

HUMANITIES INSTITUTE

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THREE WAYS OF LOVE / UCH MEERIM (1986)

Asanbek Stamov (1938-2010)

Reference: Stamov, A. (1990). *Uch meerim* [Three ways of love]. Adabiyat.

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 dastandary (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

The novella titled *Uch Meerim* was written in 1986. In the Kyrgyz language, the word *meerim* does not simply mean "love." It encompasses a much broader range of emotions, including compassion, mercy,

intimacy, sincerity, and kindness. Because of this, translating the phrase *Uch Meerim* as "Three Loves" would fail to capture its full essence. In this context, *meerim* describes love in a way that is far more nuanced and profound.

In the novella, this concept is explored through three fundamental emotions: romantic love, compassion and kindness, and maternal love. Romantic love is the act of giving one's heart to another. Compassion and kindness are defined by the ability to truly feel another's pain. Maternal love is an unconditional love that expects nothing in return. These three emotions form the foundation of the story's understanding of what it means to be human.

For this reason, the title in English is *Three Ways of Love*. It is not a literal, word-for-word translation of the original Kyrgyz title, but rather a choice that captures the true meaning and emotional depth of the story.

Background

Kyrgyz literature has a rich and deeply rooted tradition of oral storytelling, shaped by generations of legends, folktales, heroic epics, and stories passed from one generation to another. This novella belongs to that cultural tradition. It is not certain whether the writer adapted an existing folk tale and expanded it into a novella, or created the legend himself, drawing upon the spirit, imagery, and narrative traditions of Kyrgyz oral literature. Whatever its origin, the work carries remarkable philosophical depth.

At its heart is a reflection on what it means to remain fully human. The novella *Three Ways of Love* suggests that, despite hardship, loss, and the struggles of life, a person needs three essential feelings in the heart: romantic love, compassion for others, and a mother's love. These reveal different dimensions of human nature—our longing to love and be loved, our ability to feel another's suffering, and the unconditional bond between mother and child.

The author also brought a distinctly lyrical sensibility to Kyrgyz prose. His treatment of nature, emotion, memory, and human experience gives the novella a poetic quality, transforming the richness of folk tradition into a deeply lyrical literary work. Through its characters and their experiences, love and compassion become not merely emotions, but sources of humanity, dignity, and moral strength.

MAIN CHARACTERS

Borubay: A brave craftsman whose flute playing leads him to a legendary love.

Arzygul: A devoted snake princess who transforms into a human out of love and sacrifice.

Amanat: The innocent son whose pure tears eventually restore his mother's human form.

Bakalbay: A mysterious man who knows the secrets and mystical features of nature.

Arzygul (Human): Borubay's first love whose forced marriage triggers his exile.

Samat Han: The stern ruler who sets impossible conditions for marriage.

Jooru: The wealthy rival whose claim on Arzygul leads to tragedy.

SYNOPSIS

Borubay, a gifted craftsman of the southern Kyrgyz Kachy Clan, lives in Andijan, in the Fergana Valley of present-day Kyrgyzstan. He falls in love with Arzygul, the khan's daughter, but her father refuses to give her to a poor man and chooses a wealthy suitor instead. Unable to accept losing her, Borubay kills his rival and flees north.

He reaches the Oykaiyng Valley, in the northern lands of present-day Kyrgyzstan. There, while playing the flute he inherited from his father, he meets a beautiful and mysterious girl named Arzygul. They fall in love and begin living together beside Angyr Kol Lake.

Bakalbay, a man who understands the mysteries of nature, warns Borubay that his wife is not a human being but a female snake. Borubay does not believe him.

When Arzygul goes into labor, she asks Borubay not to return home for seven days. After three days, Borubay meets Bakalbay, who tells him, "I warned you, but you would not listen. Your wife is a snake. Now she is lying in her snake form. If you do not believe me, go and see for yourself."

Borubay returns home and sees Arzygul in the form of a snake. Only then does she reveal her secret. She belongs to the Snake Clan, descendants of the Snake King. Her people can take human form, but to remain human they need three essential feelings in their hearts: love, compassion, and a mother's love. Arzygul had fallen in love with Borubay and, through becoming a mother to their child, had gained the feelings that allowed her to remain human.

But once her secret is revealed, Arzygul returns to her snake form and is forced to return to the depths of Angyr Kol Lake. Before leaving, she gives one of her eyes to Borubay so that their child may survive.

Years later, their son Amanat goes to Angyr Kol to find his mother. Arzygul has been living there as a blind snake. Amanat's pure love and innocent tears restore her to human form, and mother and son are reunited.

From Borubay and Arzygul comes a new generation, whose descendants become known as the Ozuk Clan.

SCENES

Borubay's Early Life

The Father's Legend One evening, a father gathered his children around him and began to tell them an ancient legend passed down through generations of their Kachy clan.

"Listen, my children. I first heard this legend from my father when I was a boy. He had heard it from his father, and he from his. It has been passed down from grandfather to father and from father to child for generations. I first heard it when I was seven and never grew tired of it, no matter how many times I heard it. So listen without fear. This is the story of Arzygul, the beautiful daughter of a serpent."

Borubay's Story Long ago, perhaps a hundred or two hundred years ago, a young man named Borubay lived alone. He was brave, hardworking, and skilled with his hands. His only possessions were two horses, one for riding and one for work. He made the wooden frame of the traditional Kyrgyz yurt for a living. Borubay lived in the Andijan region, modern Fergana valley which was then part of the wider homeland of the Kyrgyz people. At the time, the Kyrgyz were divided into tribal communities living in different regions. Many of them were under the rule of the Dzungars and faced years of hardship and oppression. Despite this, they continued to preserve their identity and traditions.

Borubay Leaves Home Until he was twenty-four, Borubay lived a quiet life. In spring, he plowed the fields, and after the harvest he returned to making wooden yurt frames, the trade he had learned from his father. Then his parents died, leaving him completely alone. He had no livestock and had never married because he could not afford the bride price. One summer, Borubay saddled his only good horse and set off toward the mountains. Perhaps he wanted to escape the intense heat of Andijan, perhaps he wanted a change, or perhaps fate was leading him somewhere. Carrying a bow and rifle, he rode on without knowing where he would end up.

The Mourning Family Borubay rode toward the mountains around Andijan and Osh in the Fergana Valley, following the Kuba River, now known as the Ak-Buura. In those days, the mountain valleys were full of white deer and mountain goats. Around midday, he came upon a lone white yurt. As he approached, he saw a black flag hanging over the doorway, a sign that the family was mourning. Women inside were singing a traditional lament. Borubay could not simply ride past. By custom, a traveler was expected to enter and pay his respects. He tied his horse outside and sat quietly until the singing ended. Among the women, he noticed a girl of about sixteen.

