse. At night, he took the bills out and counted them privately, enjoying his secret savings. One night, Atyrgul suddenly entered the shed and caught him. Terrified, Argyn hid the money under his sweater, but Atyrgul quickly found it. She accused him of stealing from his own family and ordered him to leave with his money. Argyn promised never to do it again, and she believed him. Then Atyrgul told him to stop making monuments, return to painting, and work on building a name instead of simply earning money.

Dyikanbek Supports Argyn despite His Doubts Argyn returned to the city in the fall and planned to submit three paintings to an expert committee. The committee was chaired by Dyikanbek. Worried that the members would reject his work, Argyn asked Dyikanbek for help and showed him the paintings. Dyikanbek disliked them, especially *At the Market*, because its dark colors, unclear composition, and careless figures made its meaning difficult to understand. Argyn insisted that he was experimenting with a new artistic style and begged his friend not to embarrass him at the meeting. Although Dyikanbek knew the painting was weak, he supported Argyn before the committee. Later, he felt guilty because he had acted against his conscience.

Atyrgul Hosts a Dinner for the Friends Dyikanbek arrived at Argyn's home around nine in the evening. Atyrgul had prepared an impressive dinner and warmly welcomed him. She introduced him to her female friend and joked that they should become close friends. Argyn greeted Dyikanbek quietly, and Atyrgul insisted that the two men embrace. Once everyone sat down, she raised a toast to their friendship and wished them lasting loyalty and support. She then proposed another toast to Dyikanbek, thanking him for helping Argyn. Dyikanbek tried to stop her, but Atyrgul angrily defended him, saying Argyn should be grateful for his friend's support. The evening became increasingly uncomfortable for Dyikanbek.

Atyrgul Tries to Bring Dyikanbek and Her Friend Together During dinner, Atyrgul continued encouraging Dyikanbek to pay attention to her friend. She explained that the woman was divorced and free to choose another partner. Atyrgul even told Dyikanbek that the woman had not been with another man since her separation and openly encouraged her to win his heart. Dyikanbek felt increasingly uncomfortable. He could not even remember the woman's real name because Atyrgul usually gave her friends playful nicknames. He jokingly called her "Akbilek-jene," which Atyrgul approved of for her own reasons. Meanwhile, Dyikanbek's thoughts turned to Nina. He remembered her gentle voice and dark eyes and wondered whether his growing interest in her meant that he was falling in love.

Dyikanbek Wants to Leave the Dinner Although Atyrgul's friend was attractive, Dyikanbek strongly disliked her. He thought her eyes looked calculating and felt embarrassed sitting beside her while thinking about Nina. He began searching for an excuse to leave. Finally, he said it was getting late and that he

should go home. Atyrgul told him there was no reason to hurry and hinted to her friend, as if encouraging her. Dyikanbek could no longer tolerate the situation. Almost rudely, he asked Atyrgul to serve the food quickly and reminded her that he had already said he was feeling unwell. He explained that when a person feels sick, he wants nothing more than to return to his own home and bed.

Dyikanbek Meets Nina

Dyikanbek Calls Nina at Midnight Around midnight, Dyikanbek reached his workshop and felt unexpectedly relieved. He realized that his happiness was not simply because he had escaped the Chalkalmakovs, but because he had finally understood his feelings toward Nina. He immediately called her. After a long wait, Nina answered sleepily. Dyikanbek apologized for waking her and admitted that he had called because he missed her. Excited, he said he wanted to come to her home immediately so they could talk. Nina calmly refused, reminding him that it was inappropriate to visit an unmarried woman in the middle of the night. She told him to sleep and come tomorrow, then ended the call.

Dyikanbek Goes to Nina's Apartment After Nina refused to let Dyikanbek visit her at midnight, he stood silently by the phone, then realized he still had to see her. He went to her apartment, telling himself that even seeing her windows would calm him. At the door, he hesitated before ringing. When Nina finally opened it, Dyikanbek apologized for ignoring her advice and begged her to forgive him. Nina remained calm and welcomed him inside. She placed her hands on his shoulders and looked into his eyes. Then she gently said that sometimes it was acceptable not to listen to women. That night, they were very happy together.

Nina Ends Her Relationship with Dyikanbek In the morning, Nina prepared breakfast while Dyikanbek was still tired and hungry. They embraced, but Nina soon stopped him. She calmly explained that they could not continue meeting this way. She believed their relationship would eventually bring them sadness, even though she did not consider their night together a sin. Nina asked Dyikanbek to stay away if he truly loved and respected her. She wondered whether their feelings were real love or simply passion and said that happiness might last only while people are seeking it. Dyikanbek said he understood, but he did not fully realize that this was their last meeting. Three days later, he flew to Moscow to his wife and three-year-old daughter.

Dyikanbek flies to Moscow after Nina's decision

Dyikanbek Worries about Aisuluu On the flight to Moscow, Dyikanbek could think only about Aisuluu. He had recently dreamed that she was crying alone on an island while an eagle carried her away, and he could not save her. The dream left him frightened and restless. On the plane, he finally realized that his anxiety was not really about his family. He was suffering because of what had happened between him and Nina. He tried to forget her, but his emotional pain only became stronger. After landing, he hurried to the sanatorium. Aisuluu ran to him shouting "Papa!" and hugged him. Dyikanbek was deeply moved to see her.

Kalemkan Warns Dyikanbek about Argyn At the sanatorium, Kalemkan told Dyikanbek that Aisuluu had recently been sick, which explained his frightening dream. Dyikanbek decided to take his family back to Frunze soon. Later, Kalemkan asked about the Chalkalmakovs. Dyikanbek explained that their house was always full of famous guests and that he had helped Argyn get elected to the Artists' Union leadership committee. Kalemkan was worried and strongly disagreed with his decision. She believed Argyn was jealous of Dyikanbek's success and could not appreciate his friendship or help. She warned that if Argyn gained more influence, he might eventually turn against Dyikanbek and treat him with contempt.

Dyikanbek Defends Argyn Dyikanbek became upset when Kalemkan continued criticizing Argyn. He told her that she did not understand Argyn and insisted that he was a good person. Kalemkan simply shrugged and warned him that he would remember her words later, but it might be too late. She added that women were very perceptive. Dyikanbek joked that women might be perceptive, but not all of them, or life would be frightening. That night, he brought Aisuluu into his bed. She briefly woke, kissed him with her warm lips, and fell asleep again. Dyikanbek covered her carefully and lay awake smiling. By morning, he felt refreshed and energetic.

Argyn Changes after Joining the Leadership Committee

Transformation of Argyn After Argyn was elected to the Artists' Union leadership committee, his life changed dramatically. The position awakened his energy and ambition. He spent his days at the Union, studying its plans, visiting artists' studios, speaking politely with artists and officials, and checking how the committee's decisions were being carried out. His hard work and respectful behavior quickly made him popular. Dyikanbek was proud that he had supported Argyn. Argyn's personal life also began to change. When Dyikanbek visited his home, he noticed that the yard was much cleaner and the old shed had been repaired and painted. Argyn proudly showed him the improvements he had made.

Argyn Gives up Monument Making Dyikanbek was surprised to find Argyn's old workshop completely transformed. The shed was clean, freshly painted, and no longer contained granite or unfinished monuments. Argyn explained that he had abandoned monument making because he had wasted too many years and too much energy working only for money. He now wanted to return to art and express himself through creative work. Dyikanbek was happy to hear his friend speak with such determination. Argyn believed that a person did not need much to live and that an honest living could always be earned. He wanted to spend his life creating meaningful works instead of making monuments for profit.

