

HUMANITIES INSTITUTE

Feruza Shermatova-Omerani, Ph.D.

SON OF SARBAY / SARBAIDYN UULU (1967)

Shukurbek Beishenaliev (1928–2000)

Reference:

Beyshenaliev, S. (1988). *Syn Sarbaya* [Sarbay's son]. RuLit. <https://www.rulit.me/author/beishenaliev-shukurbek/syn-sarbaya-download-224380.html>

OVERVIEW

Author

Shukurbek Beishenaliev was a Kyrgyz Soviet writer, novelist, playwright, and children's author. He was born in the village of Kurtka in the Naryn region of Kyrgyzstan. He graduated from the Faculty of Philology at Kyrgyz State University in Frunze in 1952 and attended Higher Literary Courses in Moscow from 1962 to 1964. Beishenaliev worked as a teacher, researcher, journalist, and editor. His writing explored Kyrgyz culture, rural life, human relationships, and social responsibility, with particular attention to children's experiences. In 1974, he received the title of Honored Artist of the Kyrgyz Soviet Socialist Republic. In 1976, his children's book *Müyüzdüü Kozu* (*The Horned Lamb*) received an international honorary diploma associated with the Hans Christian Andersen Award. In 1993, he was named People's Writer of the Kyrgyz Republic. He died in 2000 and was buried in Bishkek.

Beishenaliev wrote novels, short stories, children's books, and plays. In 1950, he won first prize in a republic-wide literary competition for *Chynygy Dostuk* (*True Friendship*). His novel *Taalay Jolu* (*The Path to Happiness*), published in 1957, is another notable work.

His other works include *Ukuk* (*Right or Law*), *Kordun Tukum* (*The Lineage of the Oppressed*), *Soldat Mahabaty* (*A Soldier's Love*), *Urpaktar Üñü* (*The Voice of Generations*), *Dankka Jarasha Jük* (*The Burden of Glory*), *Too Koyundagy Gül* (*A Flower Among the Mountains*), *Amanat*, and *Bolot Kalem* (*The Steel Pen*), a novel about the Kyrgyz poet Togolok Moldo.

Children's literature was central to his career. Works such as *Ak Taylak* (*The White Camel Calf*), *Tabyshmakchy Chynara*, and *Chabalekey* (*The Swallow*) reflect children's lives, nature, friendship, and Kyrgyz traditions. Beishenaliev also wrote plays, including *Dos* (*Friend*), *Meyman* (*The Guest*), and *Bagyn-bas Akyn* (*The Unyielding Poet*). In addition, he translated works by Leo Tolstoy, Anton Chekhov, Henrik Ibsen, and Mikhail Sholokhov into Kyrgyz, contributing to the development of Kyrgyz literature and its engagement with world literature.

Novel

The novel *Son of Sarbay* by Shukurbek Beishenaliev was first published in Kyrgyz in 1967. That same year, the *Detskaya Literatura* publishing house in Moscow released the first Russian edition. The work is celebrated as a classic of Central Asian youth literature. In later years, Beishenaliev wrote a sequel, bringing the two works together as a comprehensive two-part novel. This essay is based on the Russian translation of the novel by E. Bosnyatsky.

Background

Set in a mountainous Kyrgyz village during the Soviet era, the novel follows Rakmat Sarbaev's childhood and growth as a shepherd. His character was inspired by Rakhmataly Sartbaev, a Kyrgyz shepherd born in 1934 in the Naryn region. Sartbaev worked for many years as a senior shepherd at the Chaek collective farm and received the title of Hero of Socialist Labor in 1957 for his achievements in agriculture.

Through Rakmat's experiences caring for livestock, the novel highlights the importance of hard work, patience, discipline, and responsibility. It also explores the tension between Rakmat and his father, Sarbay. While Rakmat values education, scientific knowledge, and progress, his father remains attached to traditional beliefs shaped by years of hardship.

The story reflects the social changes of the Soviet period while preserving the importance of Kyrgyz traditions, family ties, and knowledge passed down through generations. Ultimately, it shows how education and new ideas can improve traditional shepherding practices without sacrificing cultural heritage.

MAIN CHARACTERS

Rakmat (Dardake) Sarbaev: The main character, a curious, hardworking, and determined boy

Sarbay: Rakmat's father, a poor and experienced shepherd whose traditional beliefs and difficult past

Salima: Rakmat's mother, a caring and courageous woman who supports her family

Sadyk: A one-armed war veteran and farm manager who encourages the boy's development.

Zeyna: A girl who is important in Rakmat's life and contributes to his emotional growth.

Chekir: Rakmat's friend, who is part of his childhood experiences.

Builash: An elderly villager who supports Rakmat and shares his knowledge of traditional livestock care.

Zakir: The village chairman, who oversees the flock and evaluates Sarbay's work.

SYNOPSIS

The story follows Dardake, a young Kyrgyz boy, and his father, Sarbay, whose family has suffered poverty, injustice, and humiliation for generations. Sarbay believes their misfortunes are caused by fate, but Dardake is hopeful, curious, and determined to build a better future.

As Dardake grows up, he learns responsibility by herding cattle, hunting, helping villagers, and delivering ayran to workers. Through difficult experiences, he develops courage, kindness, independence, and compassion for animals and people. His friendship with Chekir and his growing affection for Zeyna also shape his character. When his father is assigned to care for a neglected flock of sheep, Dardake helps save the animals through hard work, observation, and intelligence.

Despite facing hardships and interruptions to his education, Dardake discovers his talent and passion for shepherding. With encouragement from Sadyk and Zeyna, he begins to understand that education and traditional work can complement each other. Ultimately, the story highlights the importance of perseverance, responsibility, compassion, and hope in overcoming poverty and breaking the cycle of suffering inherited from previous generations.

SCENES

A Father's Love, and the Hope for a Better Future

Sarbay's Long-Awaited Happiness Old Sarbay watched a group of boys playing energetically on a grassy field. After searching carefully, he recognized his son among them. The boy was strong, lively, and fearless, despite wearing torn clothes and having bare feet. Sarbay smiled and sat down, remembering the past. Thirteen years earlier, he had been over forty and deeply saddened because he had no children. He wondered what sin had caused his misfortune. Although he worked hard, lived honestly, and treated others kindly, happiness seemed distant. Then, unexpectedly, his long-awaited blessing arrived, bringing joy and meaning into his life.

Sarbay's Greatest Happiness Thirteen years earlier, Sarbay waited anxiously on a green hillside in the mountains while his wife gave birth in their humble yurt. He desperately hoped for a son. After hours of waiting, he finally heard a baby's cry. A woman rushed out and told him he had a son. Overwhelmed with happiness, Sarbay ran toward the yurt but suddenly turned back to the hill. He spread his arms toward Mecca, the holy city of Islam, and shouted with joy, thanking Allah for blessing him with the son he had dreamed of for so many years.

The Meaning of Rakmat Overwhelmed with happiness, Sarbay stood on the hill, shouting one word toward Mecca: "Rakmat!" It meant "Thank you, my Allah!" The women waiting outside the yurt urged him to perform

the traditional prayer for his newborn son, but he was too emotional to hear them. Finally, the midwife understood that Rakmat was more than an expression of gratitude—it would be a beautiful name for his son. Sarbay agreed, believing the name would bring kindness and strength. From that day onward, despite hardships, war, hunger, and suffering, Sarbay never lost hope or allowed sorrow to defeat him.

Rakmat Becomes Dardake Sarbay watched his son, Rakmat, play roughly with other boys. When the boy noticed his father repairing the cowshed, he immediately came to help. Together, they placed bricks and spread wet clay over the cracks. Sarbay proudly said his son was just like him. However, when he called the boy Rakmat, his son refused the name. He explained that everyone called him Dardake, which he preferred. Dardake means joyful, happy, kind, and energetic. The boy felt this name better reflected his lively, playful, and spirited personality than Rakmat, which sounded too polite and gentle.

A Father's Love and Sorrow Sarbay explained that Dardake meant a mischievous, noisy, and playful child, while Rakmat meant “Thank you.” His son disliked the name because his teacher often used the word “Thank you” when correcting him at school. He insisted on being called Dardake. Sarbay agreed but sadly reflected that generations of his family had lived in humiliation. His son could not understand his father's sorrow and asked him to explain. Sarbay embraced him, fighting back tears. Finally, the boy insisted that he was still Rakmat, his father's beloved son, and wanted to understand his feelings.

A Father's Fear and a Son's Dreams Sarbay told Rakmat that generations of their family had lived in poverty and humiliation. He feared his son would suffer the same fate, believing nobody could escape destiny. Although Rakmat tried to cheer him up by wrestling playfully, he soon realized his father was deeply troubled. Sarbay sadly explained that education had not changed their family's hardships. However, Rakmat remained hopeful. He dreamed of finishing school, becoming a tractor driver, earning good money, and buying new clothes and boots. He also promised to buy his father fine clothes so he could finally rest comfortably.

A Father and Son's Silent Love Dardake kept his thoughts to himself because he was still too young to express them clearly. He understood hunger, cold, sickness, and exhaustion, but he could not understand his father's fear of inherited humiliation and poverty. As evening shadows spread, the other boys went home, while Sarbay and his son remained beside the old cowshed. Neither could find the right words to express their worries or affection. Instead, they held each other close and gently stroked one another until they fell asleep together. Salima, Sarbai's wife eventually found them, smiled at their sight, woke them, and led them home for dinner.

Sarbay's Humiliation and Dardake's Questions One sunny morning, Dardake saw a tax collector confronting his father, Sarbay, about unpaid taxes. A young police lieutenant accompanied the collector. Sarbay explained that he had no money because the collective farm paid him almost nothing. He begged for time, promising to pay everything in autumn. Overwhelmed with shame, he began crying. The lieutenant felt sorry for him and left, but the tax collector offered to pay the taxes in exchange for a calf later. Sarbay eagerly agreed. Confused and upset, Dardake asked why his father owed money despite giving the government meat, wool, and other products.