Borubay Meets Arzygul An elderly man welcomed Borubay and asked where he was from. When Borubay said he was from the Soovay clan, the old man sighed. "Then you are one of our own," he said. "But your people did not come to our aid in the last battle. Our Kypchak brothers were the ones who helped us. They arrived when we were close to defeat and saved our honor. We drove the Kalmyks from our homeland, but victory came at a heavy price. Many brave young men were killed, and I lost both of my sons." He then called his young daughter, Arzygul, and asked her to prepare a meal for their guest.

Borubay and Arzygul Over time, Borubay settled in the village where the respected regional khan Samat Ajo lived. He fell deeply in love with Arzygul, the young woman he had first seen in the mourning house. Arzygul also grew fond of the poor, solitary horseman. At first, no one paid much attention to their relationship. About a year later, after Samat held memorial rites for his two sons and the mourning period ended, their love became known. The news reached Samat's eldest son, Ibragim Bek. A bek was a man of authority and status in the community. Ibragim was surprised by Borubay's boldness and decided to speak with his father.

The Price of Marriage Samat called Borubay before him. Desperate, Borubay offered to become his servant, but the elder gently rejected the idea. "My daughter cannot marry a servant," he explained. He then asked whether Borubay had relatives who could support him and stand as guarantors. Borubay admitted that he had no one—only his horse and his skills as a craftsman. Ibragim then proposed a condition: if Borubay could provide Arzygul's bride price, they would let her marry him. It would require 3,000 sheep, 100 racing horses, 1,000 selected horses, 100 camels, and five camels loaded with silk, fine cloth, and other valuables. Samat agreed with his son.

Jooru Asks for Arzygul Samat was not a cruel man, but he was a man of his time and the ruler of his people. The bride price he had set for Arzygul was so enormous that Borubay had little hope of ever paying it. When word spread, Jooru, a respected man of the Bargy clan from Ken-Alay, arrived at Samat's village with the full bride price. Samat welcomed him as an honored guest. The next day, Jooru revealed why he had come: he wanted Arzygul for himself. Samat was stunned. Jooru was over fifty, with unmarried sons, yet he calmly reminded Samat that no age had been set for Arzygul's future husband.

Arzygul's Fate Samat could not withdraw his word without losing face. His men searched Jooru's bride price but found nothing wrong with it. Reluctantly, Samat ordered them to send Arzygul to Jooru's village. Arzygul wept, but tradition left her no choice. Meanwhile, Borubay desperately tried to see her before the wedding. Realizing she was being closely guarded, he came secretly at night. Unable to bear the thought of Arzygul marrying the old man, Borubay stabbed Jooru in the heart and fled. Samat's household was now bound to answer for the killing. Borubay, having tried to save the woman he loved, accepted whatever fate awaited him.

Borubay's Exile and the Mystery of the Flute

Borubay's Life in Oykaiyn Years passed after Borubay fled from the southern lands to Oykaiyn Valley in northern Kyrgyzstan. His past slowly disappeared from people's memory. Though the villagers came to respect him, he kept away from feasts and gatherings, choosing to live quietly on his own, with his yurt set apart from the others. He was a gifted craftsman, making yurt frames and jewelry, and people admired his skill and modest nature. Over the years, he built up his livestock and collected household goods from passing merchants. He even prepared a chest filled with women's clothes, though he never imagined marrying. Having lost the woman he loved, he had put marriage far from his thoughts.

The Flute and Bakalbay In his youth, Borubay's father had made him a flute and taught him to play. Now, in his solitude, the flute became his closest companion. Whenever he played, his heart grew lighter, and for a while he forgot his loneliness. He learned which woods gave the flute its clearest and sweetest voice, and slowly came to understand its secrets. The flute seemed to share his sorrow; the two had become one. One day, an old man named Bakalbay, who often sat alone on a hill, called him over. The villagers respected Bakalbay as an elder, but they also feared him as a healer and sorcerer. He treated the sick, played the komuz, made people laugh, danced, and performed mysterious rituals. In the evenings, he would climb the hill, play his komuz as the sun went down, and speak of lost people and missing animals as though he knew where they had gone.

Bakalbay and the Komuz When Borubay arrived, Bakalbay simply nodded in greeting and kept playing until he finished his melody. He then rested his komuz against a stone and said, "This melody is called *Kambarkan*. I called you here to tell you the history and secrets of the komuz. When the Kyrgyz became a

people, Tengri gave them the komuz. It is an instrument of life. It gives voice to everything in human existence—joy and sorrow, regret, love, and longing. People die, but the komuz remains in this world, carrying its secrets and its voice from one generation to another.

The Legend of the Flute

Adam and Eve Bakalbay asked Borubay to take the flute from his bosom, then began to explain its secret. “The flute is not like the komuz. It is an instrument of paradise, belonging to both this world and the next. They say that after creating Adam and Eve, God could not bring them to life. Finally, He cut a piece of reed, shaped it into a simple flute, and blew into it. A beautiful, magical sound filled the air, and Adam and Eve came to life. Later, Adam found the forgotten flute and played it. Its music was so powerful that the rivers stopped, the wind fell silent, and the animals gathered around them.”

The Power of the Flute God realized that the flute had given Adam and Eve too much power. He called Kydyr Ilyas and asked what he thought of the creatures of the earth. Ilyas praised their strength and beauty, but said that none could compare with Adam and Eve. God agreed. He had created humans with intelligence so they could work, discover fire, make food and clothing, build homes, and shape the world around them. Yet the magical flute allowed them to control everything without effort. God began to fear that, if they depended on the flute, they would never learn to live and prosper through their own work.

Fire and the Flute God then said that humans would one day discover fire through their own intelligence and effort. At that moment, lightning struck, and flames appeared. But whenever the flute was played, the fire died down, the wind stopped, and the rivers became still. Everything seemed to obey its music. God watched and realized that the flute had become too powerful. If Adam and Eve could command nature simply by playing it, they would have no reason to work or learn. The flute, which had once brought them to life, had become an obstacle to their growth. God decided that its magic had to be taken away.

The Flute Loses Its Magic God ordered Kydyr Ilyas to remove the flute's magic. Ilyas took the flute, drew out the spirit that gave it power, and returned it to Adam. The flute still had its beautiful voice, but its magic was gone. When Adam played it again, nothing around him obeyed. The animals scattered, the rivers began to flow, the wind rose, and lightning once again flashed across the sky. The flute remained a beautiful instrument, but it was no longer a force that could control the world. Bakalbay finished his story and looked quietly at Borubay.