Atyrgul and Argyn Become Close Again Inside the house, Dyikanbek noticed another surprising change. Atyrgul treated Argyn gently, bringing him tea and worrying about his health, while Argyn showed the same care toward her. Their relationship seemed warm and sincere instead of the tense game they had played before. Atyrgul proudly told Dyikanbek that Argyn was now the head of the family and completely free to make his own decisions. Dyikanbek joked that if Argyn was free, then Atyrgul was free too, and their "freedom" existed on opposite sides of the mountains. His joke hurt Atyrgul deeply. She became angry and embarrassed, but hid her feelings when Argyn returned to the room.

Atyrgul Turns against Dyikanbek Atyrgul's relationship with Maybash continued, repeatedly fading and then beginning again. Her feelings for him had become the center of her life, so she no longer worried much about Argyn. When Dyikanbek made a joke that hurt her pride, she quietly became angry with him. Later, when Argyn noticed that Atyrgul and Dyikanbek seemed uncomfortable, she quickly invented an explanation. She said they had been discussing an artist who had recently died in a car accident and expressed concern about Argyn's safety while driving. Dyikanbek accepted her explanation and suggested visiting the dead artist's family. As they left, he had no idea that Atyrgul had become his enemy and planned to take revenge.

Argyn Prepares for the Artists' Union Conference After joining the Artists' Union leadership committee, Argyn seemed like a completely new person. He walked with unusual energy and was eager to prove that he was intelligent, educated, and eloquent. When he learned that the Union was preparing for an important conference, he became extremely excited. He saw it as his chance to speak publicly about major issues facing artists and show everyone what he was capable of. He wrote and rewrote his speech several times before taking the final version to the mountains to review. Atyrgul advised him to soften his criticism, avoid too many specific examples, and speak calmly so he would not create enemies. Argyn listened but remained determined to speak boldly.

Dyikanbek Criticizes Argyn's Speech Following Atyrgul's advice, Argyn avoided criticizing anyone directly and spoke in general terms. A government representative strongly supported his ideas, making Argyn feel proud and successful. After the conference, Argyn went to Dyikanbek's office, expecting praise. Instead, Dyikanbek calmly explained that Argyn's ideas were not new and that artists could not all be treated the same. Some worked well on government commissions, while others created their best art only when choosing their own subjects. Dyikanbek warned that forcing every artist to work the same way showed a lack of understanding. Hurt and angry, Argyn left convinced that Dyikanbek was jealous. From that day, he secretly considered Dyikanbek an enemy.

Argyn Seeks Success through His Paintings Argyn began submitting paintings to annual exhibitions, focusing entirely on industrial subjects to prove that he was following the program he had proposed at the

Artists' Union conference. His first three paintings were accepted into a museum collection, which encouraged him. Before the next exhibition, he invited a journalist to dinner, hoping for publicity. Soon, the newspaper published a flattering article praising his work. Argyn enjoyed the attention but was troubled that fellow artists, including Dyikanbek, remained silent. He then sought support from a Ministry of Culture representative, who promised to approve his paintings. At the exhibition committee meeting, however, Dyikanbek strongly criticized them as rushed and artistically weak, while the official defended them.

Argyn's Paintings Are Accepted The members of the art committee disagreed about Argyn's paintings. Dyikanbek was angry but spoke calmly. He explained that Argyn was his friend, but accepting his unfinished, weak paintings would only hold him back. Although the industrial subject was important, the paintings lacked depth, artistic individuality, and professional skill. The Ministry representative argued that average paintings were sometimes necessary and that the exhibition should not reject every work that was not a masterpiece. He insisted that Argyn's paintings fulfilled the requirement to show the theme of labor. In the end, everyone agreed to accept them, and even Dyikanbek voted for them. Argyn, however, went home deeply offended by Dyikanbek's criticism.

Argyn Quietly Seeks Recognition Argyn considered Dyikanbek's criticism hostile and felt betrayed. He wanted revenge but was careful not to break their friendship openly. He continued treating Dyikanbek respectfully, asking him for advice and support while secretly viewing him as an enemy. Argyn understood that he needed to work hard to gain recognition, but painting no longer gave him the pleasure it had when he was young. Instead, he searched for the easiest path to success and continued focusing on industrial subjects. Gradually, some artists began praising him, and newspapers published increasingly favorable articles. Argyn became convinced that he was truly talented. However, respected senior artists remained unconvinced, believing he was taking an easy path to fame and pursuing a career in the Artists' Union. Dyikanbek eventually stopped paying attention to him.

Dyikanbek Shares His Secret with Argyn

Dyikanbek's Growing Fame During these years, Dyikanbek worked intensely. He painted several landscapes he was proud of, created many portraits, and produced countless studies and sketches. His talent was flourishing, although he often experienced self-doubt. At times, he felt completely confident and believed he could see the whole world clearly; at other times, he became uncertain and lost his sense of direction. Dyikanbek was also highly self-critical. He valued honest, professional criticism and believed that genuine talent could recognize talent in others. He did not take empty praise seriously. Meanwhile, his reputation grew rapidly. He held a solo exhibition in Moscow, received favorable reviews, and even had a book and an album of reproductions published about his work.

Dyikanbek Realizes He Loves Nina Dyikanbek never exhibited Nina's portrait, keeping it hidden because it was deeply precious to him. After the Chalkalmakovs accidentally saw it, he made sure no indifferent or jealous person could see it again. He considered the portrait unfinished, although it was one of his strongest works. After his night with Nina, he knew he would never display it. He had promised not to seek her again, but he could not forget her. When they unexpectedly met, both were hurt and unable to know how to behave. At first, Dyikanbek remembered their night with pride, but later he realized that his feelings had become genuine, deep love for Nina.

Dyikanbek Escapes to the Mountains Dyikanbek remembered how easy his relationship with Nina had been when they were only friends. Now every meeting felt awkward and painful because both knew what had happened. As spring arrived, his longing for Nina grew stronger, and he could not return to his normal life. To escape his thoughts, he began traveling into the mountains every day with his easel. One warm spring day near the Alamudun Gorge, he stopped in a meadow surrounded by melting snow, green grass, flowers, and distant white mountains. At first, he simply rested and enjoyed nature. Then he painted until long evening shadows covered the mountain valleys and the temperature dropped.

Dyikanbek Returns to Nina Driving through the dark spring night, Dyikanbek was suddenly overwhelmed by memories of Nina. He stopped the car and realized he could not live without seeing her. When he arrived, Nina was not surprised and admitted that she had known he would return. He stayed with her through the

night and the following day, and their feelings became impossible to resist. Yet afterward, Dyikanbek could not stop thinking about their difficult situation. He wondered whether Nina expected him to find a solution or whether she was suffering because she could not find one herself. He knew he could not leave his sick wife or his beloved adopted daughter. Still, his feelings for Nina grew stronger, so he finally decided to ask Argyn for advice.

Dyikanbek Tells Argyn About Nina In mid-May, Dyikanbek and Argyn went to Dyikanbek's country house near the Alamudun River to relax and talk. Sitting by the water, Dyikanbek finally told his friend that he had fallen deeply in love with Nina Sokolova and could not stop thinking about her. He admitted that they had been close for a long time but that he no longer knew what to do. Argyn listened with envy and compared Nina to the women from his own meaningless affairs. He said she would probably leave Dyikanbek and find another man. Furious that Argyn had insulted Nina, Dyikanbek smashed his glass, threw away the bottle, and walked toward the house.