The Story of Sarbay's Family

Dardake's Curiosity about His Ancestors Sarbay explained that he owed several taxes and payments, even for growing potatoes and millet on his small plot. When Dardake questioned why people still suffered after the war, his father angrily ordered him to remain silent. He even threatened to beat him if he continued asking such questions. Dardake retreated into a corner, frightened but curious. He could not understand why his strong, elderly father seemed so afraid and submissive. He wondered whether this weakness had been inherited from their ancestors, whose suffering seemed to weigh them down. Now, Dardake desperately wanted to learn about his family's past.

Dardake Learns about His Ancestors Sarbay and his son Dardake traveled by ox toward the summer pastures in the mountains. Dardake felt comfortable beside his father and eagerly awaited the family history. The peaceful mountains and ancient paths seemed ready to listen, too. Sarbay began telling him about his

great-great-grandfather Baimende, who became an orphan early and lived in poverty, working for a wealthy man. Dardake felt proud that his ancestor had been poor rather than an exploiter. However, Baimende's strength and agility attracted a powerful wealthy man, who trained him to become a warrior. Sarbay explained that these warriors were cattle and horse thieves.

Baimende's Struggle for Freedom and Love Sarbay explained that wealthy landowners and tribal leaders trained warriors to raid neighboring tribes and steal their livestock. Baimende once brought his master over a hundred horses, hoping to receive some as a reward and pay the bride price to marry the girl he loved. However, his master treated him like a slave, controlling every part of his life. Baimende tried to escape twice but was caught. To punish him, the master demanded that he steal nine horses from another tribe. Brave Baimende accepted the challenge, unaware that his master had secretly betrayed him.

The Suffering of Three Generations Baimende survived his master's cruelty but became enslaved by another wealthy landowner. After years of broken promises about helping him marry, he escaped to Jumgal, married a widow, and had a son named Sansa. Baimende later died in battle, and Sansa lost his right eye. Despite being poor and peaceful, Sansa became a victim of a powerful ruler's scheme. After a young nobleman was accidentally wounded, the ruler ordered Sansa to be shot to avoid paying compensation. Sansa was murdered, leaving his son Bekboo an orphan at just sixteen years old.

Sarbay's Belief in Fate Sarbay wanted to explain to Dardake why he had never learned to read or improved his life. His grandfather, Sansa, was murdered by a local ruler, leaving Sarbay's father, Bekboo, an orphan at sixteen. Bekboo had to support his mother and younger brothers. Wealthy landowners exploited him, and he spent years working as a farmhand, isolated from other people. Sarbay feared Dardake would ask why he had not studied when other poor people had learned to read. Instead, he blamed his family's misfortunes on God, fate, and destiny. Although hardworking and honest, Sarbay followed orders without taking initiative, yet proudly remembered his youthful activism.

Bekboo Dardake asked his father to tell him about his grandfather Bekboo, who fought for the revolution against the White Army. Sarbay explained that Bekboo was a skilled craftsman who made boots, saddles, and leather goods. He carried messages for the revolutionaries but was captured, tortured for three days, and killed. Sarbay himself delivered messages only twice before returning to work for wealthy landowners. Ashamed of his choices, he blamed his failures on fate. During their journey, a violent storm forced them to shelter beneath a spruce tree, where Dardake collected sweet tree resin.

Dardake's Journey into Adulthood

Dardake Challenges His Father's Superstitions When thunder roared, Sarbay panicked and told Dardake to pray, repent, and control the devil inside him. He believed Allah was punishing his son for questioning fate. Frightened by his father's reaction, Dardake soon realized the noise was not thunder but explosions from workers blasting the Kabak rock to build a road. He laughed and explained that geologists and construction workers were responsible. Sarbay looked confused and distrustful, displeased by his son's excitement. Instead of admitting he was mistaken, he ordered Dardake to gather firewood, hoping to teach him humility and obedience.

Dardake Became a Responsible Shepherd Dardake proudly watched a healthy herd of forty-eight cows, fourteen heifers, and a white bull grazing peacefully on the mountain pasture. Having finished sixth grade, he had been appointed shepherd while his father, Sarbay, helped build a new cowshed. Dardake believed a shepherd should be educated and impressed his father with his knowledge of animal anatomy and digestion. Sarbay doubted whether book learning was enough to protect the herd from danger. Dardake also asked whether he would receive work credits for performing official collective-farm duties. Recognizing his son's growing maturity, Sarbay promised to arrange them.

Dardake Discovered the Wonders of Nature Alone on the high mountain pastures, thirteen-year-old Dardake watched over his herd and discovered that solitude could be joyful. Surrounded by breathtaking mountains, glaciers, clouds, and clear springs, he learned to appreciate nature's beauty. Books and school had taught him to look beyond appearances and understand how plants, insects, and animals formed a living

world. Unlike his ancestors, he imagined himself connected to distant countries and cities beyond the mountains. Although he enjoyed exploring and observing wildlife, evening brought relief from loneliness. At sunset, he gathered his cows and proudly led them home to the village.

Dardake's Secret Plan One morning, Dardake woke earlier than usual, filled with excitement and energy. Hearing the cheerful sounds of milking, he felt inspired to begin the day. He noticed several traps hanging above the doorway and decided to take two, along with a small axe, on his journey. After eating a hearty breakfast and filling his flask with fermented milk, he packed his belongings. When his mother, Salima, questioned his unusual behavior, Dardake confidently explained that cattle should leave before sunrise while the grass was covered in dew. Claiming he had read this in a newspaper, he made the women laugh.

Builash Supports Dardake When the women laughed at Dardake's advice, eighty-year-old Builash supported the boy, confirming that morning dew benefited the cattle. He encouraged the milkers to finish quickly so the herd could leave before sunrise. Builash reminded everyone that he and Dardake were the only men living in the village, since Sarbay had gone to the valley. When Salima noticed her son's unusually full bag, Builash defended Dardake's privacy and promised to accompany him. As they followed the herd, the old man noticed Dardake's rough feet and worn clothes, praised his cheerful spirit, and warned him to handle the traps carefully.

Dardake Sets His First Hunting Traps After leading his cows to a lush, dewy pasture, Dardake climbed the steep, rocky slopes of Kara-Kiya to set traps for mountain goats. He spotted a magnificent horned goat leading its herd across the ridge. Eager to begin, Dardake searched for a suitable trail but worried about leaving his cattle unattended. Remembering Builash's advice, he carefully placed the large trap, securing it firmly between the rocks so the animal could not escape and suffer unnecessarily. After disguising it with stones and grass, he set a smaller trap hastily and hurried back toward his herd.

Dardake Learns from Failure After spending the day gathering wild rhubarb, Dardake dreamed of fighting a powerful mountain goat. Before sunrise, he woke and excitedly told Builash that he had set traps, asking the old man to watch his herd. However, after searching for an hour and a half, he discovered that his large trap had caught only four blades of grass. Builash explained that a falling stone had triggered it and taught him to avoid rocky ground, dig deeper holes, and cover traps carefully. Embarrassed, Dardake realized that experience and patience were essential to becoming a successful hunter.

Dardake's Compassion for a Mountain Goat Dardake worked hard collecting firewood to help his mother and the other village women. For three days, he resisted checking his small trap, but curiosity finally overcame him. Near the mountain spring, he discovered a young mountain goat caught by its front leg. A vulture circled overhead, and Dardake briefly feared a snow leopard might be nearby. Realizing the injured kid could not survive alone, he decided not to abandon it. He freed its trapped leg, tied a rope around its neck, and led it toward the stream, hoping to tame and care for it.

Dardake Returns with a Young Mountain Goat Dardake waited patiently until the young goat finally drank from the stream. Suddenly, it leaped wildly, nearly knocking him down, but the boy held tightly to the rope. When they reached the pasture and the goat saw the cows, it stopped struggling, though it gazed wistfully toward the mountains and its freedom. Dardake brought the herd home earlier than usual, leading his unusual prize. The villagers hurried out to greet him, gathering excitedly around the young animal. Dardake searched for old Builash, hoping to see him first, but nobody answered his questions. Everyone was fascinated by the goat.

Dardake's First Prize Salima kissed her son's forehead proudly, praising him as a capable provider, though she had feared he might injure himself with the traps. The yurt filled with excited villagers, and Zeyna, his beautiful classmate, playfully teased him about catching the goat. Embarrassed but pleased by her attention, Dardake turned away. Then Zeyna's mother, Sayrash, announced that they should slaughter the animal before it grew thinner. Zeyna protested, calling it adorable. Salima pleaded to wait until Dardake's father returned, since this was her son's first hunting prize. Sayrash insisted on tradition.

Sayrash and the Hunting Laws Everyone waited, impressed by Sayrash's knowledge and confidence. She insisted that keeping a wild mountain animal at home brought bad luck and could spread disease among people and livestock. Salima grew frightened and agreed that the goat should be slaughtered. The women quickly tied its legs and prepared a wooden bowl, but none dared wield the knife, believing slaughtering animals was men's work. Finally, Sayrash volunteered, rolling up her sleeves and gripping the blade. Yet she hesitated, unable to strike. Then she noticed Dardake watching her with bitter resentment.

Dardake's Painful Lesson in Manhood Sayrash forced Dardake to slaughter the young mountain goat, guiding his hand as he cut its throat. Horrified by the animal's pleading eyes and the warm blood on his skin, Dardake burst into tears and fled. His mother pitied him, calling him still a child. By the time old Builash returned, the goat had been killed, and its meat was boiling in a large pot. Builash found Dardake hiding in the cattle pen, gently blessed him, and praised him as a man capable of providing food for others. Tearful Dardake knelt before the old man.