Warning

Borubay Ignored Bakalbay's Warning Bakalbay warned Borubay to stop playing the flute, telling him that it still possessed a living power and could bring trouble. Borubay did not take the old man seriously. For three days, he kept the flute hidden, but loneliness soon became unbearable. He finally went deep into the forest below Chumkoktu place and played there until nightfall. On his way home, he met Bakalbay playing the komuz and speaking sadly about death and the passing of life. Borubay said he would rather enjoy the sunrise than think about death. Bakalbay warned him again: the place ahead was called Jylanduu, the snakes' lair.

The Mysterious Girl

A Voice in the Forest That day, Borubay worked until late, cutting willow branches for the wooden parts of yurts. He sorted the best pieces and left them in the shade to dry slowly. After eating, he sat beneath a tall pine and began to play his flute. As he played, memories of his homeland and his beloved Arzygul filled his mind. He grew drowsy, lost in longing, and did not wake until evening. When he finally rose, he knew he would reach his shelter by dusk. No one was waiting for him. His brown horse stood nearby, quietly grazing. Just as he was about to leave, he heard a faint voice from the young trees: “Help me.”

The Girl by the Water Borubay followed the voice and found a girl sitting among the willows across a stream. He left his horse, crossed the water, and then turned away, unable to look directly at her. She was completely naked, or so he thought at first. “Who has hurt you, sister? How did you come to be here?” he

asked. "No one has harmed me. I will explain later. Please, cover me first." Borubay ran back to his horse, took his rain cloak, and threw it toward her. When she covered herself, he saw that her long black hair fell all the way to her heels. Her purity and beauty startled him. She looked so much like Arzygul that his heart began to ache.

"Call Me Arzygul" The mysterious girl knew that Borubay recognized something familiar in her. She told him she knew his name and had come because she knew him. When he asked who she was, she refused to say. "Perhaps I am someone you have been waiting for a long time," she said with a gentle smile. Borubay wondered if she might be Arzygul's younger sister. The girl agreed that he could think of her that way, then finally said, "Call me Arzygul." Borubay agreed. She asked him not to question her about her past and promised to stay with him. She also asked that no stranger sleep in his home until she became accustomed to it. Borubay gladly accepted.

A New Love and the Paradise of Angyr-Kol

A Quiet Return Home Worried that someone might see them—especially the old Bakalbay—Borubay and the girl took a little-used path home, watching carefully along the way. They arrived only after darkness had fallen and everyone had settled in for the night. Borubay brought out the clothes he had been saving and left the girl to dress. When she called him inside, he found her sitting neatly beside the household bundles, looking radiant in the moonlight that fell through the roof opening. He tried to light a fire, but she suddenly moved away in fear. "Please don't light the fire," she said. Borubay was puzzled but remembered his promise not to question her.

A Promise of Happiness The girl said she was not used to fire yet and would learn to cook with it the next day. For that night, she asked only for milk. Borubay brought her a large bowl, and she drank it gratefully. He worried that living without meat would be difficult, but she promised to learn to cook for him. Encouraged, Borubay asked her never to leave his home. "I am tired of being alone. Bring happiness to my hearth," he said. She replied that he need not worry—she had come looking for him and had nowhere else to go. Borubay thanked Tengri for bringing her into his life. She asked him to keep his promise, and that very night they left for Oykaiyn together.

The Paradise of Angyr-Kol Lake Borubay and Arzygul moved to the shore of Angyr-Kol lake, a hidden lake surrounded by cliffs and reached only through Kekilik-Ashuu pass. The people avoided it, believing a sixty-fathom dragon guarded the lake. But Borubay knew the land well and found it peaceful and untouched. Around the clear little lake grew tall grasses, berries, and wild plants, while the pines stood along the shore like eyelashes. Ducks flew across the water, nightingales sang day and night, and a waterfall rushed down the rocks. Borubay watched it all with wonder. Beside Arzygul, he finally understood what happiness meant.

Bakalbay Reveals the Secret Less than a year passed, and Arzygul became pregnant. Still, the two lovers lived alone beside Angyr-Kol, far from the people. Yet their secret did not remain hidden. The very next day after they left, old Bakalbay muttered that poor Borubay had followed a six-fathom white snake to the lake. His words spread through the villages like lightning. People, already afraid of Angyr-Kol, now stayed far away. One day, Bakalbay met Borubay near Kekilik-Bel. He reminded him of his earlier warning about the flute and then revealed what he believed to be the truth: the beautiful woman beside Borubay was not human, but the daughter of a snake. Borubay angrily dismissed his words and rode away.

Birth of a Son

Arzygul Awaits the Birth Beside Angyr-Kol, Arzygul waited for the birth of her child. When the pain grew stronger, she called Borubay and gave him careful instructions. He was to cover the opening of the yurt, close the door, circle the yurt three times with a rope, and fill the cooking pot with water. Then he must wait nearby but stay outside. At midnight, when the stars were bright, he would know the child had arrived by its first cry. A falling white star would mean a girl; a red-tailed star, a boy. After naming the child, he must leave and return only on the seventh night.

Borubay Learns He Has a Son Borubay waited anxiously, never taking his eyes from the white yurt. When he heard a baby's cry, he looked toward the sky and saw a long red star falling. Remembering Arzygul's words, he knelt and prayed, then named the child Amanat, wishing him to become a respected man. He mounted his horse and rode away. At dawn, from the top of Kekilik-Bel, he looked back, but the yurt and Angyr-Kol had disappeared from sight. As the sun rose, he prayed once more, asking it to protect his newborn son. Then he rode on, wandering for three days without meeting anyone.

Bakalbay Warns Borubay Again On the third evening, as Borubay rode alone, Bakalbay suddenly called out and stopped him. Borubay tried to ride on, but the old man followed, saying he had come only to save him from danger. He then revealed what he believed to be the truth: Arzygul was not human but the daughter of a snake. She had told Borubay to stay away for seven days, Bakalbay said, because she knew what was coming. Borubay angrily dismissed his words as lies. But Bakalbay urged him to return home and look through the wall of the yurt. He claimed that Arzygul had given birth to a white baby and would soon turn into a six-fathom snake. Borubay refused to believe him.