Argyn Turns Against Dyikanbek

Argyn Challenges Dyikanbek By mid-June, Argyn finally decided to confront Dyikanbek openly. Since joining the Artists' Union leadership committee, he had worked mainly for his own success and had been preparing for what he called self-defense. Encouraged by a Ministry representative, Argyn produced many paintings under the slogan of socially important labor themes. He then demanded that his solo exhibition be held in the museum's large hall. Dyikanbek explained that the hall was already booked and offered the Union's own exhibition space instead. Argyn became angry, accusing Dyikanbek of deliberately blocking his success. Dyikanbek advised him to show only his strongest paintings and focus on quality rather than quantity.

Argyn Attacks Dyikanbek's Art Argyn became even more hostile and mocked Dyikanbek for working carefully, claiming that nobody wanted to look at his landscapes. Dyikanbek calmly reminded him that he also painted many portraits, including portraits of working people, and that the discussion was about Argyn's exhibition. Argyn then attacked him personally, accusing him of painting women and actresses instead of addressing important social themes. He claimed Dyikanbek's subjects were outdated and said that Dyikanbek was hiding from the government's demands by retreating into everyday life. Dyikanbek struggled to control his anger as Argyn continued accusing him. Their argument showed that their old friendship had turned into open artistic and personal hostility.

Argyn Plans Revenge against Dyikanbek Dyikanbek angrily rejected Argyn's accusations, saying that genuine social themes required talent and honest artistic work. He refused to approve Argyn's exhibition and insisted that a committee should decide. Argyn left furious and soon became consumed by jealousy and hatred. He wanted to hurt Dyikanbek but feared an open fight, so he began searching for another way. His attitude was shaped by the belief that any method was acceptable for achieving his goal. A similar incident had happened with a neighbor whose new orchard angered Atyrgul because the trees might shade their garden. After the neighbor pushed Argyn away, Argyn secretly promised revenge, and Atyrgul believed he had a plan.

Argyn Plans to Attack Dyikanbek through His Family While Argyn searched for a way to hurt Dyikanbek, Dyikanbek was enjoying a renewed happiness and spending much of his time with Nina at his country house. Argyn became even more jealous when Dyikanbek was nominated for membership in the Academy of Arts and received increasing attention in newspapers. Fearing that Dyikanbek might also win an award, Argyn decided to act quickly. He believed the best way to hurt him was through his family. He planned to make Kalemkan suspect her husband and leave him or complain about his behavior. Argyn saw this as attacking an enemy from behind when his defenses were weak.

Argyn Lies to Atyrgul about Nina Argyn finally told Atyrgul that Dyikanbek was behaving immorally and was setting a bad example for young artists. He claimed that Dyikanbek spent nights with women and specifically accused him of having an affair with Nina Sokolova and planning to marry her. Atyrgul remembered Nina's portrait and quickly believed the story. Argyn added false details, saying artists were becoming corrupt and that Dyikanbek's behavior encouraged drinking and sexual misconduct. He urged Atyrgul to tell

Kalemkan everything and advise her to visit the country house herself. Atyrgul agreed and decided to meet Kalemkan the next day, unaware that Argyn had deliberately invented the accusations.

Atyrgul Visits Kalemkan The next evening, Atyrgul visited Kalemkan and carefully prepared to tell her about Dyikanbek. She first talked casually, then asked whether Dyikanbek came home at night. Kalemkan admitted that sometimes he did not, which immediately worried her. Atyrgul drank some cognac and began speaking about how difficult husbands could be. She compared men to dogs, saying some stayed home while others wandered everywhere. Then she told Kalemkan a story about catching Argyn trying to sneak away from bed while a female relative was visiting. Atyrgul used the story to suggest that husbands could not be trusted and needed to be strictly controlled.

Atyrgul Warns Kalemkan about Dyikanbek Atyrgul continued warning Kalemkan that even talented and famous men could attract other women. Kalemkan asked her to stop because her heart was weak, but Atyrgul insisted that she was speaking only as a concerned friend. She claimed Dyikanbek's reputation was already at risk and that people in important positions might learn about his behavior. Atyrgul advised Kalemkan either to control her husband or separate from him. Finally, Kalemkan demanded the truth and asked who the woman was. Atyrgul pretended to hesitate before claiming that Dyikanbek was involved with a promiscuous woman. She then revealed that the woman was currently with him at their country house and challenged Kalemkan to go there and see for herself.

Kalemkan Becomes Suspicious As Atyrgul continued speaking, Kalemkan became increasingly anxious. She did not want to believe that Dyikanbek was unfaithful, but Atyrgul deliberately mixed warnings, invented stories, and false claims to make her doubt him. Atyrgul said that women were naturally attracted to successful men and suggested that Kalemkan knew nothing about what happened outside the home. Kalemkan insisted that Atyrgul had no proof and was only causing unnecessary pain. Atyrgul answered that she would never lie to a friend and even shed convincing tears. Finally, she told Kalemkan that Dyikanbek was with another woman at the country house. Troubled and frightened, Kalemkan demanded to know the woman's identity.

Kalemkan Goes to the Country House After Atyrgul left, Kalemkan tried to hide how deeply her words had hurt her. As soon as the door closed, she broke down and cried. At first, she told herself that everything must be a lie, but then she remembered how often Dyikanbek had recently stayed away overnight. She decided to go to their country house and see the truth herself. She took a taxi, stopped before reaching the house, and walked across the river. Seeing their car behind the house made her heart pound. Inside, she noticed a woman's perfume and a fashionable silk coat hanging by the door. She immediately understood that another woman had been there.

Kalemkan Sees Nina Sokolova Kalemkan searched around the house but found nobody. As evening approached, the mountains became dark and quiet. She felt that everything was lost. Then she suddenly saw Dyikanbek walking with a woman whose dark-brown hair reached her shoulders. Kalemkan immediately recognized her as Nina Sokolova. Without waiting or speaking, she hurried away, afraid they might follow her. In the taxi, she asked the driver to go faster. Surprisingly, she no longer felt jealousy. Instead, she was confused and did not know what to think or what to do. She had nobody to consult, so she sat silently, lost in thought, and eventually fell asleep.

Dyikanbek Plans to Marry Nina After Kalemkan saw them together, Nina and Dyikanbek stood silently, worried about what would happen. Nina feared the consequences, but Dyikanbek believed the discovery was actually good because they could finally stop hiding. Sitting together under the moonlight, he told Nina that he planned to divorce Kalemkan and marry her. He said their painful and unnatural situation could not continue forever and asked Nina to be patient. Nina cried but accepted his hope. However, she begged him not to quarrel with Kalemkan. Even if Kalemkan became angry, Nina advised him to remain calm, wait until she settled down, and explain everything without arguing.

Dyikanbek Returns Home Dyikanbek returned home expecting Kalemkan to be angry after discovering him with Nina. He decided to wait until her first anger passed before explaining himself. He was especially worried about Aisuluu and wondered what would happen to her after the divorce. To his surprise, Kalemkan

welcomed him calmly, served him dinner, and behaved as if nothing had happened. Confused, Dyikanbek finally asked why she was not angry. Kalemkan explained that she believed she had no right to blame him. She admitted that she had been influenced by Atyrgul and apologized for her own actions. She said she understood his feelings and would not prevent him from becoming happy with Nina.