Dardake's New Leather Flask Salima taught Dardake to soften the young mountain goat's hide by kneading, twisting, and rubbing it for four days. As the skin grew supple, Dardake remembered the animal sadly, but found comfort knowing its hide would become something useful. Salima smoked the finished leather, and Sayrash skillfully stitched it into a beautiful, reddish-brown flask for carrying drinks. Everyone admired the result. Sayrash thanked Dardake for providing meat for the village and praised the new flask. Dreaming of filling it with kumis, Dardake rolled up his patched trousers, preparing to make a journey to the horse farm.

Dardake's First Journey Dardake asked to borrow old Builash's horse so he could ride to the horse farm himself. He planned to visit every yurt, accept a bowl of kumis at each, and pour it into his new leather flask instead of drinking it, until the flask was full. Then he would return and share the drink with everyone. The women laughed, realizing how confidently he had taken on another man's responsibility. Under his mother's and Zeyna's proud gazes, Dardake mounted the horse and waved goodbye. He rode forty kilometers along mountain trails, discovering how one brave deed could earn respect and make him feel grown-up.

Dardake's Loneliness and Questions Weeks passed, but Dardake's father, Sarbay, remained away in the valley, sending only greetings and promises to return. Meanwhile, old Builash had been taken to the hospital after catching a severe cold from washing daily in icy spring water. Left alone, Dardake cared for the cattle confidently but missed his school friends and longed for guidance. He had gathered nine large piles of firewood, one for each village yurt, hoping to help every family. Yet he feared his mother's anger. He struggled to understand why she kept the best goat meat for themselves while he wanted to share everything.

Dardake Finds a Listener Spending long summer days alone, Dardake wondered how cities fed millions of people and realized his work as a herdsman helped sustain families far away. He began singing loudly, enjoying the echoes across the mountains. Remembering wartime songs, he imagined hearing old Builash's voice urging him to sing about happiness instead of war, which had cost the old man two sons and a son-in-law. Dardake sang a cheerful song about a foal. A shepherd's assistant, Chekir, praised his singing but then snatched his felt cap, teasing him to chase after it. Dardake burned with anger but pretended indifference.

Dardake and Chekir

Dardake Stands Up to Chekir Chekir continued mocking Dardake, riding away with his stolen felt cap. Unable to catch him, Dardake retaliated by driving Chekir's sheep downhill toward his own cattle, knowing the exhausted animals would struggle to climb back. Furious, Chekir whipped Dardake repeatedly. Dardake grabbed him, and their struggle caused the old horse to collapse, throwing both boys to the ground. Dardake overpowered Chekir and forced him to apologize, then broke his whip. Though both were bruised and torn, Chekir admired Dardake's strength. Admitting he had started the quarrel, Chekir offered his hand in friendship.

The Offer of Friendship Dardake gladly accepted Chekir's offer of friendship, forgetting their fight despite his bruises. Chekir suggested they exchange shirts as brothers. Excited, Dardake tried on Chekir's nearly new shirt, but it was too small and ripped in three places. At first, Dardake felt terrible, but when Chekir donned Dardake's ragged clothes, both boys burst into uncontrollable laughter. Chekir joked that Dardake was as broad as a bull or powerful as a tractor. After helping Chekir gather his sheep, Dardake returned home, telling his mother he had fallen from a cliff. Though she scolded him, he secretly rejoiced: he had found a friend.

Dardake Longs for His Friend Dardake's swollen eye, aching legs, and scabbed wounds made every movement painful. After taking his cows to pasture, he anxiously watched the distant hills, hoping Chekir would appear. When hours passed without his friend, Dardake feared he had been seriously injured during their fight. Blaming his felt cap for causing their quarrel, he angrily threw it onto a rock and scolded it as though it were alive. Lonely and desperate for someone to talk to, he eventually laughed at himself. Later, learning that Builash had returned from hospital, Dardake eagerly rushed to see him.

Builash's Hospital Story Many villagers gathered to welcome Builash home from the hospital. Zeyna laughed at Dardake's bruises, while the old man enthusiastically described his treatment: clean beds, free meals, fruit juice, and painful injections that cured his cough. He explained that washing in icy water had caused his illness and that doctors had taught him how sudden temperature changes harmed the body. When Builash described examining his spit for invisible germs, Dardake burst out laughing, and Zeyna followed. Ashamed of disrespecting the elderly man, Dardake refused Zeyna's mischievous suggestion and worried that Builash would never forgive him.

Builash's Care Builash noticed Dardake's swollen eye and urged him to visit a doctor. Guessing that he had fought Chekir, the old man gently teased him about inventing excuses for his injuries. Dardake avoided answering, claiming he needed to take the cattle out. Builash accepted his explanation, rubbed the bruises with rancid oil, and pretended it was a miraculous healing ointment. He also gave Dardake a fragrant bar of soap, advising him to stay clean and healthy. Deeply grateful, Dardake kissed the old man's cheek. Then he washed away the oil and thoroughly bathed himself beside the stream.

Zeyna

Dardake Insults Zeyna After bathing, Dardake spotted Zeyna and several children gathering flowers for Grandpa Builash. Though secretly attracted to her, he grew irritated when she casually asked him to move his cattle so the children could cross the pasture. He refused, suggesting they walk around instead. Dardake admired Zeyna's beauty but resented her confident manner and fashionable clothes, which he associated with city life. When she decided to leave, he insulted her, calling her lazy. Zeyna stared at him and called him rude before departing. Dardake smugly imagined how Chekir would have laughed at her.

Zeyna's Hidden Hard Work During the war, food was scarce, men went to the front or labor camps, and children worked alongside adults. Dardake had weeded gardens, tended corn, and learned to mow grass while still young. He believed Zeyna spent her time playing, but she worked hard too, helping her mother and studying well. After her father, a railway mechanic serving as a mortar sergeant, was killed, villagers gradually showed sympathy toward Zeyna and her mother. Following her mother's idea, Zeyna organized a village kindergarten, caring for children so their mothers could work. Dardake's accusations concealed his guilty conscience.

Dardake's Longing and a Mysterious Catch Dardake had never owned a ball. Though grown strong, he secretly longed for a small rubber ball but felt too old and ashamed to ask his parents. Lonely without Zeyna or Chekir, he smelled wild roses and remembered Zeyna's fragrance. Impulsively, he tore branches from the bushes, painfully scratching his hands, but ruined most of the flowers. The next morning, he climbed high into the mountains to check a trap he had set near a glacier. Snowflakes stung his face as he approached. Inside lay a strange, brown, furry creature with a long tail, unlike anything he recognized.

Dardake Catches a Valuable Marten Dardake found a dead animal in his mountain trap and nearly buried it, thinking it was worthless. His mother mistook it for a rat, but Zeyna identified it as a mountain marten,

whose beautiful fur was highly prized. Builash confirmed its value and offered to prepare the pelt. Though delighted by his good fortune, Dardake felt embarrassed that Zeyna had recognized the animal before he had. Finally, he publicly thanked her for identifying the marten, admitting he had planned to bury it. Despite his mother's disapproval, Dardake proudly acknowledged Zeyna's knowledge and kindness.

Dardake Dreams of the Future Dardake borrowed a book from Zeyna to read while tending his cattle. As he waited for his father, he dreamed of becoming a tractor driver, earning money, and buying his parents fine clothes. His father's work at a tank factory also inspired him to imagine driving tanks or even airplanes someday. Meanwhile, Dardake longed for his work to be recognized as seriously as adults' labor. One day, Chekir finally visited, cheerful and healthy. The boys greeted each other ceremoniously, putting their fight behind them. Chekir shared a generous feast of lamb, pastries, cheese, and kumis, strengthening their friendship.

Dardake Learns about Life

Friendship and Different Dreams Dardake and Chekir became close friends, meeting daily to herd their cattle and sheep together. They wrestled enthusiastically, imagining themselves as legendary heroes, until their animals began fighting over pasture and losing weight. Eventually, the boys abandoned wrestling and began talking. Chekir wanted to follow his father and ancestors into herding, while Dardake dreamed of becoming a tractor driver and learning about the wider world. When Dardake read him a book about a boy who became an artist, Chekir grew bored and rode away. Dardake feared their friendship was over, but Chekir returned the next morning and asked him something.

Dardake's Kindness Chekir asked Dardake to read, then joked that he had planned to snatch the book as he once stole his cap. Instead, he asked Dardake to tell him an interesting story. Dardake described spending days in the forest, enjoying its sounds and preparing huge piles of firewood for needy families, including widows and people unable to gather wood themselves. Chekir was amazed and teased him for not preparing a pile for his strong, healthy friend. He praised Dardake's kindness, though Dardake could not tell whether he was sincere. The next day, Sarbay arrived, keeping Dardake away from the mountains and Chekir.

Sarbay's Welcome Home Salima removed Sarbay's boots, washed his tired feet, and prepared *beshbarmak*, a Kyrgyz dish of boiled meat and homemade noodles. She proudly told him that Dardake had caught a mountain goat and showed him the preserved meat. Sarbay explained that he had to return to the village the next morning to deliver *ayran*, a yogurt drink, to workers laboring in the hot valley. He also brought garlic from a young doctor for Builash. Dardake invited the elderly man to share their meal. Builash blessed Salima for her hospitality, but Dardake noticed his mother worrying about the leftover food and wondered why people became stingy.

Dardake's First Journey to the Valley Before dawn, Sarbay prepared two large containers of *ayran*, a refreshing yogurt drink, to deliver to workers in the hot valley. Tired from his recent journey, he allowed Dardake to carry the heavy load on their strong ox. Salima proudly called her son a true hero and packed him bread, while Builash blessed him for a safe journey. Dardake proudly mentioned his hunting achievements, but the adults warned him against boasting before traveling. Although the ox moved slowly, Dardake continued toward the mountain pass, watching the sun illuminate the distant, icy peaks.