Borubay Sees the Truth With no way out, Borubay stood trembling. Bakalbay, certain that he had finally convinced him, watched closely, sometimes laughing, sometimes turning stern. "Go on, then. See for yourself," he said. Burning with anger and confusion, Borubay forgot the promise he had made to Arzygul and raced home. Yet he still doubted the old man's words. Before reaching the yurt, he dismounted, tied his horse out of sight, and approached on foot. He peered through the felt wall, ready to turn back if Bakalbay had lied. But the sight froze him: Arzygul's body had become a snake from the waist down, while her head remained human. Their naked baby was peacefully suckling at her breast.

Arzygul Asks Borubay to Listen Terrified, Borubay stumbled backward. As he was about to leave, Arzygul lifted her head and cried, "Who are you?" He stood rooted to the spot, unable to speak. "You would not listen to me, and now you have brought this fate upon me. Your child will be left an orphan, and you a widower. Soon we will have to part forever." Her voice weakened. "Come inside. There is something I must tell you." When the baby began to cry, Borubay rushed into the yurt and gathered him into his arms. The child soon quieted. Arzygul asked him to open the door wider. As her body slowly turned into a snake, only her head remained human. Borubay broke down in tears. "What will I do with our child? How will I raise him?" Arzygul begged him not to die with her. "At least one of us must live for the baby. What fault does this innocent child have?" Then she began to tell him about her fate.

The Snake Who Wanted to Become Human

Arzygul Tells of Her Childhood I was a playful, curious little snake from the moment I was born. My parents adored me and spoiled me, so I usually got whatever I wanted. I was clever, too. I noticed things others missed and often sensed things before they did. Everyone praised me for that. But in the end, my curiosity got me into trouble. Unlike other snakes, I hated staying underground after I had eaten. At dawn, when the birds began to sing and the first red glow appeared in the sky, I would crawl out and watch the sunrise. I never grew tired of it. I could lie on a warm stone for hours, simply watching the morning unfold.

Why We Feared Fire I loved the rain, the sound of running water, the springs, thunder and lightning. But nothing frightened us snakes more than fire. My mother always told me that lightning was the source of fire, and I believed her. She often told me about snakes that had burned to death when fires swept through the dry grass. In summer, we stayed near the water and rested in the thick grass. When autumn came, we moved into old, abandoned graves. They were dry and warm, and there were plenty of mice to eat. But sometimes lightning struck the dry forest and started a fire. The flames could spread before we had time to escape. Many snakes were burned in their burrows, while others suffocated in the smoke. Water was the only thing that could save us.

What People Get Wrong about Snakes People are afraid of snakes without really knowing us. Don't believe everything they say. We have always been curious about people and the way they live. Humans have even learned to control fire. It warms their homes and burns safely in their hearths. That, to me, is one of their greatest strengths. But snakes do not attack for no reason. We keep to ourselves and leave others alone. I have always wondered why people call cruel and heartless people 'snakes.' We are nothing like

that. We know love, loyalty and friendship. We can tell what kind of person someone is almost the moment we meet them. Most of all, we can recognize a person by their voice. I was especially good at that.

I Could Never Sit Still I was always restless. In summer, I hardly wanted to sleep. I loved the sounds around me—the mountains and forests, the open fields, the nightingales, the rushing streams and the wind. On moonlit nights, I would slip into the little lake and chase the fish just for fun. Whenever they saw me, they would disappear into the depths. I could not understand why they were so afraid when I wasn't hungry and had no intention of eating them. Sometimes I even complained to my mother about it. She would laugh and call me foolish. Even when the spring floods came, I could not stay away from the water. I would throw myself into the current, let it carry me along, then swim to the other side and crawl home. I was always looking for something new. And then, one day, I met a human being for the first time.

The Snake and the Child One summer, we were staying in the Chumkok pasture. A large white yurt was set up near our den, and I was fascinated by the people who lived there, especially their voices. One day, I slipped inside and found a baby sleeping in a cradle. I crawled closer and watched him. When he opened his eyes and smiled at me, I was so taken with him that I curled around his little chest and fell asleep in his warmth. His mother screamed when she saw me, but an old woman gently sprinkled milk over me and told them not to hurt me. From then on, the child and I became friends. I could recognize his voice even among many other children. When his family stopped coming to the pasture, I missed him terribly. That was when I first understood what it meant to long for a human being.

The Day We Saw Human Cruelty One summer, we witnessed something terrible. A family of snakes lived in a large den beneath a white rock above ours. That year, a white yurt was set up nearby, and they were delighted to have people living so close. One evening, a few playful young snakes crawled into the yurt. When the woman saw them and screamed, the owner, a cruel, dark-faced man named Karabek, rushed in and crushed two of them under his feet. The others escaped toward their den, but he followed them and discovered where they lived. Later, he poured a cauldron of boiling water into the den. We watched helplessly as our neighbors writhed in pain and died. That was the day we learned what human cruelty was.

Bakanooz Takes Revenge One snake survived. He was a gray-black snake with a white horn on his head. His name was Bakanooz, and he had been the leader of the family. He came to us grieving and swore that he would avenge the others. My parents tried to calm him, reminding him that not all humans were cruel. But he could not let go of his anger. One day, he found Karabek sleeping on a flat stone after drinking too much kumis. Bakanooz did not attack him while he slept. He waited for Karabek to wake, because that was our way of challenging an enemy. They stared at each other without moving. Before long, Karabek began to grow pale and weak, as if his strength were draining away. Just as Bakanooz was about to strike, Karabek's wife came running and called his name. Karabek turned his head, and Bakanooz struck him in the throat. Karabek collapsed. Bakanooz had won. Later, the people sacrificed a white mare and scattered its blood along his path, asking forgiveness and promising to end the feud. That evening, we told Bakanooz that the humans had made peace. He accepted their apology and finally let his hatred go.

The Suitors That spring, many males came seeking my hand, but I refused every one of them. I had a strange feeling that something was about to change in my life, and my heart was filled with excitement. Among snakes, love is different from what humans know. No male can force a female to choose him. The suitors must first fight among themselves, and only the strongest earns the right to stay by her side. Even then, the female must accept him willingly. I had once wounded two males who loved me. Even as they lay dying, they never blamed me. At the time, I thought love must be the same for every living creature. I did not yet know how different my own fate would be.

The Song That Led Me to Borubay One day, I was lying in the sun beside a great river when I heard a beautiful sound coming from the forest. I had never heard anything like it. I could recognize every sound in nature, but this was unlike anything I had known. It seemed to gather the beauty of birdsong, flowing water and the wind into a single melody. Without realizing it, I followed the sound and found you, Borubay, sitting beneath the trees and playing your flute. I could hardly take my eyes off you. Your pale forehead, sharp nose and dark eyes enchanted me. The simple flute in your hands seemed magical. Then you fell asleep. I crept closer and watched you until morning. That night, I followed you home and heard the same melody

again. Your flute seemed to speak of your sorrow, your loneliness and the love you had lost. Listening to it, I felt that I understood your whole life.