Kalemkan Asks Dyikanbek to Protect Aisuluu Kalemkan told Dyikanbek that she did not want to accuse Nina or stand in the way of their happiness. She only asked him to remember Aisuluu and remain involved in her life. Wiping away her tears, she explained that she could endure the divorce, but their daughter needed her father. Kalemkan asked Dyikanbek not to tell Aisuluu about the divorce yet because she wanted to explain everything herself when the time was right. She also asked him to stay home that night, spend time with their daughter, and comfort her because she missed him. Finally, Kalemkan said she would write the divorce petition herself and asked him to take it to court the next day.

Nina Learns about the Divorce After Kalemkan went to her room, Dyikanbek remained at the table, surprised and somewhat depressed by how simply the painful situation had been resolved. The next morning, he visited Nina and told her about his conversation with Kalemkan. He showed her the divorce petition and praised his wife for her true nobility. Kalemkan had made no accusations, wished them happiness, and had always respected Nina's talent. Dyikanbek planned to go to work and then take the petition to court. However, Nina stopped him at the door. She asked him to wait one day, saying they needed to discuss everything first and should go to court together.

Nina Apologizes to Kalemkan After Dyikanbek left, Nina sat alone, struggling to decide what to do. Finally, she put on a colorful dress and went to Dyikanbek's apartment. Kalemkan opened the door and was shocked to see her. Nina sincerely apologized and admitted that she loved Dyikanbek. She explained that she had known him when he was young and had never been able to forget him. Kalemkan responded with remarkable generosity. She said she also loved Dyikanbek but understood that he did not love her. She believed people should live together only when both truly love each other. After seeing Nina with Dyikanbek, Kalemkan accepted their relationship and wished them a happy life.

Nina Meets Aisuluu During Nina's conversation with Kalemkan, Aisuluu woke up and came into the hallway. She had stayed up late talking with her father, so Kalemkan had not taken her to kindergarten that morning. Nina already knew about the girl and looked at her with curiosity. Aisuluu immediately admired Nina's beauty and recognized her from television as an actress. Kalemkan asked her to leave so the adults could continue talking. Nina gently kissed Aisuluu on the head before saying goodbye. Before leaving, Nina asked Kalemkan for a piece of bread, following the local custom of sharing food with a guest. After eating it, Nina quietly left and asked Kalemkan not to tell Dyikanbek about her visit.

Nina and Dyikanbek Spend the Night at the Golden Spring After Nina left, Kalemkan felt relieved and decided to leave the city with Aisuluu. She packed quickly, left a note for Dyikanbek, and went to stay with relatives near Kara Balta. That evening, Dyikanbek and Nina drove toward Altyn-Bulak spring, then walked to a small green hollow where they had discovered a spring two years earlier. They spread blankets beneath a hawthorn bush and shared food while the moon reflected in the spring's small pool. Nina suggested staying until dawn. Dyikanbek said he would be happy even if he died there because she was with him. Seeing her tears, he learned they were tears of happiness. Nina said she needed nothing except him.

Nina Leaves Dyikanbek Dyikanbek discovered only two days later that Nina had left the city. After receiving her letter, he learned why she had made this painful decision. Nina still loved him, but she admired Kalemkan's kindness, strength, and selflessness. She could not take Dyikanbek away from his wife or deprive Aisuluu of her father and childhood. After secretly visiting their home and meeting Kalemkan and Aisuluu, Nina became certain that leaving was the right thing to do. She urged Dyikanbek to value his wife and never hurt her. Nina said she was leaving because of her conscience and honor. She had also destroyed the divorce papers.

Dyikanbek Returns to Family Life Autumn arrived, and artists returned to the city after spending the spring and summer painting outdoors. Like farmers waiting for the harvest, they now presented the results of their hard work. Dyikanbek had taken his family to Issyk-Kul during the summer and worked there on his

studies, hoping that constant work would restore his emotional balance and confidence. After returning, he organized his unfinished responsibilities at the Artists' Union. He finally displayed Nina's portrait at the autumn exhibition, where it attracted attention and received praise. Dyikanbek continued working hard, but spent all his free time at home with Kalemkan and Aisuluu. He avoided social gatherings, while Kalemkan never mentioned Nina. Dyikanbek seemed older, and gray appeared in his hair.

Argyn Provokes Akbay against Dyikanbek

Argyn Fuels Akbay's Jealousy Argyn usually ignored former classmates and fellow villagers who had not achieved much, but he deliberately stopped to talk with his relative Akbay. Knowing that Akbay was jealous of his wife, a famous factory worker and public figure, Argyn told him false rumors that she was having an affair with Dyikanbek, who was painting her portrait. Akbay became furious and rushed to Dyikanbek's workshop. He attacked the portrait and then struck Dyikanbek. Dyikanbek overpowered him and forced him to leave. Still consumed by jealousy and humiliation, Akbay took a hunting rifle and decided to kill Dyikanbek. On his way, he stopped at Argyn's house to announce his plan.

Argyn Uses Akbay's Anger against Dyikanbek When Akbay showed Argyn and Atyrgul the rifle, they were frightened by how seriously he intended to kill Dyikanbek. Argyn quickly stopped him and locked the gate, fearing that he would be punished if Akbay committed murder. Atyrgul treated Akbay's injuries and encouraged him to report Dyikanbek instead. Argyn agreed, telling Akbay that revenge should be achieved through the law, not murder. Akbay wrote a detailed complaint describing how Dyikanbek had beaten him and gave it to Argyn. Atyrgul arranged for doctors to examine him and document his injuries. Argyn secretly celebrated, believing that Dyikanbek had finally fallen into his trap.

Akbay Admits the Truth A few days later, the Artists' Union leadership committee began discussing Dyikanbek's case. Before the discussion could start, Akbay arrived with his wife. She angrily confronted Argyn and demanded that he prove his accusation that she was Dyikanbek's lover. Akbay then admitted that Argyn had told him the rumor and that he had believed it. He explained that Argyn and Atyrgul had encouraged him to file a complaint after Dyikanbek beat him. Ashamed, Akbay admitted that Dyikanbek was innocent and tore up his complaint. The committee members became furious with Argyn and called for his removal from the leadership committee and possibly from the Artists' Union.

Argyn Admits His Hatred of Dyikanbek After Akbay and his wife left, only Dyikanbek and Argyn remained in the meeting room. Dyikanbek asked Argyn why he had created such a scandal when he had always tried to help him. Argyn, pale with anger, admitted that he hated Dyikanbek and promised to settle the matter with him. Dyikanbek asked whether Atyrgul had influenced him and why they had sent Akbay to attack his family. Argyn defended his wife, saying she was a mother who had given birth to children. Dyikanbek replied that having children was not enough; parents must also raise them to become decent people. Realizing the conversation was useless, Dyikanbek stopped arguing, while Argyn repeated his hatred before leaving.