A New Sense of Independence Dardake had never traveled so far without an adult. He remembered the route, two mountain passes, a forest, and a new highway crowded with trucks. He recalled hearing how frightened camels once ran off a cliff after encountering a road roller, but he felt confident rather than afraid. Riding the yellow-and-white ox with two heavy containers of *ayran*, he enjoyed the quiet morning and his freedom. He imagined how surprised his father and friend Chekir would be. As his family disappeared behind the hills, Dardake proudly felt he had left childhood behind and become a responsible young traveler.

Dardake's Struggle with the Stubborn Ox Dardake traveled alone, carrying two heavy containers of *ayran* for workers in the valley. He did not know the distance or the exact time of their lunch, but he was determined to arrive punctually. Imagining the workers welcoming him, he urged the slow yellow-and-white

ox to hurry. He tried coaxing, praising, and even threatening it, but the animal stubbornly stopped to eat leaves and drink from a stream. Afraid of disappointing his father and the village chairman, Dardake pulled the ox by its nose ring. Blood appeared, yet the exhausted animal still refused to move.

Dardake Finally Gets the Ox Moving Exhausted and desperate, Dardake watched the ox collapse onto its belly and refuse to rise. Blood still dripped from its injured nostril, but the frustrated boy blamed it for being lazy and overweight. After washing himself in the freezing mountain stream, he tried beating the animal and pleading with it, without success. Finally, he grabbed its tail and twisted it painfully. The ox sprang to its feet, though it still moved slowly. Dardake wiped its bloody muzzle with grass and scratched between its horns. Beginning to suspect the animal might be sick, he decided to treat it more gently.

A Gift from the Truck Drivers Dardake became so fascinated by pretending to drive the truck that he forgot his waiting duties. When the driver called him down, he thanked the workers and learned their names: Semen, Tulkubek, and Kaiym. After they left, Dardake felt guilty about delaying the ayran delivery and blamed his lazy ox. Then he discovered the workers had left him tomatoes, a cucumber, and white bread as a gift. Comforted by the thought that he had helped hungry travelers, he continued along the road, singing defiantly at the raven that kept cawing ominously.

Dardake Refuses the Children Soon, Dardake encountered a bus carrying about thirty children from a pioneer camp. Their teacher asked him to sell them fresh mountain ayran, while the excited children crowded around him, asking questions and holding out their cups. Proud that one boy had called him “sir,” Dardake nevertheless panicked. He knew the children could empty an entire container, leaving nothing for the harvest workers waiting for their delivery. Unable to explain himself calmly, he shouted that he would sell nothing and ordered everyone away. His ox suddenly moved forward, scattering the crowd as the children called him greedy.

Dardake Learns the Difficulty of Adulthood As Dardake continued along the mountain road, he admired the forests, snowy peaks, green hills, and butterflies. Hearing an engine, he imagined an airplane landing so its important passengers could ask him for ayran. He pictured himself explaining that the harvest workers must receive it first. For the first time, Dardake understood that kindness and hospitality sometimes had limits. Remembering the children who had called him greedy, he wondered whether his mother had also been right to save food rather than share everything. He decided he was not selfish, only responsible. Proudly remembering being called “sir,” he realized adulthood was difficult.

Dardake and the Stubborn Ox Dardake dreamed of driving a tractor as he traveled toward the valley, where he encountered a truck driver struggling with a burst tire. When Dardake offered help, the frustrated driver joked about exchanging his truck for the boy’s dependable ox. Continuing onward, Dardake reached the beautiful valley, with wheat fields, green meadows, and the irrigation canal. However, his ox soon collapsed and refused to move. Dardake poured water over the exhausted animal, fearing it was dying. Once freed from its load and harness, the ox immediately stood up and began grazing. Realizing he had been tricked, Dardake decided to camp overnight.

Dardake Discovers the Kindness of Strangers Exhausted, Dardake spent the night beside the canal, eating bread and drinking ayran while watching the stars appear. He noticed Ryspay, a farm official, galloping past with containers of kumis for powerful officials, while ordinary harvest workers went without it. Feeling guilty about his delayed delivery, Dardake eventually fell asleep. At dawn, he discovered someone had secured his ox and opened the containers’ lids to keep the ayran fresh. Although the stranger had disappeared, Dardake rejoiced at this unexpected kindness. Shouting “Rakmat!”—his own name, meaning “thank you”—he continued onward and delivered the ayran before work began.

Dardake Earns Respect Exhausted, Dardake spent the night beside a canal, eating bread and drinking ayran while watching the stars appear. He noticed Ryspay, a farm official, galloping past with containers of kumis for powerful officials, while ordinary harvest workers went without it. Feeling guilty about his delayed delivery, Dardake eventually fell asleep. At dawn, he discovered someone had secured his ox and opened

the containers' lids to keep the ayran fresh. Grateful for this kindness, he continued his journey and delivered the drink before work began. The one-armed farm manager, Sadyk, praised Dardake as a true man and full kolkhoz member, publicly shaking his hand and shouting, "Rakmat!"

Dardake Becomes a Respected Worker After his difficult first journey, Dardake insisted on continuing to deliver ayran instead of returning to herding cattle. He explained to his father, Sarbay, that he had learned how to rest the ox and manage the heavy containers. His mother supported him, arguing that the work would earn him recognition and labor credits. Sarbay agreed to let him continue if he delivered on time. Soon, Dardake reliably brought ayran to thirsty harvest workers, who praised his strength and dedication. He also shared berries with classmates. Though the chairman remained distant, Dardake vowed never to become arrogant and dreamed of driving a tractor.

Dardake's Firewood Disappears Every evening, Dardake checked whether his father had brought back the firewood he had gathered for needy families, but the wood never appeared. As the weather grew colder, he continued collecting twigs and bark for his mother. Finally, Sarbay revealed that camel drivers had carried away Dardake's carefully prepared firewood. The boy angrily demanded to know who had taken it, but his father warned him to remain quiet. A forester had confiscated the wood because it had been collected without permission. Sarbay explained that uncontrolled logging destroyed forests, threatened wildlife, dried rivers, and harmed farmland.

Dardake Suspects Chekir Dardake struggled to accept his father's explanation about the confiscated firewood. He believed the fallen branches he had collected would otherwise rot uselessly, but Sarbay warned that people might use such permission to cut down healthy trees. Dardake suspected his father was protecting someone and began wondering whether Chekir had stolen the wood. Meanwhile, cold weather made his daily deliveries harder, and his patched clothes embarrassed him beside classmates wearing new outfits. One day, he spotted Chekir approaching in a new military-style shirt. Angry and disappointed, Dardake rode past without acknowledging his former friend, determined not to forgive him if his suspicions proved true.

Dardake Receives a New Outfit Returning from his daily ayran deliveries, Dardake found his parents unusually cheerful. They sent him to visit Sayrash, the village seamstress, carrying ground grain and schoolbooks. There, he discovered piles of brand-new green military-style fabric, a rare sight in the village. Zeyna greeted him warmly, and her affectionate, curious gaze made him forget their earlier quarrel. Sayrash then measured his shoulders, arms, waist, and legs, announcing that Dardake had grown into a young man. Embarrassed but secretly delighted, he learned that she intended to make him a properly fitted outfit. Zeyna took his hand and led him outside.

Zeyna Tells Dardake About the Visitors As evening fell, Zeyna led Dardake up a green hill, holding his hand and promising to explain the day's surprising events. Under the emerging stars, he listened eagerly, delighted by her animated storytelling and attention. Zeyna described twelve horsemen arriving in fine waterproof coats, spotless leather boots, and velvet suits. Four additional horses carried packages and crates, attracting crowds of curious women and children. Among the visitors were the collective farm chairman Zakir and storekeeper Yunus. Their leader, riding a black horse and bearing a prominent scar across his cheek, was district party secretary Musa Akhunbaev.

Dardake and Zeyna Celebrate Their Recognition Zeyna told Dardake how district secretary Akhunbaev had praised him at the village meeting for his hard work delivering ayran to harvesters and replacing his father as a herdsman. The villagers applauded, and Dardake's mother proudly criticized officials for neglecting mountain families' needs. In response, the visitors distributed clothing, household goods, and other rewards. Dardake and his father received fabric, while Zeyna's mother received cotton cloth. The secretary also recognized Dardake's valuable marten pelt. Inspired by the meeting, Dardake invited Zeyna to join the Komsomol with him. They shared dreams of their futures.

Sarbay's Secret Hope for a New Home Winter covered Jumgal village in deep snow, but January sunshine brought bright skies and lively activity. Near the village stood a willow tree growing above the warm

Kara-Suu spring, once considered sacred by pilgrims who tied colorful cloth scraps to its branches as offerings. Nearby, the collective farm had built a new cowshed where Sarbay had worked for months while his son Dardake tended the mountain herds. The farm leadership planned to build a comfortable two-room house for the cattleman. Everyone assumed Sarbay would receive it because of his experience, but he kept the news secret, afraid to raise his family's hopes before the decision was certain.

Dardake's New Home and Growing Dreams Salima initially regretted leaving their old house, but arranging the family's belongings gradually made their new home feel comfortable. Dardake set up his school-books, notebooks, pencils, and homemade desk. After a plentiful harvest, the collective farm rewarded ordinary workers with potatoes, grain, and a little money for each labor day. Dardake earned his first wages and bought sturdy military-style boots. Life seemed to be improving, and he studied more diligently. Whenever possible, he visited the machine-tractor station nine kilometers away, eagerly watching mechanics repair machinery and sometimes helping them. Soon, however, increasing household responsibilities ended his visits.