My Wish to Become Human From that day on, I could not stay away from you. I followed you everywhere and listened whenever you played. My parents soon realized what had happened to me. They told me that the flute had never completely lost its magic. When someone played it with deep sorrow and genuine feeling, even a small part of its old power could awaken. They warned me that if I continued listening to it, the flute might eventually turn me into a human being. I was secretly delighted. I wanted to become a beautiful woman, marry you, Borubay, and make you happy. My parents tried to stop me, but I would not change my mind. My mother then told me that our family descended from Shahimardan, the ruler of snakes, and that only once in a thousand years might one of us become human. But to remain human, I would need three kinds of human compassion to enter my body and blood. Otherwise, I would turn back into a snake and belong nowhere.

Three Kinds of Love My mother told me that people were not all the same. Some were kind, gentle, and compassionate, but many were selfish and greedy. People often wanted more wealth even when they already had enough, and where there was wealth, there could also be violence, jealousy, and injustice. She warned me that life among humans would be difficult. Yet she also explained that there were three kinds of love and tenderness that could make me truly human: romantic love, the love between a mother and her child, and the kindness people show to one another. Without these, I would always remain a stranger among humans.

A Mother's Unfulfilled Love I have no regrets about finding romantic love. It warmed my heart, gave me the strength of a woman, and allowed me to become a mother. But even after giving birth, I am leaving this world with an empty heart. I never saw my child smile or heard him say "Mother." I carried him for nine months, suffered through pregnancy, and longed to hold him, kiss his face, watch him grow, and hear his sweet voice. Now I can only ask you to raise him well and never let his innocent soul suffer. He was born from my love, and I will remember him until my final breath.

A Mother's Sacrifice When the baby began to cry, Borubay, still sobbing, asked Arzygul what would become of their child after she was gone. How could he raise such a helpless baby on his own? Arzygul told him to hold out his hand. Then, with terrible pain, Arzygul gave him one of her eyes. She explained that whenever the baby cried, he should place it in the child's mouth so he could nurse from it. The child would need no other food until he was one year old. The strength of a mother's eye would keep him nourished. For her child, Arzygul was willing to endure anything.

Arzygul's Final Warning Before leaving Borubay, Arzygul begged him never to look for her. Arzygul was now a snake, while Borubay was human, and she feared that her appearance would frighten both him and their child. She told him to forget what she had become, but never to forget their love. Then Arzygul spoke about the flaws she had discovered in human beings. People were greedy, cruel, jealous, and quick to believe gossip. They bowed before the powerful but showed little mercy to the weak. Arzygul finally understood that her mother had been right: human beings had not yet learned to become truly human. Their hearts were still filled with selfishness and cruelty.

Protect Their Child Arzygul's final request was that Borubay protect their child with all his heart. He should give the boy all the love a father could give, but never tell him that Arzygul had become a snake. When the child was old enough to understand, he should simply say that Arzygul had died giving birth to him. If the boy ever asked where his mother was buried, Borubay should show him an old grave. And if the child grew up longing for Arzygul, he should comfort him and, if necessary, leave the village to protect him from gossip. Above all, Arzygul begged Borubay never to search for her.

Farewell, My Love "Goodbye, my dear," Arzygul said. "Your love brought warmth to my heart, and I came to love you in return. Goodbye, my beloved. You are both my happiness and my sorrow." Arzygul said that she would live out the rest of her life alone. Even without hope, she believed that every living creature had a duty to keep living. Then Arzygul slipped out of the yurt and began to crawl away. Borubay cried after her,

asking where he could find her if he ever wanted to see her again. Without stopping, Arzygul replied, "If you truly must look for me, go to Turna-Kol lake. If I am not there, try Jashyl-Kol lake." Then she disappeared.

The Mother Who Never Left Her Son

The Magic Flute Borubay built his yurt near Turna-Kol and began a quiet life with his son. Every morning, while the boy was still asleep, he rode to the lake and played his flute. Its gentle music seemed to bring the whole world to life—the rising sun, drifting clouds, green leaves, eagles in the sky, and deer moving through the grass. Arzygul listened from the lake, seeing the world through his music. More than anything, she loved hearing her son's laughter and little voice. "I can hear everything," she said happily. "He is growing into a good man. I am grateful to you, Borubay. I am grateful for life."

A Mother's Happiness Borubay played his flute by the lake every day, even when autumn came and winter storms swept across the land. The music always reached Arzygul. Through it, she heard her son learning to speak, laughing, playing, and growing up. For a while, she could forget that she was a snake and imagine herself living beside her family again. Seven or eight years passed like this. When the boy finally asked, "Where is my mother?", Borubay took him to an old, lonely grave and told him it was hers. The boy believed him. Whenever he visited the grave, he felt strangely close to his mother.

Running to His Mother The boy had always wondered about his mother. Whenever he asked, Borubay told him that she was buried in the lonely grave by the lake. One day, missing her deeply, the boy went there alone and sat sadly beneath the grass-covered mound. There he met an old man named Bakalbay, who told him that the grave belonged to a woman who had died long ago. His mother, he said, was still alive—in the lake, living as a snake. The boy refused to believe him. Just then, he heard Borubay's flute and ran toward the lake. Hearing her son call, Arzygul fled into the deep water. The boy followed, crying, "Mother!"

The Miracle of Love When the boy reached the blind white snake, he showed no fear. He wrapped his arms around her and sobbed, "Mother, Mother!" Arzygul coiled herself around her son, trembling with emotion. She cried so deeply that blood flowed from her sightless eyes. Then the boy's clear tears fell onto them. With every tear, her eyes slowly opened, and before them stood a beautiful woman once again. Arzygul, Borubay, and their son embraced, laughed, and wept together. As they walked out of the lake, the sun seemed to smile upon them, and the whole world appeared brighter. Their joy was beyond words.

The Legend of the Kings of the Forest

Three Kinds of Love Bakalbay watched the reunited family and blessed them, saying that they had finally passed their trial. Arzygul bowed respectfully and thanked him. Then their conversation turned to the meaning of love. Bakalbay admitted that he had once doubted the power of the three kinds of love, but now he believed, especially in the love between a mother and her child. Arzygul smiled, knowing that without that love she would never have become human again. Yet Bakalbay said that even three kinds of love might not be enough to make humanity truly happy. He then offered to tell them a story meant especially for their little boy.