Bakbergen Insults Aisuluu at Kindergarten Aisuluu, Dyikanbek and Kalemkan's daughter, and Bakbergen, the Chalkalmakovs' son, attended the same kindergarten and had been good friends until their parents became enemies. Although Kalemkan never told Aisuluu about the conflict, she noticed that the families no longer visited each other. Argyn and Atyrgul openly criticized Aisuluu's parents in front of Bakbergen, and the children soon began fighting. One morning, Bakbergen told Aisuluu that her father had two wives. She replied by calling his father untalented, without understanding the meaning. Bakbergen complained at home, and his parents told him to say that Aisuluu's parents were not her real parents. The next day, he cruelly repeated this lie to Aisuluu while they were playing.

Kalemkan Becomes Ill after Aisuluu's Words Bakbergen noticed that Aisuluu had ignored his cruel words, so he chased her, kicked her leg, and repeated that Dyikanbek and Kalemkan were not her real parents. Aisuluu cried from the pain, but quickly stopped when she learned that her parents had arrived to take her home. In the car, Kalemkan asked why she had been crying. Aisuluu explained that Bakbergen had kicked her and claimed that Dyikanbek and Kalemkan were not her biological parents and had adopted her. Kalemkan tried to answer but suddenly felt a sharp pain in her heart and could barely breathe. She asked Dyikanbek to take her to a doctor. Dyikanbek rushed her to the hospital while Aisuluu cried.

Atyrgul Blames Herself for Kalemkan's Death On the taxi ride home to Frunze, Atyrgul increasingly understood that her reckless and cruel actions had helped cause a terrible human tragedy. She believed she would carry this guilt for the rest of her life. At the same time, she hated Argyn and looked back over their marriage, realizing that she could not remember a single truly generous or unselfish act from him. She felt ashamed that she had wasted so many years believing in his cheap, false reputation. At home, she found Argyn absent but was welcomed by her calm mother-in-law, Bereke-Apa. Atyrgul embraced her and cried, asking for advice and help.

Atyrgul Decides to Divorce Argyn After bath, Atyrgul discovered a metal comb belonging to Maybash in her travel bag. Her mother-in-law Bereke-Apa warned her to hide it because Argyn might cause a scandal. Atyrgul calmly said she no longer cared. She explained that she and Argyn constantly deceived, watched, and betrayed each other while pretending to be respectable in public. Their marriage, she said, was built on lies, and she could no longer bear living that way. Atyrgul announced that she wanted a divorce and a completely new life. Bereke-Apa admitted that she did not fully understand their unhappiness but did not blame Atyrgul. She loved her daughter-in-law and told her to think carefully. Atyrgul eventually married Maybash.

The End

Dyikanbek Receives Good News from Moscow A late-night phone call woke Dyikanbek. His friend Arkadiy was calling from Moscow to tell him that his election as a corresponding member of the Academy of Arts had been officially approved. Dyikanbek quietly thanked him so he would not wake Aisuluu. Although the news did not make him especially happy, it lifted him from the emotional numbness he had felt for a long time. Standing by the open window after the rain, he remembered the spring when he first met Kalemkan after a heavy storm. She had been a young teacher walking with children toward the mountains. They soon married, and Kalemkan deeply loved him and admired his art.

Memories of a Lost Wife Dyikanbek, a grieving father, carried his six-year-old daughter home through a heavy storm after visiting her mother's grave. Although he was completely soaked, he first made sure that his daughter was warm, dry, and comfortable. He gave her hot tea and an egg and stayed beside her until she fell asleep. Sitting in a chair, Dyikanbek remembered his beloved wife, who had died four years earlier. He deeply regretted not appreciating her enough while she was alive. His own illness also had no cure, making his future uncertain. Despite his suffering, he found comfort in caring for his daughter and promised never to leave her alone.

Dyikanbek Remembers Kalemkan and Plans a New Painting Looking through the rainy night, Dyikanbek remembered that he had painted many portraits during his life but had never painted Kalemkan while she was alive. The memory of her and the mountain meadows filled with bright red poppies suddenly became vivid in his mind. He decided to return to those mountains the next morning with Aisuluu and try to paint the spring landscape and the young girl he had once seen walking with children. For the first time in a long while, he felt that life was not over despite all his suffering. Before sleeping, he kissed Aisuluu and quietly told her that they still had a life ahead of them and that she must grow up happy.

CHARACTER ANALYSIS

Dyikanbek

Dyikanbek is the protagonist of *After the Downpour* and a painter living in Frunze. His life revolves around his work, his family, and his complicated feelings for Nina. He takes painting seriously and believes that an artist should remain honest and committed to meaningful work. His friendship with Argyn becomes strained because they develop very different ideas about art and professional success. At home, Dyikanbek is deeply attached to his adopted daughter, Aisuluu, and shares a long marriage with Kalemkan. His reunion with Nina brings a new emotional dimension to his life and forces him to confront the conflict between personal desire and family responsibility.

Artistic Dyikanbek treats painting as much more than a profession. For him, art is a way of understanding people, expressing emotions, and responding honestly to the world around him. He is particularly critical of work that appears to be created mainly for money, popularity, or professional advancement. This attitude explains his growing disagreement with Argyn, whose approach to painting changes as he becomes more interested in recognition. Dyikanbek's own work reflects his emotional involvement with his subjects, especially in his portrait of Nina. His commitment to artistic honesty also becomes an important part of his identity and shapes his relationships with other artists.

Passionate Dyikanbek experiences both art and personal relationships with considerable emotional intensity. His interest in Nina develops gradually after their unexpected reunion, but his feelings eventually become strong enough to challenge the stability of his marriage. He is also deeply emotionally connected to his work, particularly when a person or experience inspires him creatively. His passion gives him energy and makes his artistic life meaningful, but it also makes his personal decisions more difficult. He cannot simply separate his feelings from his responsibilities. His relationship with Nina therefore becomes not only a romantic experience but also a source of inner conflict that changes the course of his life.

Conflicted Dyikanbek struggles between what he wants personally and what he feels responsible for protecting. His feelings for Nina are genuine, but he is also deeply attached to Kalemkan and Aisuluu. When he considers divorce, he faces the possibility of creating a new life while destroying the family he has built over many years. Nina eventually understands this conflict and makes the decision to leave him. Dyikanbek's uncertainty reveals that he is not able to resolve the situation simply by choosing one person over another. His emotional struggle is central to the novella because it connects his romantic desires with questions of loyalty, responsibility, and consequence.

Devoted Dyikanbek's attachment to his family is particularly clear in his relationship with Aisuluu. After several miscarriages, he and Kalemkan adopt her, and he accepts her completely as his daughter. His love for her does not depend on biological connection. Even during his relationship with Nina, his family remains an important part of his emotional life. After Nina leaves him, he returns to Kalemkan and Aisuluu. Later, after Kalemkan's death, he continues to care for Aisuluu and decides to return to the mountains with her. His devotion to his daughter gives him a sense of responsibility and hope for the future.

Argyn Chalkalmakov

Argyn Chalkalmakov is Dyikanbek's friend and fellow painter. He was once a promising artist but gradually turns away from serious painting and begins producing monuments and gravestones for financial gain. His ambitions increasingly center on professional recognition and advancement. Dyikanbek initially supports him, even helping him obtain a position on the Artists' Union council. Their friendship deteriorates as their ideas about art become increasingly different. Argyn also becomes resentful of Dyikanbek's success and personal happiness. After learning about Nina and Dyikanbek, he reveals the relationship to Atygul, setting in motion events that seriously disrupt Dyikanbek's family life.