Sarbay Struggles with His New Responsibilities At first, Sarbay was proud of the modern cowshed, with its clean wooden floors, bright windows, heated calf room, and separate stalls. But after two winter months, the demanding work exhausted him. His back ached from shoveling manure, feeding and watering cattle, and moving them for milking. Household repairs added to his burden, while Dardake was increasingly busy with chores after school. Salima worried about her husband's declining strength and their dwindling savings, spent on household goods and winter clothing. She urged Sarbay to ask the chairman for an easier job herding sheep, but he feared rejection and hesitated to speak up.

Alapai

Dardake Faces His Old Bullies One freezing winter day, Dardake returned from school and found his father struggling painfully to clean the cowshed. Without waiting for instructions, he took the shovel and finished the work, then began distributing hay. Sarbay watched proudly as his son worked confidently. Suddenly, snow-and-manure balls struck Dardake, and two visitors emerged: his old friend Chekir and the older bully Alapai. Dardake still resented Chekir for taking his stored firewood. Alapai mocked Dardake and insulted his father's work, making him furious. Then Alapai unexpectedly praised Dardake's strength, shook his hand, and challenged him to wrestle.

Dardake's Wrestling Match with Alapai Chekir invited Dardake to visit his family for a feast, promising food and an introduction to Alapai's adventurous life. But Alapai suddenly tripped Dardake into the snow and challenged him to wrestle. Furious, Dardake attacked, and the two fought fiercely while Chekir and Sarbay watched. Alapai pinned Dardake and pressed heavily against his shoulders, nearly defeating him. Dardake grabbed Alapai's loose trouser leg, twisted it, and escaped. In the struggle, Alapai's knee bent unnaturally, and he cried out that his leg was broken. Horrified, Dardake apologized as the others prepared to take Alapai to hospital.

Alapai's Courage and Sarbay's Fear Dardake admired Alapai's calmness after the wrestling match injured his leg. With Chekir's help, he lifted Alapai onto a horse and took him to the hospital. Alapai concealed the truth, telling the doctor that his horse had fallen, protecting Dardake from blame. The doctor reset the dislocated leg and ordered X-rays to check for fractures. On the journey home, Dardake praised Alapai's courage, patience, and generosity, forgetting the insults that had provoked their fight. However, Sarbay privately warned his son that serious trouble might follow, fearing their humble social position would make them especially vulnerable to punishment.

Dardake's Secret and Zeyna's Concern Every morning, Dardake led the farmworkers' children to school, singing marching songs while Zeyna guided the younger pupils behind him. When Dardake suddenly disappeared from the group, the children lost their discipline and enthusiasm. Curious, Zeyna followed him one morning and discovered him carrying his schoolbag and a milk container along a different route. Dardake admitted he was taking milk to a sick friend but refused to explain further, accusing girls of gossiping. Zeyna confronted him about his strange behavior, declining school performance, and refusal to join the Komsomol or wear his pioneer scarf. His laughter deeply hurt her.

Dardake's Loyalty and Chekir's Unexpected Gift Every morning, Dardake brought milk to the hospital for Alapai and shouted through the window to ask how he felt. Alapai always smiled and insisted he was well, hiding his pain and encouraging Dardake to attend school. Since Alapai's parents never visited him, Dardake began coming evenings too. Within a week, Alapai was moving around on crutches, joking about his comfortable hospital stay. He never blamed Dardake for the accident that had broken his leg. One day, Chekir arrived with roasted meat, manty dumplings, jam, and secretly tucked a quarter-liter bottle of vodka into Alapai's bedside cabinet.

Dardake Faces Responsibility for Alapai's Injury Alapai rejected Chekir's vodka, explaining that he hated his father's drunkenness and did not want people comparing them. After leaving the hospital, Chekir told Dardake that Alapai's father, Mambetkul, had neglected his sheep, causing disease and deaths. Without Alapai managing the flock, the kolkhoz herd was in danger, and Dardake felt responsible for the consequences of their fight. Chekir demanded to know what Dardake's father advised. Dardake admitted his parents prayed for Alapai's recovery, though he did not pray himself. Chekir laughed, mocked him as a holy dervish, and galloped away.

A Family's Difficult Decision A week later, Alapai's cast was removed, but his swollen leg prevented him from walking normally or riding a horse. Becoming increasingly gloomy, he told Dardake to stop visiting because seeing him brought painful memories of the accident. Meanwhile, Sarbay's family discussed their worsening situation. Sarbay admitted he was exhausted and struggling to maintain the cowshed without Dardake's help. Salima argued that Dardake should not feel sorry for Alapai's family. She revealed that the kolkhoz chairman had offered Sarbay a shepherd's position, replacing Mambetkul. However, accepting it might require Dardake to leave school and sacrifice his dream of becoming a tractor driver.

The Mountain Hardships

Sarbay and Salima Face the Mountain Hardships Builash warned Dardake that Chairman Zakir might blame Sarbay's family for the diseased, starving sheep to protect his drinking companion, Mambetkul. Meanwhile, Sarbay and Salima struggled to care for the neglected flock at their remote winter pasture. Salima fed the weakest sheep their dwindling barley supplies and treated their mange with disinfectant, while worrying that they lacked hay and other provisions. When Sarbay heard Dardake calling from a distant gorge, the two exchanged information through practiced mountain shouts. Despite their hardship, Sarbay felt renewed strength and happiness working alongside his son, sharing the familiar life of shepherds.

Sarbay and Dardake Search for Winter Pasture Sarbay proudly told Salima that Dardake had discovered good grass beneath the snow on a distant hillside. The boy had explored the mountains tirelessly and offered to shovel a path through the deep snow for his father and the sheep. Salima urged Sarbay to keep the flock at the new pasture overnight rather than exhaust the animals by driving them back. Although Sarbay worried about freezing, she packed extra flatbread and food for their journey. He gathered his rifle, shovel, matches, and supplies, then followed the lead goat with the flock, leaving Salima alone to guard the remaining sheep.

Dardake Discovers His Strength in the Winter Mountains Fourteen-year-old Dardake stood exhausted but delighted after discovering rich grass beneath the snow in a remote mountain gorge. His discovery meant the sheep could feed without making an exhausting journey back. Working alone with his shovel, he felt the same excitement he once experienced after winning a contest or earning praise at school. He remembered his summer achievements: herding cattle, trapping a mountain marten whose fur helped his family pay debts, and delivering ayran to valley workers. Although others now considered him grown-up, winter mountain life had taught him how inexperienced and young he still was.

Dardake's First Winter on the Mountain Pasture Fourteen-year-old Dardake joined his parents at a remote winter pasture, where they inherited 490 starving sheep infected with mange. The chairman had given Sarbay a failing flock, little hay, no livestock for transport, and almost no knowledge of suitable grazing grounds. Although inexperienced, Dardake had agreed to help out of pride and a sense of responsibility. After clearing snow from their shelter and sheep enclosure, Sarbay sent his son north to search for grass

beneath the snow. Armed with a wooden shovel and a flatbread, Dardake crossed the dazzling mountains alone, learning to navigate and communicate with his father by shouting.

Dardake's First Shepherding Discovery Alone in the silent winter mountains, Dardake suddenly felt tiny beneath the endless snow and wondered where his father's promised joy could be found. Unlike summer, when birds, animals, and plants filled the mountains with life, winter seemed lifeless and threatening. Remembering Sarbay's advice, he stayed and listened instead of returning home. Then he heard a distant rumble and realized an avalanche had swept down a slope. Soon, he spotted mountain goats racing toward the exposed hillside. Dardake understood they were searching for newly uncovered grass. Thrilled by his first shepherding discovery, he shouted triumphantly and finally heard his father answer.

Dardake Guides the Flock through Deep Snow Dardake discovered a rich grass-covered pasture but realized the starving sheep could not cross the deep snow safely. He worked tirelessly with his shovel, clearing a narrow path and packing the snow down. While waiting for his father and the flock, he painfully remembered school, his classmates, and Zeyna, wondering whether they still missed him. He also worried that spring might bring jut, a deadly ice crust that prevented sheep from reaching grass. When the flock arrived, Dardake coaxed its black lead goat forward with fresh grass. However, scattering grass before the sheep caused them to crowd together and sink into the snow.

Dardake Learns the Hard Lessons of Shepherding Dardake panicked as the hungry sheep crowded into the snowy passage, trampling their weaker companions. Sarbay rushed to help, and together they guided the flock across. Although several sheep appeared dead, many revived in the soft snow. Sarbay praised Dardake for finding excellent pasture and recalled how hunger had driven starving soldiers, including himself, to fight over potatoes during the war. He then taught his son to ration the grazing land carefully. Inspired by the warming sunshine, Dardake eagerly cleared snow to build a barrier. Watching him playfully, Sarbay affectionately teased his son and offered him bread.

Dardake's Snow Guardian Dardake and Sarbay shared a playful contest over a piece of warm bread, laughing until Dardake finally lifted his father off the ground and won half the loaf. After eating, Dardake appointed Sarbay commander of the sheep army and declared himself guardian of the southern border. While Sarbay watched the flock and worried about the approaching threat of jut and the village chairman's neglect, Dardake busily sculpted something from snow. Amused by his son's childlike energy, Sarbay let him play. Soon, however, he approached and discovered an enormous, frightening snow guardian decorated with stones, red clay, and dried grass.

The Wolves Dardake proudly discovered that his snowman frightened the sheep and kept them within the pasture's boundaries. His father helped equip the figure with a shovel, turning it into a supposed night watchman. As darkness fell, father and son guarded the flock, walking endless circles through the freezing mountains and listening nervously for wolves. Near dawn, the sheep crowded around the snowman, startling Dardake into laughter. Sarbay, however, suspected danger and sent his son to investigate. Later, he explained that fear of wolves also benefited sheep, teaching them to huddle together for warmth and survive the bitter cold.