The Lion and the Leopard Bakalbay began telling them about two great creatures who lived deep in the forest: the Lion and the Leopard. All the animals respected them and feared their strength. Whenever the Lion walked through the woods, the animals bowed or hid from his gaze. The Leopard was feared just as much. They were both proud and believed they were the true rulers of the forest. Yet they shared the same woods, drank from the same streams, lived beneath the same sky, and worshipped the same God. They simply never stopped to think about what they had in common. Then, one day, a small mouse changed everything.

A Whisper That Started a War The mouse, lived near the Lion's den and slowly won his trust. One day, he began whispering that the Leopard secretly hated him and wanted him dead. The Lion believed every word and became furious. Then Momoloy went to the Leopard and told him the same kind of story, saying the Lion was plotting against him. The Leopard believed him too. Fear and suspicion quickly took over their

minds. Soon, both animals were convinced that the other was their enemy. What began as a few careless lies grew into a deep hatred between two creatures who had once lived peacefully in the same forest.

When Anger Took Over In the end, the Lion could no longer control his anger. He stormed toward the Leopard's den, ready to attack. The Leopard fought back, but when he realized he could not win, he ran. The Lion chased him through the forest, and neither would give up. Exhausted, they both began praying to God for help. The Lion begged God to help him catch his enemy, while the Leopard prayed to escape. Each promised to worship God forever if he survived. As they ran, they heard each other praying and thought the same thing: "God is on my side." Neither realized that anger and lies had blinded them both.

The Lesson of Justice Just as the Lion was about to catch the Leopard, he fell into a deep pit. The Leopard came back and laughed at him from above. Trapped at the bottom, the Lion cried out to God, asking why he deserved such a fate. A deep voice answered, "I have been fair. You are still alive." The Lion begged to be freed, but God told him that he would be rescued and taken into captivity instead. The Leopard laughed, believing he had won. Then God told him to look around. Only then did the Leopard realize that he too was surrounded by iron bars. Neither had understood the value of freedom.

Learning to See God The Lion and the Leopard finally understood that God had taken neither side. They had both taken their freedom for granted, and now they would have to live together behind bars. God reminded them that life was only a brief spark and that every creature should learn to value it. From then on, they began to see the beauty they had once ignored—the open sky, the warm sun, the mountains, forests, rivers, and rich earth. They came to understand that true happiness was found in freedom, honest work, and a peaceful life. Each morning, when the sun rose, they greeted it: "Good morning, great God!" And the sun seemed to answer, "Good morning, my creatures."

The Legacy of the Snake Mother When Bakalbay finished his story, he gave the family his blessing, wishing them a life filled with happiness and abundance. Then he mounted his horse and rode away. The three of them stayed behind, quietly reflecting on his words. This time, they felt certain that the old man had spoken from the heart. Soon, the family reunited with their people and held a great celebration. Their descendants grew in number and eventually became a clan known as the Ozuk, named after their snake mother. They were known for their beautiful voices, lively laughter, courage, pride, and strong sense of honor. Yet Bakalbay believed that kindness, fairness, compassion, and forgiveness were greater virtues than revenge.

CHARACTER ANALYSIS

Borubay

Borubay is the central protagonist of the novella, a man whose life bridges the gap between the mundane and the mystical. Originally a member of the Soovay clan in Andijan, he is a master yurt-maker whose skilled hands shape the traditional homes of his people. His life is marked by deep transitions: from a man in exile to a solitary craftsman in the Oyakaiyn Valley, and finally to the patriarch of the Ozuk clan. Through his music and his labor, Borubay represents the enduring human spirit, navigating the complexities of honor, impulsive tragedy, and supernatural devotion.

Skillful Borubay is exceptionally skillful, possessing a mastery over traditional crafts that defines his identity and ensures his survival. As a master yurt-maker, he inherited the precise art of shaping willow branches into the complex wooden frames of nomadic dwellings. His expertise extends beyond functional structures to the creation of fine jewelry and household goods, earning him the silent respect of his neighbors in Oyakaiyn. This skill is his primary connection to his heritage; even in total exile, his hands continue the work of his ancestors. For Borubay, craftsmanship is a form of meditation and a vital source of personal dignity.

Melancholic Borubay carries a profoundly melancholic spirit, a trait that finds its most powerful expression through the notes of his flute. His internal world is shadowed by the loss of his parents, the

violent separation from his first love, and the isolation of his exile. This sadness is not silent; it is a melodic force that resonates through the valleys. It is this specific emotional depth that attracts the mystical snake daughter, Arzygul, to him. His music does not just fill the air; it carries the weight of his loneliness and his longing for a home that no longer exists.

Impulsive Borubay is fundamentally impulsive, a man whose intense emotions often lead him to take drastic, irreversible actions. This trait is most evident when he murders the elderly Jooru to prevent the human Arzygul from being forced into a loveless marriage. Instead of seeking a compromise or accepting his fate, his raw passion compels him to act violently, forcing him into a lifetime of exile. This impulsivity is a double-edged sword; while it stems from his capacity for deep love and protection, it also shatters his social standing and forces him to build a life on the fringes of society.

Resilient Borubay is remarkably resilient, demonstrating an inner strength that allows him to build a meaningful life despite repeated tragedies. After fleeing the south, he survives the harsh solitude of the northern valleys, adapting his trade to a new environment. His resilience is further tested when he chooses to live at Angyr-Kol, a lake feared by others as a site of ancient monsters. He does not surrender to despair after losing his first love, nor does he flee when he discovers his wife's supernatural nature. He remains steadfast, continuing his work and fulfilling his duties in the face of isolation.

Devoted Borubay is deeply devoted, a trait that transforms him from a wandering exile into a committed guardian of his family. Following the snake daughter's return to the lake, he dedicates himself entirely to raising their son, Amanat. He meticulously follows Arzygul's instructions to ensure the child's survival and protects the boy's innocence by hiding the painful truth of his mother's transformation. His devotion is also seen in his daily ritual of playing the flute by the water, maintaining a spiritual bridge to his wife. His life becomes a testament to enduring loyalty and the selfless love of a father.

Arzygul

Arzygul is the mystical heroine of the novella, representing the bridge between the human and supernatural worlds. Born into a noble lineage of serpents descending from Shahimardan, she is defined by her insatiable curiosity and her desire to experience human emotions. Her life is a series of transformations—from a curious snake to a loving human woman, then back to a serpent, and finally to a permanent human form through the power of love. As the ancestral mother of the Ozuk clan, she embodies the themes of profound sacrifice, maternal devotion, and the redemptive power of compassion.