Ambitious Argyn wants to advance his professional position and gain greater recognition. His ambition is not necessarily negative at first; like many artists, he wants his work to be noticed and to have a successful career. However, his priorities gradually change. Financial opportunities, institutional influence, and professional status become increasingly important to him. Dyikanbek even helps him obtain a position on the Artists' Union council, giving him an opportunity to advance. Yet Argyn's ambition eventually becomes closely connected to his dissatisfaction with his own career. His desire to succeed contributes to his willingness to compromise his artistic principles and damage his friendship with Dyikanbek.

Opportunistic Argyn often looks for practical ways to improve his position. His move toward producing monuments and gravestones reflects his willingness to choose work that offers greater financial benefits rather than remaining focused on the kind of serious painting he once pursued. He also benefits from Dyikanbek's support when he receives a position on the Artists' Union council. His opportunism extends beyond his professional life. When conflict develops between him and Dyikanbek, he uses private information about Nina rather than addressing the disagreement directly. His behavior suggests that he frequently considers what a situation can offer him before considering its effect on others.

Jealous Argyn becomes increasingly resentful of Dyikanbek as he compares his own career with that of his friend. Dyikanbek continues to develop as an artist while Argyn becomes less committed to serious painting, creating a difference that Argyn appears unable to accept easily. Dyikanbek's criticism of his work further increases the tension between them. Argyn also knows that Dyikanbek has found inspiration and happiness through Nina, which adds another source of resentment. His jealousy eventually becomes destructive when he tells Atyrgul about the relationship. Instead of remaining a private feeling, his resentment leads him to take actions that seriously harm his friend.

Dishonest Argyn's behavior conflicts with Dyikanbek's understanding of artistic and personal integrity. In his professional life, he increasingly accepts work that Dyikanbek considers lacking in genuine artistic value. In his personal life, he does not openly resolve his disagreements with Dyikanbek. Instead, he reveals private information about Nina and Dyikanbek to Atyrgul, knowing that the information can create serious problems. This action changes a disagreement between two artists into a conflict involving their families. Argyn's dishonesty is therefore significant not only because of what he does, but because it shows how far he is willing to go when personal resentment and professional ambition become stronger than friendship.

Nina Bichurina

Nina Bichurina is an opera singer whom Dyikanbek first meets when they are young in Moscow. At the time, she dreams of becoming a professional singer, and Dyikanbek recognizes her natural ability and encourages her. Thirteen years later, he encounters her again in Frunze, where she is performing the title role in Bizet's *Carmen*. She has achieved the career she once imagined for herself. Their reunion renews their connection, and Dyikanbek falls in love with her. Although Nina returns his feelings, she eventually understands that their relationship threatens Dyikanbek's family. She chooses to leave him after realizing the consequences of remaining together.

Talented Nina's talent is recognized by Dyikanbek when she is still a young woman with an uncertain future. He sees that she has a natural ability for singing and encourages her to pursue it. Thirteen years later, her performance as Carmen demonstrates that her ability has developed into a professional career. Her success is important because it fulfills the dream she once shared with Dyikanbek. Nina's artistic achievement also connects her to Dyikanbek, even though they work in different forms of art. Her voice and stage presence inspire his painting, showing how one artist's creativity can influence another and become part of a deeply personal relationship.

Determined Nina follows her ambition to become an opera singer despite the long period between her early dream and her eventual professional success. When Dyikanbek meets her again, she is no longer simply an aspiring singer but an established performer capable of taking on a major operatic role. Her determination is also visible in her personal decisions. Once she understands that her relationship with Dyikanbek could destroy his family, she does not continue simply because she loves him. Instead, she makes a difficult decision and removes herself from the situation. Her ability to act according to her understanding of what is right demonstrates strength beyond professional ambition.

Compassionate Nina gradually becomes aware of the people who could be hurt by her relationship with Dyikanbek. Before Kalemkan arrives at the country house, Nina asks Dyikanbek to stop seeing her because she does not want to destroy his family. Her compassion becomes even clearer when she later visits Kalemkan. She sees that Kalemkan is devoted to Dyikanbek and that the couple has built a family around Aisuluu. This encounter changes Nina's understanding of the situation. She realizes that remaining with Dyikanbek would not simply create a new romantic relationship; it would cause serious emotional harm to people who have shared a life together.

Self-sacrificing Nina ultimately gives up the relationship she wants even though her feelings for Dyikanbek are genuine. After meeting Kalemkan, she recognizes the depth of the family bond between Dyikanbek, his wife, and Aisuluu. She understands that leaving with Dyikanbek would mean breaking apart

that family. Instead of choosing her own happiness, she tears up the divorce papers Dyikanbek has prepared and leaves him. Her decision is painful because it requires her to surrender a relationship she values. Through Nina, the novella presents love not only as emotional attachment but also as the willingness to accept personal loss for the sake of others.

Atyrgul

Atyrgul is Argyn's wife and an important figure in the conflict surrounding Dyikanbek, Nina, and Kalemkan. She becomes interested in Nina after seeing her portrait in Dyikanbek's workshop and is also aware of Dyikanbek's artistic success. She asks him to help Argyn advance his career, and he agrees, eventually helping Argyn obtain a position on the Artists' Union council. After learning about Nina and Dyikanbek's relationship from Argyn, Atyrgul deliberately informs Kalemkan and asks her to come to the country house. Her own marriage is troubled as well, since she has maintained a long-term relationship with another man. After Kalemkan's death, she eventually divorces Argyn.

Envious Atyrgul's reaction to Dyikanbek's success suggests that she compares his achievements with the position of her own family. She notices his artistic success and becomes interested in Nina after seeing the portrait in his workshop. Her request that Dyikanbek help Argyn advance professionally also reflects her desire to improve their own circumstances. Her feelings are therefore connected not simply to material success but to social and professional standing. Rather than accepting the differences between the two families, she becomes increasingly involved in them. Her envy contributes to the tension surrounding Dyikanbek and eventually becomes connected to her decision to reveal his relationship with Nina.

Manipulative Atyrgul does not merely passively learn about Dyikanbek and Nina. After Argyn tells her about the relationship, she deliberately informs Kalemkan and asks her to come to the country house. She knows that Kalemkan's arrival will expose the relationship directly and create a confrontation. Her actions therefore influence events rather than simply responding to them. This makes her an active participant in the breakdown of Dyikanbek's marriage. She uses information at a moment when it can have the greatest effect. Her behavior shows how personal resentment can turn knowledge about another person's private life into a means of controlling a situation.

Unfaithful Atyrgul's own marriage is complicated by her long-term relationship with another man while she remains married to Argyn. This detail gives her character an important contradiction. She becomes involved in the consequences of Dyikanbek's relationship with Nina, yet her own marriage does not conform to the expectations of marital loyalty. Her behavior also suggests that the problems in her marriage existed independently of Dyikanbek and Nina. Her eventual decision to divorce Argyn comes only after Kalemkan's death and after she becomes increasingly dissatisfied with Argyn. Her personal life therefore adds another example of the complicated and often contradictory relationships presented throughout the novella.

Disillusioned Atyrgul's relationship with Argyn gradually becomes less sustainable as she becomes increasingly dissatisfied with his character and choices. She is already involved with another man while married to him, suggesting that the marriage has serious problems before its final breakdown. Argyn's professional compromises and personal behavior contribute further to her dissatisfaction. After Kalemkan's death, Atyrgul eventually divorces him. Her decision can be understood as the final result of a long process rather than a sudden reaction. Through Atyrgul, the novella shows how disappointment can accumulate within a relationship until the people involved no longer see their marriage as something worth preserving.