Dardake's First Night among the Wolves During the night, Dardake and Sarbay heard wolves approaching the flock. Sarbay fired his rifle while Dardake ran around shouting to frighten them away. Using a flaming torch, they drove off the pack, apparently killing one wolf. At dawn, Sarbay taught his son to read tracks and observe the sheep carefully, emphasizing the knowledge every shepherd needed. Dardake realized how much he still had to learn and felt ashamed of wasting time on his snowman. Seeing his exhausted father asleep in the snow, he felt deep compassion. Sarbay later sent him home for food, tea, and rest.

Dardake's Fright and His Mother's Kindness After a sleepless night guarding the flock, Dardake hurried home, only to find the sheep pen empty. Terrified that wolves had taken the remaining sheep, he frantically pounded on the door, frightening his mother, Salima. Inside, he discovered the sick sheep safely sheltered in their small underground home, where she had protected them from the cold and carefully fed them. Relieved but exhausted, Dardake collapsed onto the bed. Salima gently helped him rest and teased him

about his emerging beard. After sleeping for three hours, he awoke eager to feed the sick sheep and return to work.

Dardake Discovers the Meaning of Compassion Spring arrived suddenly, bringing warm winds, melting snow, and then a dangerous, heavy snowfall that buried the flock. Sarbay and Dardake struggled for hours to clear snow from the sheep and prevent them from freezing. When the storm passed, many animals lay trapped or helpless. Sarbay instructed his son to uncover the grass, while they worked together to rescue the survivors. Dardake carried weak sheep in his arms, feeling their heads rest trustingly against his shoulder. For the first time, he forgot punishment and shame. Saving lives became more than work; it became a heartfelt responsibility.

Sarbay's Lessons after the Storm Sarbay examined the sheep Dardake had thought dead and discovered that some were still alive. Together, they counted eleven dead animals. Relieved that the losses were smaller than expected, Sarbay explained the dangerous phenomenon called yellow snow, which could melt the underlying snow and reduce the threat of jut. He showed Dardake how to recognize melting snow by observing the water flowing beneath it. Sarbay then headed home to check on Salima, promising to send food back. Before leaving, he ordered Dardake to preserve the dead sheep as evidence, fearing officials might falsely accuse them of slaughtering or selling the animals.

Sarbay's Breaking Point As spring arrived, the melting snow revealed fresh grass, helping the sick sheep recover. However, dangerous avalanches and rushing streams threatened the flock, while heavily pregnant ewes needed careful handling. Sarbay and Salima argued over their care because the family had almost no hay. Eventually, farm manager Sadyk and a young veterinarian arrived after months of neglect. Sarbay angrily accused them of abandoning the animals and unfairly blaming him for Mambetkul's failures. He threw away his shepherd's staff and demanded they take the flock. Dardake feared losing everything and desperately wanted to defend his exhausted father.

Surviving the Spring Snowstorm A sudden, heavy snowfall buried the mountains and covered Sarbay and Dardake's flock. Fearing disaster, father and son worked tirelessly to brush snow from the sheep and uncover the grass. Sarbay explained that the unusual yellow snow could be dangerous, but urged Dardake to keep working wisely. Dardake rescued the weakened animals, carrying them to exposed grass and feeling a new compassion for their lives. Sarbay checked sheep his son had mistaken for dead, discovering that some could still recover. Together, they counted eleven dead sheep. Relieved, Sarbay praised their efforts and hoped to save the remaining flock.

Spring Brings Hope and New Challenges Sarbay explained that the dangerous "yellow snow" melted the old snow beneath it, creating flowing water and reducing the threat of jut. He reassured Dardake that the sheep would soon find juicy grass and promised to bring him food after visiting Salima. Before leaving, he warned Dardake to preserve the dead sheep as evidence against possible false accusations. As spring advanced, the mountains revealed fresh grass, and the recovering sheep grew energetic. However, avalanches, rushing streams, and heavily pregnant ewes created new dangers. With little hay available, Sarbay worried about the approaching lambing season and cursed Chairman Zakir.

Sarbay's Anger and Unexpected Joy After more than two months, farm manager Sadyk and a young veterinarian finally visited the neglected flock. Sarbay angrily accused them of abandoning the sheep and unfairly burdening him with Mambetkul's failures. Exhausted, he threw away his shepherd's staff and demanded they take the animals back. Dardake feared their hard work would be wasted and imagined returning to school and seeing Zeyna again, but he lacked the courage to defend his father. When the visitors later departed on friendly terms with Sarbay and Salima, Dardake was confused. His father returned laughing and embraced him, revealing an unexpected change in mood.

Alapai's Unexpected Loyalty Sarbay explained that farm manager Sadyk had admitted the collective farm was responsible for neglecting their flock. Landslides had blocked the usual mountain route, preventing officials from reaching them for two months. Surprisingly, Alapai had recently found a way to the pasture and secretly inspected the sheep. Instead of demanding his father's flock back, he praised Sarbay and

Dardake for saving the animals his father had neglected. Dardake gladly believed Alapai's kindness. Meanwhile, Salima courageously demanded flour, tea, hay, and shelter for the weak sheep and their lambs. Sadyk and the veterinarian agreed to provide supplies and an ox.

Sadyk Becomes Dardake's Commander Three days later, Sadyk arrived alone with an ox carrying a dismantled yurt, two horses loaded with hay, flour, and barley meal. Dardake admired the one-armed war veteran's strength and courage and eagerly helped unload the supplies. Sadyk gave him newspapers for his parents, a notebook, and a pencil to record each sheep's lambs. Noticing the boy's admiration, he embraced Dardake and proposed they become commander and soldier, promising obedience and hard work. Dardake proudly accepted. Sadyk left the animals with the family, insisting they must never surrender them. Afterward, Dardake joyfully galloped around on horseback.

A Father's Pride and a Family's Happiness Watching Dardake ride joyfully, Salima protested that the horse should belong to Sarbay, the respected father, rather than their son. Sarbay calmly explained that Sadyk had chosen the horse especially for Dardake, whose future might be brighter than those of his ancestors. He quoted an ancient song about fathers stepping aside so their sons could enter adulthood, insisting that helping his son succeed brought honor, not shame. Salima gradually accepted his wisdom and teased him affectionately. Reinvigorated by their improved circumstances, Sarbay sang traditional verses, celebrating their livestock, prosperity, and renewed happiness.

Dardake Welcomes New Life Riding his new horse, Dardake proudly guided the flock toward fresh pasture, imagining himself a heroic horseman. However, he remembered his responsibility for the heavily pregnant ewes and slowed down to protect them. Suddenly, he heard a newborn lamb's cry and hurried to find its mother. To his amazement, the ewe delivered twins. Dardake gently helped both lambs reach their mother's milk, then recorded the birth in the notebook Sadyk had given him. Excited by his first success as a shepherd, he galloped back to his parents, shouting joyfully that the first lambs were twins.

The Hardship of Lambing Season After a promising start to lambing season, Sarbay's family faced an overwhelming crisis when more than eighty lambs were born in one day. Exhausted, the three struggled to match newborns with their mothers, and many lambs died. Dardake discovered an extraordinary ability to recognize which lamb belonged to each ewe, saving many lives. Despite his efforts, Sarbay became devastated by the losses and blamed himself. When Dardake tried to record the deaths, his father accused him of caring more about bookkeeping than grieving. Hurt, Dardake secretly documented everything, realizing how deeply a shepherd's knowledge affects entire herds.

The Inspection and Dardake's Forgotten Duty As spring turned to summer, the sheep and lambs grew stronger, and Dardake became skilled at recognizing each animal. Then Chairman Zakir arrived with Sadyk and an inspection commission to assess the flock. Although Sadyk defended Sarbay's efforts to save the diseased sheep, Zakir questioned the number of surviving lambs and accused the shepherd of incompetence. Sarbay admitted that many lambs had died. Sadyk challenged Dardake to report the flock's numbers, reminding him of his promise to keep records. Ashamed, Dardake produced his notebook, realizing he had neglected his important responsibility during the crisis.

Dardake Learns about Leadership When the inspection confirmed that 469 lambs had survived, the officials celebrated, but Dardake remained troubled by the many deaths. Chairman Zakir wanted him to demonstrate his remarkable ability to match lambs with their mothers, embarrassing the boy and prompting him to flee. Sadyk quietly found him and reassured him without forcing him to return. He explained that the chairman had neglected Sarbay's family and expected most lambs to die. The unexpectedly high survival rate delighted everyone. Through their conversation, Dardake began understanding that leaders' decisions affect entire communities, and that responsibility requires more than celebrating good fortune.

Dardake's New Happiness Sadyk reassures Dardake that running away embarrassed Chairman Zakir, who wanted to use the boy's talent to glorify himself. He warns Dardake never to flee again. Meanwhile, spring transforms the mountains into lush green pastures, and Sarbay reflects on how the family's confidence has revived after receiving praise and support. Dardake grows into a capable shepherd, proudly managing the flock with help from his enormous wolfhound. Surrounded by thriving sheep and playful

lambs, he discovers happiness in his work. One morning, two unexpected visitors approach, and Dardake suddenly recognizes a familiar girl, leaving him speechless.

Dardake and Zeyna Reunite Dardake is overwhelmed with excitement when Zeyna arrives with Builash, but he nervously runs away to warn his parents. After greeting their guests, he and Zeyna reunite, awkwardly struggling to speak until she challenges him to a game of tag. Chasing her into the hills, Dardake warns her about a trap, but she accidentally catches her boot in it. Their shared adventure breaks the tension, and they begin chatting like old classmates again. Zeyna brings astonishing news: Zakir has lost his position, Sadyk is the new chairman, and Alapai now manages the dairy farm.