Curious Arzygul is profoundly curious, a trait that sets her apart from her fellow serpents and initiates her transformation. While other snakes prefer the safety of their burrows after feeding, Arzygul is drawn to the vibrant beauty of the surface world. She spends hours watching the sunrise and listening to the sounds of nature, fascinated by human existence and their control over fire. This intellectual restlessness leads her to follow the melody of Borubay's flute, eventually compelling her to leave her own kind. Her curiosity is the catalyst for her entire journey, driving her to seek a life beyond her natural instincts.

Compassionate Arzygul is deeply compassionate, possessing a capacity for empathy that transcends her reptilian nature. From a young age, she feels a strange kinship with humans, even befriendng a sleeping infant in a yurt. She understands the complexity of human suffering and the burden of Borubay's loneliness, choosing to become human specifically to bring happiness to his hearth. Her compassion is not just toward her own kind but extends to all living things, as she observes human cruelty with sadness rather than malice. This trait is essential to her transformation, as it allows her to integrate the three kinds of love.

Noble Arzygul is inherently noble, belonging to a prestigious lineage of serpents that traces its origins back to the ruler Shahimardan. This nobility is reflected in her dignified behavior and her adherence to the rules of her family, even as she chooses a different path. She understands the gravity of the "thousand-year" transformation and the risks involved in becoming human. When she is forced back into her snake form, she maintains her sense of honor, begging Borubay to protect their child and live for his sake. Her actions are never guided by petty instincts but by a high sense of duty.

Sacrificial Arzygul is exceptionally sacrificial, putting the needs of her family above her own physical and emotional well-being. When her human form is lost and she must return to the lake, her primary concern is the survival of her infant son, Amanat. In a harrowing act of devotion, she plucks out her own eye to provide nourishment for the child, ensuring his health for a full year. This sacrifice highlights the depth of her maternal love, proving that she values her son's life more than her own sight or comfort. Her selflessness is the ultimate expression of her human heart.

Resilient Arzygul is remarkably resilient, enduring long years of isolation and blindness within the depths of the hidden lake. Despite her physical transformation and the pain of being separated from her husband and child, she continues to live, finding solace in the sounds of Borubay's flute. She listens from the water as her son grows, refusing to surrender to despair even when she is reduced to a sightless serpent. Her ability to survive and maintain her love for her family through years of darkness demonstrates an iron will. This resilience eventually allows her to be restored by her son's tears.

THEMES

Love: Transformative Power

In the story *Three Ways of Love*, love is much more than just a simple feeling. It acts like a powerful force that can actually change who we are, even breaking the laws of nature. The most amazing example is Arzygul, a noble serpent who turns into a human woman. This change doesn't happen by accident; it starts when she hears Borubay playing his flute. His music is so full of sadness and longing that it reaches her soul across the gap between the human and supernatural worlds. It shows that art and love can be so strong that they make a creature want to change its very nature to be close to another.

The story gives us a beautiful lesson about this through the "three ways of love." Arzygul's mother explains that simply having a human body isn't enough to *be* human. To stay in that form, a person must be filled with three things: the romantic love for a partner, the deep love of a mother, and general kindness toward all living things. This tells us that being "human" isn't just about how we are born—it is an emotional rank we earn through how much we care for others. In this world, love is the very substance that creates and protects our humanity.

We see the true strength of this theme during Arzygul's restoration. Even though Borubay's doubt almost ruins everything and turns her back into a blind snake, the love of their son, Amanat, saves her. It is his pure, innocent tears that fall on her sightless eyes and break the curse forever. This final miracle proves that while fear and distrust can destroy a life, a child's love is strong enough to fix what was broken. In the end, the legend of the Ozuk clan teaches us that love is the most powerful magic there is, capable of reclaiming lost beauty and keeping a family whole.

Illustrative moment: Borubay is a lonely man pouring his heart into his music. Arzygul, at that time a snake, doesn't just hear the sound; she *feels* his human sorrow. This emotional connection is the spark that begins her change. It shows that love starts when we look past our differences and feel someone else's pain. Because of his music, she stops thinking like a serpent and starts longing to be a woman so she can comfort him.

Maternal Devotion: Sacrifice

There is a kind of love that doesn't ask anything back. That's a mother's love, and Arzygul shows what it really costs. She doesn't just feel love for her son Amanat. She pays for it with her own body. When her human life falls apart because Borubay breaks his promise, she is turning back into a snake. She is losing her home, her husband, her human form. Any other person would panic about herself. But her first thought is: how will my baby eat? Borubay is alone in the wild and he doesn't know how to feed a newborn. She knows the baby will die without her.

So she does something no one could forget. She took her one eye and put it in Borubay's hand. She tells him to put it in the baby's mouth when he cries, and it will feed him for a whole year. It sounds terrible and strange, but for her it is simple. If her child lives, the pain is worth it. She would rather go back to the dark lake half-blind than let her son go hungry for one day. That is what makes her truly human, not her face or her voice. A real mother puts her child's life before her own comfort.

Later, even as a snake, she doesn't stop being a mother. She lives in the cold water, alone and in pain, but she keeps listening for her son. Every time Borubay plays the flute by the shore, she hears Amanat laugh or cry or learn new words. That sound keeps her alive. She doesn't need to see him to love him. Her body changed back, but her heart never did. That is the whole point. Sacrifice isn't a one-time act. It is staying close, even in the dark, for as long as your child needs you.

Illustrative Moment: Think of her in Turna-Kol lake. She is a white snake again, blind and alone at the bottom. She can't hold her boy anymore. So she listens. Each morning Borubay comes to the shore and plays. Through the music she learns everything — Amanat's first laugh, his small steps, his games by the yurt. When she hears him, her pain eases for a moment. She can't cook for him or kiss him, but she is still there, watching in her own way. That quiet listening is her motherhood now.

Music: The Power of Art and Music

In this story, Borubay's flute is much more than just a piece of wood—it is his voice. As a man who has lost his home, his parents, and his first love, he doesn't have many words for his pain. Instead, he pours all his loneliness and his memories into the music he plays. The legend shows us that art is a universal language. You don't need to speak the same tongue to understand a song that comes from the heart; whether you are a person, a spirit, or a creature of the forest, you can feel the raw emotion behind the notes.