Kalemkan

Kalemkan is Dyikanbek's wife and Aisuluu's adoptive mother. She and Dyikanbek experience several miscarriages before adopting Aisuluu, whom they raise as their daughter. She is deeply attached to both Dyikanbek and Aisuluu and represents the stability of the family they have built together. When she discovers Dyikanbek with Nina, she does not create a public confrontation. Instead, she calmly suggests that she and Dyikanbek divorce. Her later meeting with Nina becomes important because Nina sees the

strength of Kalemkan's family bonds and realizes what her relationship with Dyikanbek could destroy. Kalemkan's death later becomes a major turning point in the novella.

Devoted Kalemkan's life is closely tied to her family. After several miscarriages, she and Dyikanbek adopt Aisuluu and raise her as their own daughter. Kalemkan's relationship with the child demonstrates that motherhood, in the novella, is presented through care and commitment rather than simply biological connection. She is also deeply invested in her marriage and remains emotionally connected to Dyikanbek despite the difficulties they face. Her devotion becomes particularly important when Nina sees the family they have created. Kalemkan represents the stability and emotional continuity of the household, making the threat to her marriage especially serious within the structure of the story.

Patient Kalemkan experiences several painful situations but generally responds with restraint. She and Dyikanbek endure repeated miscarriages before becoming parents through adoption, and she accepts the difficulties that accompany their family life. Her greatest test comes when she discovers Dyikanbek with Nina. Rather than responding with anger or creating a public confrontation, she remains calm and suggests divorce. Her patience does not mean that she is unaffected by what happens. Instead, she appears to control her emotional response and deal with the situation directly. This quality gives her character a quiet strength and distinguishes her from characters who react to conflict through manipulation or resentment.

Dignified Kalemkan maintains her composure when she discovers the relationship between Dyikanbek and Nina. She does not insult Nina, attack Dyikanbek, or create a public scene. Instead, she calmly proposes divorce, responding to a deeply painful situation with restraint. Her dignity becomes even more significant when Nina later visits her. Nina sees Kalemkan as a devoted wife and mother and comes to understand the consequences of breaking apart the family. Kalemkan therefore influences Nina without trying to persuade or manipulate her. Her quiet behavior communicates the seriousness of her relationship with Dyikanbek more powerfully than an angry confrontation might have done.

Selfless Kalemkan repeatedly places the needs of her family above her own personal comfort. She accepts Aisuluu completely as her daughter after the couple's painful experience with miscarriages and devotes herself to the family they have created. Even when Dyikanbek's relationship with Nina threatens her marriage, she does not seek revenge or attempt to humiliate the other woman. Her response is controlled and focused on resolving the situation. Her selflessness also helps Nina recognize the value of the family she could potentially destroy. Through Kalemkan, the novella presents sacrifice as an important part of love, family life, and personal responsibility.

THEMES

Family:

Love and Family Responsibility

The novella presents family not simply as a social institution but as a bond formed through love, care, loyalty, and responsibility. Through Dyikanbek, Kalemkan, and their adopted daughter Aisuluu, Stamov explores the meaning of family and the difficult choices that arise when personal desires come into conflict with family obligations.

Dyikanbek and Kalemkan's marriage is shaped by years of shared experience and hardship. After several miscarriages, they adopt Aisuluu, and Dyikanbek becomes deeply attached to her, loving her as his own daughter. Their relationship demonstrates that parenthood is not determined only by biological ties. The family they create is based on emotional attachment and mutual care. This becomes especially important when Aisuluu later learns that Dyikanbek and Kalemkan are not her biological parents.

The theme becomes more complex when Dyikanbek reconnects with Nina and falls in love with her. His feelings are genuine, but his relationship with Nina threatens the family he has built with Kalemkan. The conflict therefore places romantic love against marital loyalty and parental responsibility. Nina eventually recognizes the consequences of her relationship with Dyikanbek and chooses to leave him rather than destroy his family. Her decision presents love as an emotion that can involve restraint and sacrifice.

Kalemkan's response to the crisis also emphasizes the importance of family. When she discovers Dyikanbek with Nina, she does not create a public confrontation but calmly suggests divorce. Her dignity and devotion reveal the emotional strength of the family bond.

The later tragedy surrounding Aisuluu further demonstrates the vulnerability of family relationships. Bakbergen's cruel revelation about Aisuluu's adoption causes profound emotional suffering and contributes to Kalemkan's decline and death. Afterward, Dyikanbek remains devoted to Aisuluu. His decision to return to the mountains with her suggests that, despite loss and suffering, family continues to give his life meaning and a reason to move forward.

Illustrative moment: The next day, Nina visits Kalemkan at home and meets Aisuluu. Kalemkan is deeply ashamed of the situation, feeling that she has disturbed Dyikanbek and Nina and cannot hold her husband by force if he truly loves another woman. Yet she remains calm and dignified, without bitterness or hostility toward Nina. Nina sees a decent, kind, and generous woman who respects both Dyikanbek's artistic talent and Nina's talent as a singer; Kalemkan had even encouraged Dyikanbek to attend *Carmen*. Meeting Aisuluu further reveals the family they have built together. Nina cannot bring herself to destroy such a family and decides to leave Dyikanbek.

Marriage and Loyalty

Marriage and loyalty are closely connected themes in Asanbek Stamov's *After the Downpour* (*Noshordon kiyin*). Through the contrasting marriages of Dyikanbek and Kalemkan and Argyn and Atyrgul, Stamov examines marriage as a relationship shaped by trust, affection, responsibility, and moral commitment. The novella also shows how infidelity, resentment, and emotional dissatisfaction can weaken the bonds between spouses.

Dyikanbek and Kalemkan's marriage is built through years of shared hardship. After several miscarriages, they adopt Aisuluu and raise her together, creating a family based on love rather than biological connection. Even when Dyikanbek falls in love with Nina, Kalemkan responds with remarkable dignity. At the country house, she does not try to force her husband to remain with her. Although deeply hurt and ashamed that she has disturbed Dyikanbek and Nina, she accepts that she cannot hold him by force if he truly loves another woman.

The next day, Nina visits Kalemkan and meets Aisuluu. She sees Kalemkan's kindness, dignity, and devotion to her family. She also realizes that Kalemkan respects both Dyikanbek's artistic talent and Nina's talent as a singer; she had even encouraged Dyikanbek to attend *Carmen*. Nina cannot bring herself to destroy such a family and chooses to leave Dyikanbek.

Argyn and Atyrgul's marriage provides a darker contrast. Atyrgul has maintained a long-term affair with another man while still married to Argyn, revealing that her emotional commitment has already shifted outside the marriage. Her affair suggests a deep dissatisfaction with her relationship and contrasts sharply with Kalemkan's loyalty and willingness to preserve her family. Atyrgul is also involved in the conflict surrounding Dyikanbek and Nina: after learning about their relationship from Argyn, she deliberately tells Kalemkan and asks her to come to the country house. Her own marital disloyalty thus exists alongside her interference in another family's crisis. After Kalemkan's death, Atyrgul becomes increasingly disillusioned with Argyn, particularly with his dishonesty and conduct, and eventually divorces him.

Through these contrasting relationships, Stamov presents marriage as a test of loyalty and character. Kalemkan's dignity and Nina's self-restraint are set against the infidelity and resentment surrounding Argyn and Atyrgul, showing different responses to love, dissatisfaction, and marital responsibility.