Dardake Shares His Shepherd's Wisdom Zeyna tells Dardake that Sadyk is now chairman and explains that his dream of becoming a tractor driver requires finishing school. Dardake insists he has abandoned that ambition, while Zeyna speaks passionately about her own desire to work with children. As they explore the flock, Dardake demonstrates his remarkable ability to identify each ewe and match lambs to their mothers. He explains that every sheep has a unique history and needs individual care and protection. Although Zeyna initially listens with interest, she grows impatient with his comparisons between shepherding and teaching. Then Salima calls them inside for dinner.

Dardake's Second Chance at School Zeyna reveals the purpose of her visit by reading a letter from Dardake's school. Although he has missed months of seventh grade while tending the flock, his teachers have decided not to expel him. Instead, they offer him a month to prepare for examinations, with his classmates and teachers helping him catch up. Zeyna brings textbooks, filling Dardake with gratitude and excitement. However, Salima argues that education is unnecessary for a shepherd and insists her son should continue his livestock work. Sarbay laments their misfortune, while Dardake struggles silently between his calling and his dream.

Dardake Chooses His Future After hearing the school's offer, Dardake asks his parents for permission to return to school for a month and pass his seventh-grade examinations. Although Salima believes education is unnecessary for shepherds, Sarbay supports his son's choice. When unexpected May snowfall threatens the flock, Zeyna joins the family in clearing snow from the sheep. Salima gradually warms to her, and Zeyna helps Dardake study. After three days, Dardake leaves for the village, promising to return within a month. On the journey, he struggles to understand his growing affection for Zeyna and his uncertain future.

Discovering His True Calling On the way to the village, Dardake and Zeyna meet Sadyk, the new collective-farm chairman. Zeyna challenges him about education and opportunities for young people, revealing her determination to pursue higher education. Sadyk announces that a secondary school will open in the village that autumn. He explains that shepherding is valuable work requiring educated, capable people who choose it through genuine passion. Dardake admits he wants to study, explore the world, and read, yet also feels drawn to shepherding. When he declares that he is ready to devote himself to the profession, Sadyk and Alapai encourage him.

CHARACTER ANALYSIS

Rakmat (Dardake)

Rakmat (Dardake) is the main character of the story, which follows his childhood and development in a mountainous Kyrgyz village. Growing up in a poor family, he learns about life through school, family relationships, and shepherding. His experiences caring for sheep and cattle help him develop practical skills and a deeper understanding of responsibility. His relationship with his father, Sarbay, reveals differences between traditional beliefs and the younger generation's outlook. Through Rakmat's journey, the story explores education, personal growth, compassion, and the importance of knowledge in improving rural life.

Curious Rakmat demonstrates curiosity through his desire to understand the world around him. He asks his father about their ancestors, family hardships, and the reasons behind their poverty. He also questions traditional beliefs when he discovers that the loud sounds his father interprets as supernatural are actually caused by workers blasting rocks during road construction. Rather than accepting explanations without evidence, Rakmat tries to find logical answers. His curiosity is strengthened by school and his observations of nature. This quality helps him develop independent thinking and represents the importance of education and rational understanding in the story.

Knowledgeable Rakmat uses his education to improve his work as a shepherd. Unlike someone who relies entirely on experience, he applies scientific knowledge to understand animal anatomy, digestion, and livestock care. He carefully observes the behavior of sheep and cattle, learns to recognize individual animals, and records the births of lambs in a notebook. His knowledge becomes especially valuable when he helps protect weak animals and manage the flock. Through Rakmat, the story demonstrates that education can complement traditional shepherding practices. His character reflects the importance of combining theoretical learning with practical experience to solve problems and improve agricultural work.

Compassionate Rakmat's compassion becomes particularly clear through his care for animals. When a heavy snowfall buries the sheep, he works alongside his father to rescue them from the snow. He carries weak animals in his arms and feels deeply concerned about their suffering. His response shows that he gradually begins to understand shepherding as more than an ordinary occupation. He recognizes that the animals depend on him for their survival. His compassion also appears in his concern for his parents and his desire to improve their difficult living conditions. Through these experiences, Rakmat develops empathy and a strong sense of responsibility toward living beings.

Ambitious Rakmat is ambitious because he dreams of a future different from the difficult life experienced by his ancestors. Despite his family's poverty, he hopes to finish school, find a good job, earn money, and provide better living conditions for his parents. At one point, he imagines becoming a tractor driver and buying new clothes and boots for himself and his father. These dreams reveal his desire to overcome the limitations imposed by poverty. His ambition is not based solely on personal success; he also wants to bring happiness and comfort to his family. Through Rakmat, the story emphasizes hope and the possibility of social improvement.

Sarbay

Sarbay is Rakmat's father and an experienced shepherd whose life has been shaped by poverty, humiliation, and difficult social circumstances. His memories of the past influence his understanding of the world and his expectations for his son. Although he possesses extensive practical knowledge of livestock and mountain life, he struggles to accept ideas that challenge his traditional beliefs. His relationship with Rakmat forms a central part of the story, revealing both conflict and affection between generations. Through Sarbay, the author explores the lasting effects of hardship, the influence of inherited beliefs, and the challenges of adapting to social change.

Superstitious Sarbay often interprets unfamiliar events through traditional and supernatural beliefs. During a storm, for example, he becomes frightened by loud noises and believes they may represent supernatural punishment. He urges Rakmat to pray and repent rather than investigate the source of the sounds. When Rakmat discovers that the noises come from workers blasting rocks during road construction, Sarbay struggles to accept this explanation. His reaction illustrates how deeply his beliefs influence his understanding of nature. Through Sarbay, the story presents the conflict between traditional explanations and scientific knowledge, particularly as Rakmat develops a more questioning and evidence-based outlook.

Pessimistic Sarbay's difficult experiences have made him pessimistic about the future. He believes that poverty and humiliation have followed his family for generations and fears that Rakmat will experience the same suffering. Even when his son expresses dreams of education, employment, and a better life, Sarbay doubts that these ambitions can change their circumstances. His outlook is shaped by years of deprivation and disappointment, rather than by a simple unwillingness to improve. This pessimism creates

tension between father and son because Rakmat remains hopeful about the possibilities ahead. Their contrasting attitudes reveal how hardship can influence a person's expectations and shape relationships between generations.

Proud Sarbay values his dignity and experience despite living in poverty. His pride becomes especially visible when officials criticize his work as a shepherd or question his ability to care for the flock. Such criticism hurts him because he has worked hard under difficult conditions, often without sufficient support. At times, his wounded pride leads him to become angry or defensive. However, Sarbay also takes pride in Rakmat's growing abilities and gradually recognizes that his son may achieve more than previous generations. His character demonstrates the complicated relationship between personal dignity, social humiliation, and parental expectations in a community facing economic hardship.

Loving Although Sarbay can be strict and pessimistic, he deeply loves his son. His fear that Rakmat will inherit the family's suffering comes from his desire to protect him from the humiliation he has experienced. Sarbay sometimes struggles to express his affection openly, and their disagreements make it difficult for them to understand each other. Nevertheless, moments of tenderness reveal the strength of their bond. He teaches Rakmat the skills needed to survive as a shepherd and gradually acknowledges his son's abilities. Sarbay's love is also reflected in his willingness to accept Rakmat's growing independence, suggesting that he hopes his son will have a better future.

Zeyna

Zeyna is an important character in the story of Rakmat (Dardake), contributing to his emotional and personal development. She is a hardworking schoolgirl who helps her mother and performs well in her studies. Her experiences during the war teach her to take responsibility for others. Zeyna also dreams of pursuing higher education and working with children. Through her interactions with Rakmat, she encourages him to reconsider his future and continue his education. Her actions reveal her independence, determination, and concern for the village community. She represents the younger generation's growing opportunities through education and social participation.

Hardworking Zeyna demonstrates her hardworking nature through her responsibilities at home and her involvement in village life. Although Dardake initially assumes that she spends most of her time playing, he later learns that she helps her mother and studies diligently. After her father dies during the war, Zeyna continues fulfilling her responsibilities despite the family's difficult circumstances. She also organizes a village kindergarten with her mother's encouragement, caring for children so their mothers can work. This example shows that Zeyna contributes to the community rather than focusing only on herself. Her character highlights the importance of work, perseverance, and women's participation in society.

Caring Zeyna shows her caring nature through her concern for children and her efforts to help Rakmat. She organizes a kindergarten where village children can be looked after while their mothers work. This initiative demonstrates her awareness of other families' needs and her willingness to help solve practical problems. She also visits Rakmat when he has missed months of school and brings him textbooks and a letter explaining that his teachers will give him another chance to continue his education. Later, she helps him study and joins his family in clearing snow from the sheep. These scenes show her concern for both individual well-being and community needs.

Determined Zeyna demonstrates determination through her commitment to education and her future ambitions. During her conversation with Dardake, she speaks passionately about her desire to pursue higher education and work with children. She also challenges Sadyk about educational opportunities for young people in the village. Rather than accepting limited opportunities as unavoidable, she actively seeks ways to improve her future. Her decision to bring Rakmat's schoolbooks and help him prepare for his examinations further demonstrates her commitment to education. Through Zeyna, the story emphasizes that determination enables young people to pursue their goals despite family difficulties, social expectations, and the limitations of rural life.

Supportive Zeyna supports Rakmat by encouraging him to return to school after he spends months caring for the flock. She brings him textbooks and explains that his teachers are willing to give him time to prepare for his examinations. When Rakmat struggles to decide between shepherding and education, she helps him consider his future possibilities. She also joins his family in clearing snow from the sheep, showing that her support extends beyond words. These actions demonstrate that she respects Rakmat's potential and wants him to have more opportunities. Through Zeyna, the story presents encouragement and practical assistance as important influences on another person's development.