The flute acts like a bridge between the everyday world we see and the mysterious, supernatural world we don't. The biggest turning point in the tale happens because of this music. When Arzygul, the snake princess, hears Borubay playing, she isn't just attracted to a nice sound. She is drawn to the deep, human feeling in his melody. This music is what wakes up the magic in her soul and gives her the strength to change her very nature. It suggests that when art is fueled by real emotion, it has the power to reach across different worlds and change reality itself.

Even when things fall apart and Arzygul is forced back into the lake, the music remains their strongest bond. For years, Borubay returns to the shore to play his flute every single day. For Arzygul, who is now blind and living as a serpent again, the music becomes her eyes. Through the melodies, she can "see" the sun rising and hear her son growing up. The flute keeps their love alive when they can no longer touch or talk to each other. It proves that art can preserve a memory and keep a connection strong even when people are physically separated. In the end, the flute is the real magic of the story, showing that the heart can communicate even when everything else is lost.

Illustrative moment: Even though Arzygul has been forced back into the water as a blind serpent, she isn't really lost to him. As Borubay plays, the music paints a vivid picture for her in the darkness. When the notes are light and bright, she can feel the morning sun on the leaves. When the music mimics the sound of their son's laughter and his first words, she gets to experience him growing up, even from the bottom of the lake.

This moment illustrates that music is much more than just a sound; it is a way to stay connected when you are miles apart. It proves that a simple melody can become a pair of eyes for someone who can no longer see, and a bridge for a family that has been broken.

Human Identity and Compassion

Usually, we think that being human is just about being born with a human body. But this novella suggests that "humanity" is actually an emotional state we reach through love and empathy, rather than just a physical shape we are born into.

When Arzygul, the snake princess, decides she wants to leave her world behind to be with Borubay, her mother gives her a serious warning. She explains that a human body is easy to get, but staying human is the hard part. To remain in that form, Arzygul's heart and blood must be filled with three specific kinds of love: the romantic love for a partner, the deep, selfless love for a child, and a general kindness for all living things. The story is telling us that without these three feelings, a person is just an empty shell, regardless of what they look like on the outside.

Being human is a choice we make by connecting with others. Throughout the tale, we see humans who act with greed, jealousy, and cruelty—behaving more like "monsters" than people. On the other hand,

Arzygul, who starts as a serpent, shows more kindness and sacrifice than almost anyone else. This creates a powerful message: humanity is not a gift you receive at birth; it is a quality you build through how you treat others. It is about your ability to feel someone else's pain and your willingness to put their needs before your own. Ultimately, the legend teaches that a heart full of compassion is the only thing that truly makes us human.

Illustrative Moment: Arzygul talks to her mother about her desire to change. Her mother warns her that humans can be selfish and violent, and that life among them is difficult. But Arzygul isn't deterred. She is so moved by Borubay's music and the warmth she feels for him that she is willing to risk everything just to experience those three kinds of love. This moment shows that her transformation began in her heart long before her body changed. It proves that wanting to care for someone else is the very first step toward becoming truly human.

Nature: Spiritual Wisdom and the Mysteries

Bakalbay knows Arzygul's true identity because he possesses a type of "spiritual sight" that the average person doesn't have. In the story, he isn't just an old man; he is a healer and a sorcerer who understands the hidden laws of the spirit world. He can see through disguises and recognize when the natural order has been shifted by magic.

Long before Borubay even met the girl in the forest, Bakalbay warned him about his flute. He knew the flute was an "instrument of paradise" that had the power to bring things to life and control nature. When Borubay kept playing it with such deep sorrow, Bakalbay could sense that the music was waking up "dormant magic" in the forest. He knew that a melody that powerful would inevitably attract something supernatural.

Bakalbay reads the earth like a book. While the other villagers were simply confused when Borubay disappeared, Bakalbay openly muttered that "poor Borubay has followed a six-fathom white snake to the lake." He could see the trail of the serpent where others only saw a path. He also knew the history of Angyr-Kol lake, a place humans avoided because of its connection to dragons and snakes. When Borubay moved there, Bakalbay knew exactly what kind of being would choose to live in such a place.

Bakalbay has the mystical ability to see a creature's true form regardless of what they look like on the outside. He understands the ancient laws of the snake ruler, Shahimardan, and knows that once every thousand years, a serpent can become human. Because he is so connected to the spirit world, he could feel that Arzygul's energy was not human, even if she looked like a beautiful woman to everyone else.

Illustrative Moment: Bakalbay stops Borubay on the road and tells him directly, "The woman beside you is not human; she is the daughter of a snake." He didn't need to visit their home or spy on them to know this. He could simply sense that Borubay was living a life touched by magic. He urges Borubay to go home and look through the yurt wall, not because he is guessing, but because he knows that during the birth process, Arzygul would be unable to maintain her human disguise. Bakalbay wasn't discovering a secret; he was waiting for the truth he already knew to be revealed.

Flaws: The Fragility of Trust and the Taboo

The novella shows how easily trust can be broken and the heavy price people pay for breaking a sacred promise. In folklore, this is often called a "taboo"—a specific rule or boundary that must not be crossed for magic to survive. For Borubay and Arzygul, their entire happiness depends on a single promise: he must trust her enough to stay away and not look at her for seven days after their son is born.

The story shows that trust is fragile because it is often attacked from the outside. Borubay loves Arzygul, but he is human, and humans are vulnerable to doubt and fear. When the mysterious elder, Bakalbay, begins whispering that his wife is actually a monster, Borubay's trust starts to crack. This illustrates a sad truth about human nature: it is often easier to believe a frightening lie from a stranger than to maintain total faith in the person we love. The "taboo" of not looking at Arzygul wasn't just a random rule; it was a test of Borubay's heart. By peeking into the yurt, he proved that his fear was stronger than his faith.

When trust breaks in a magical relationship, the damage is usually permanent. The moment Borubay violates the taboo, the world he built with Arzygul shatters. The legend suggests that for a relationship

between two different worlds to work, there has to be a level of respect for secrets we might not fully understand. Because Borubay couldn't handle the mystery and needed to "see for himself," he lost the very thing he was trying to protect. It serves as a warning that once you let doubt into your heart, it can destroy even the most beautiful miracle.

Illustrative Moment: Borubay stands trembling outside the yurt. He has been wandering for days, his mind spinning with Bakalbay's warnings. He wants to believe his wife is human, but the seed of doubt has grown too big to ignore. Finally, he gives in to his fear and peeks through a small hole in the felt wall. Instead of a human mother, he sees Arzygul transformed into a serpent from the waist down. The tragedy isn't just what he sees, but the fact that he looked at all. By breaking that one promise, he ended their life together, proving that even a great love can be ruined by a single moment of broken trust.