Illustrative moment: A revealing moment occurs when Atyrgul proudly tells Dyikanbek that Argyn is now the head of the family and completely free to make his own decisions. Dyikanbek jokingly responds that if Argyn is free, then Atyrgul is free as well, adding that their "freedom" exists on opposite sides of the mountains. The remark deeply hurts Atyrgul's pride. She becomes angry and embarrassed, but hides her feelings when Argyn returns. Although Dyikanbek intends the comment as a joke, Atyrgul quietly develops resentment toward him. The moment reveals the hidden tensions within her marriage and marks a turning point in her attitude toward Dyikanbek.

Family Bonds: Adoption, and Childhood

The novella explores how a child's understanding of family can be shaped not only by biological ties but also by upbringing, affection, and shared experience. Aisuluu's relationship with Dyikanbek and Kalemkan provides the emotional center of this theme.

After several miscarriages, Dyikanbek and Kalemkan adopt Aisuluu and raise her as their daughter. Dyikanbek becomes especially attached to her, and their relationship is presented as that of a genuine father and daughter. The importance of this bond becomes clearer later, when Aisuluu's adoption is used against her.

The conflict begins in kindergarten when Bakbergen provokes Aisuluu and tells her that she is adopted. Aisuluu initially avoids the confrontation, but Bakbergen continues until the quarrel becomes physical and he kicks and injures her. Aisuluu responds by criticizing his father's lack of artistic talent. Their exchange shows how children can unknowingly reproduce the tensions and judgments that exist among adults.

Bakbergen's words have consequences far beyond an ordinary childhood quarrel. The revelation about Aisuluu's adoption causes deep emotional distress and contributes to the suffering that follows in the family. Stamov thereby shows how information about a child's origins can become especially painful when it is revealed through cruelty rather than through the trust and care of parents.

The episode also connects family conflict with the behavior of the next generation. Aisuluu and Bakbergen are children caught in circumstances created by adults, yet they become the immediate carriers of those conflicts. Their quarrel transforms adult resentment into childhood cruelty.

Through Aisuluu's story, Stamov emphasizes that parenthood is experienced through everyday acts of love and responsibility. The novella also warns that adult rivalries can reach children in damaging ways, turning private family tensions into sources of humiliation, violence, and lasting emotional pain.

Illustrative moment: A key illustrative moment begins with Kalemkan's repeated miscarriages and the doctors' conclusion that she can never have children. After meeting a sixteen-year-old pregnant girl whose family wants her to have an abortion, Kalemkan finds a possibility of becoming a mother by raising the baby herself. With Dyikanbek's support, she arranges for the girl to give birth safely. Five months later, Aisuluu is born, and the couple takes her home as their daughter. At first, Dyikanbek feels little attachment to the helpless baby. As Aisuluu grows, however, her smiles, gestures, and first word, "Papa," awaken a deep paternal love. She gradually becomes the emotional center of his life.

Art: Artistic Integrity, and Human Weakness

A significant theme in Asanbek Stamov's *After the Downpour* (*Noshordon kiyin*) is the relationship between artistic creation, personal feeling, and moral integrity. The novella raises a fundamental question about the purpose of art: should an artist pursue recognition and professional success, or should art remain grounded in sincerity, emotional experience, and an inner commitment to truth? Through the contrasting careers and values of the painters Dyikanbek and Argyn, Stamov explores the ethical dimension of artistic practice.

For Dyikanbek, painting is inseparable from personal experience and emotional engagement. He approaches art as a means of understanding and expressing life rather than simply as a profession. His portrait of Nina, for example, emerges from his admiration and love for her, while *The Day of the Melon Grower* reflects his sustained commitment to serious artistic work. His attitude toward painting is therefore closely associated with authenticity: the value of a work depends not only on its outward form or public reception but also on the sincerity behind its creation.

Argyn provides a contrasting model. Once a promising painter, he gradually turns toward commercially profitable monuments and gravestones. His growing concern with professional advancement and recognition increasingly shapes his artistic choices. Dyikanbek regards some of Argyn's later work as lacking honesty and artistic integrity, and their disagreement develops into a broader conflict over the values that should guide an artist.

The novella consequently presents art as both an aesthetic and ethical activity. Artistic integrity becomes a measure of character, while the pursuit of recognition at the expense of sincerity is associated

with jealousy, compromise, and personal conflict. At the same time, Stamov does not portray art as separate from human experience. Love, friendship, family, loss, and moral responsibility all enter Dyikanbek's creative world.

In this sense, *After the Downpour* favors an understanding of art rooted in emotional truth and personal integrity—art that comes from the heart rather than being produced primarily for status, profit, or recognition.

Illustrative moment: Dyikanbek criticizes Argyn's paintings for lacking artistic honesty. Argyn, once a promising painter, has become increasingly focused on professional recognition and material success. Their disagreement exposes the tension between artistic integrity and ambition. Argyn's reaction also reveals his jealousy and insecurity, which gradually damage his friendship with Dyikanbek. After learning about Dyikanbek's relationship with Nina, Argyn tells Atyrgul, setting in motion events that threaten Dyikanbek's family. Through this conflict, Stamov shows how human weaknesses such as jealousy, ambition, and wounded pride can influence artistic choices and destroy personal relationships.

Flaws: Jealousy, Ambition, and the Destructive Pursuit of Recognition

Through Argyn's changing relationship with his profession and with his friend Dyikanbek, Stamov examines how the desire for recognition can become destructive when it is accompanied by insecurity, envy, and resentment.

Argyn is introduced as a fellow painter and close friend of Dyikanbek. He was once considered a promising artist, but he gradually turns away from serious painting and begins producing monuments and gravestones because they are more profitable. His decision reflects the tension between artistic ambition and material concerns. Unlike Dyikanbek, who remains committed to painting as a serious creative vocation, Argyn increasingly seeks professional advancement and recognition.

Dyikanbek initially supports his friend rather than treating him as a rival. When Atyrgul asks Dyikanbek to help Argyn advance his career, he agrees and even helps him obtain a position on the Artists' Union council. This assistance makes Argyn's later resentment particularly significant. Instead of strengthening their friendship, professional comparison gradually creates tension between them.

Argyn becomes increasingly ambitious and seeks recognition through paintings that Dyikanbek considers dishonest and lacking in artistic integrity. Dyikanbek openly criticizes this work, and their artistic disagreement develops into a serious personal conflict. Argyn's jealousy is not limited to professional matters. He also becomes resentful of Dyikanbek's artistic success and personal happiness, including his relationship with Nina.

His jealousy ultimately affects the lives of others. Knowing about Dyikanbek and Nina's relationship, Argyn tells Atyrgul about it. Atyrgul then deliberately informs Kalemkan and brings her into the situation. What begins as professional rivalry therefore expands into a chain of personal conflicts that harms Dyikanbek's family and contributes to the suffering of several characters.

Illustrative moment: Argyn spreads a false rumor that Dyikanbek is having an affair with another woman. Believing the rumor, the woman's husband confronts Dyikanbek and beats him. The incident briefly damages Dyikanbek's reputation and shows how jealousy can turn into deliberate cruelty. However, the truth is eventually revealed when the man and his wife come to the office and expose Argyn's motives and lies. Their testimony makes clear that Argyn deliberately created the rumor out of resentment toward Dyikanbek.