THEMES

Work: Hard Work and Responsibility

Hard work and responsibility are important themes in the story, shown through Rakmat (Dardake) as he grows from a playful boy into a capable and dedicated shepherd. Through his experiences caring for livestock, helping his family, and delivering ayran to workers, he learns that responsibility requires patience, knowledge, courage, and concern for others. His journey shows that work is not simply a duty but also a way to contribute to the community and earn respect.

One important scene occurs when Dardake becomes responsible for a herd of forty-eight cows, fourteen heifers, and a white bull after finishing sixth grade. He takes pride in his work and uses knowledge gained from school to understand animal anatomy and digestion. Although Sarbay doubts whether education alone can protect the herd, Dardake demonstrates that knowledge and practical experience can work together. This scene shows his willingness to take his responsibilities seriously.

Another example is Dardake's journey to deliver ayran to harvest workers in the valley. He struggles to control the stubborn ox carrying two heavy containers. When the animal becomes exhausted and refuses to move, Dardake initially becomes frustrated and handles it roughly. However, he gradually realizes that the ox may be sick and begins treating it more gently. Despite delays and difficulties, he continues his journey and eventually delivers the ayran before work begins. His determination earns him recognition as a responsible young worker.

The theme becomes even clearer during the winter when Dardake discovers grass beneath deep snow for the family's starving sheep. He works tirelessly to clear a path so the flock can reach the pasture. Later, when a heavy snowfall buries the animals, he helps his father rescue the weakest sheep, carrying them in his arms to safety. He begins to understand that every animal's life depends on the shepherd's care and decisions.

Finally, during lambing season, Dardake learns to identify lambs and match them with their mothers, saving many young animals. These scenes show that hard work requires both physical effort and knowledge. Through his growing dedication, Dardake learns that true responsibility means protecting those who depend on him, even when the work is exhausting and difficult.

Illustrative Moment: One of the clearest examples of hard work and responsibility occurs when Rakmat discovers grass beneath the snow during winter. Realizing that his sheep are starving, he clears a path through the snow so they can reach the grass. Later, during a heavy snowfall, he helps rescue the sheep by carrying the weakest ones to safety. These scenes show that Rakmat does not treat shepherding as just a job. He understands that the animals depend on him, so he works through difficult conditions to protect them. His actions demonstrate patience, dedication, and responsibility.

Conflict: between Generations

The conflict between generations is an important theme in Rakmat's relationship with his father, Sarbay. Their disagreements show the difference between traditional beliefs and new ways of thinking. Although they care about each other, they often see the world differently because they have grown up with different experiences and expectations. Sarbay's views are shaped by poverty, hardship, and the traditions he has followed throughout his life, while Rakmat is influenced by education, curiosity, and his hopes for the future.

Sarbay often doubts the value of education when compared with practical experience. As a shepherd, he believes that protecting livestock requires experience, hard work, and an understanding of nature. He questions whether the knowledge Rakmat gains from books can truly help him care for animals.

Sarbay's attitude reflects his traditional way of thinking, in which survival depends mainly on experience and familiar practices. His doubts do not necessarily mean that he wants his son to fail; rather, they show that he struggles to understand the changing world around him.

Rakmat, however, believes that education can help him become more knowledgeable and improve his life. He applies what he learns in school to his responsibilities as a shepherd. Instead of accepting every traditional belief without question, he wants to understand things through observation and knowledge. This creates tension between father and son because Rakmat's ideas sometimes challenge Sarbay's authority and established beliefs.

Despite their disagreements, their relationship reflects a deeper connection between generations. Sarbay represents the hardships and traditions of the older generation, while Rakmat represents the hopes and possibilities of the younger generation. Understanding between generations becomes possible when old traditions and new ideas are considered together.

Illustrative Moment: Sarbay questions whether Rakmat's school knowledge can really help him protect the livestock. After finishing sixth grade, Rakmat is given responsibility for a herd of cows and uses what he has learned about animal anatomy and digestion to understand their needs. Sarbay, however, trusts practical experience more than information from books. Their disagreement reveals the gap between the father's traditional beliefs and the son's interest in education. This scene demonstrates that Rakmat and Sarbay approach life differently: Sarbay relies on experience, while Rakmat believes knowledge can help him become a better shepherd.

Change:

Personal Growth and Self-Discovery

Rakmat's growth becomes clear through the experiences that force him to think for himself, make mistakes, and decide what kind of future he wants. His time in the mountains teaches him lessons that he could not learn from books alone. At first, he is a young boy who dreams of finishing school, becoming a tractor driver, earning money, and buying better clothes for himself and his father. As he takes on the responsibilities of shepherding, however, his ambitions begin to change.

One important experience happens when Rakmat is alone in the mountains during the winter. At first, the endless snow makes him feel small and uncertain. Remembering his father's advice, he stays instead of turning back. When he hears an avalanche and sees mountain goats moving toward the newly exposed grass, he realizes why the animals are heading there. This discovery gives him confidence because he has learned to observe nature and understand what it reveals.

His next challenge comes when he finds good pasture but struggles to lead the starving sheep across the deep snow. He clears a path with his shovel, yet the flock crowds together and some sheep become trapped. Sarbay rushes to help and later teaches him to manage the grazing land carefully. Rakmat learns that enthusiasm alone is not enough; a shepherd must also think ahead and understand the consequences of his decisions.

Later, Rakmat faces a different choice when Zeyna brings news that his school will give him another chance to pass his examinations. He feels torn between returning to education and continuing his work with the flock. When he speaks with Sadyk, he admits that he wants to study and explore the world but also feels drawn to shepherding. He eventually recognizes that shepherding is not merely a duty imposed on him; it is work he can choose because he values it.

Rakmat's journey shows that growing up does not always mean abandoning childhood dreams. Sometimes, it means understanding those dreams more deeply and choosing a future based on personal experience, knowledge, and genuine interest.

Illustrative Moment: Rakmat discovers pasture beneath the winter snow. He clears a narrow path for the hungry sheep, but when he tries to guide them across, they crowd together and some become trapped. Sarbay helps him bring the flock through safely and explains how to manage the grazing land. Instead of simply celebrating his discovery, Rakmat must face the consequences of his mistake and learn from his father.

Education and Knowledge

Education plays an important role in Rakmat's life because it teaches him to think independently and understand the world around him. Although he spends much of his time caring for livestock, he does not see learning as separate from his daily responsibilities. Instead, he uses his school knowledge to solve practical problems. His experiences show that education becomes especially valuable when people apply what they learn to real situations.

Rakmat is given responsibility for a herd of cows after finishing sixth grade. He uses what he has learned about animal anatomy and digestion to understand the animals' needs. His father, Sarbay, questions whether knowledge from books can truly help protect the livestock. Their disagreement reveals two different attitudes toward learning. Sarbay trusts experience gained through years of hardship, while Rakmat believes that studying can help him become a more capable shepherd.

Rakmat also learns by observing nature. When he is alone in the snowy mountains, he hears an avalanche and notices mountain goats moving toward a hillside where the snow has exposed grass. He realizes that the animals are searching for food. This discovery shows his ability to connect observation with understanding. Although his knowledge comes partly from experience, his curiosity and willingness to think carefully help him make sense of what he sees.

Illustrative Moment: Education becomes even more important when Rakmat receives a second chance to return to school. Zeyna brings him a letter explaining that his teachers will allow him a month to prepare for his seventh-grade examinations. She also brings textbooks to help him catch up. Rakmat feels excited, but his mother, Salima, argues that education is unnecessary for someone who will work as a shepherd. He must decide how to balance his family's expectations with his desire to continue learning.

Later, Rakmat admits that he wants to study, explore the world, and read, while also recognizing his interest in shepherding. His journey suggests that education does not make practical work less valuable. Instead, knowledge can help people understand their responsibilities, make better decisions, and choose their futures more confidently.

Tradition and Social Change

The novel shows the changes taking place in a rural Kyrgyz community where traditional shepherding exists alongside new opportunities through education and social development. Through Rakmat and his family, the story explores how people respond differently to changing ideas. Some hold tightly to familiar ways of life, while others begin to imagine possibilities beyond the traditions they have inherited.

Sarbay represents the older generation, whose beliefs have been shaped by poverty, difficult working conditions, and years of caring for livestock. He understands the mountains, animals, and demands of shepherding through personal experience. However, his painful memories have also made him pessimistic about the future. He worries that Rakmat will experience the same hardship and humiliation that earlier generations endured. Because of this, he often struggles to understand his son's interest in education and new opportunities.

Rakmat represents a younger generation that wants to learn while still respecting practical work. He uses knowledge from school to understand animals and approaches shepherding with curiosity. His experiences show that traditional skills remain valuable, but education can help people improve the way they work. The story does not present shepherding as an outdated occupation; instead, it suggests that rural work can benefit from educated people who understand both theory and practice.

Changes in village leadership also demonstrate the community's changing direction. When Sadyk becomes the new collective-farm chairman, he speaks about the importance of education and announces that a secondary school will open in the village in autumn. This gives young people greater opportunities to continue studying without abandoning their community. Zeyna also represents social change through her determination to pursue higher education and her efforts to establish a kindergarten so mothers can work.

By the end, Rakmat begins to see that he does not have to choose between tradition and progress. He can value shepherding while continuing to learn and develop his abilities. The story suggests that communities can move forward by combining the experience of older generations with the knowledge, ambition, and fresh ideas of younger people.

Illustrative Moment: Rakmat, Zeyna, and Sadyk discuss education and the future of herding. Zeyna explains her ambition to continue her studies, while Sadyk announces that a secondary school will open in the village that autumn. He also explains that herding needs educated and capable people who choose the profession willingly. Rakmat admits that he wants to study, explore the world, and read, but he also feels drawn to caring for sheep. This conversation shows how new educational opportunities are changing village life. It also suggests that progress does not require abandoning traditional work; instead, education can help strengthen it.