

Senem's Journey to a New Beginning
Modified Version
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Chapter 6

Senem's Journal, Monday, August 2

When I came to Denver I thought "I'm alone. I don't have any friends or relatives here." So I was sad. Now, I never feel like this. I will never forget, especially you and Martha and Ruth. I love all of you so much.

Senem, Ruth, and Martha decided to meet at Ruth's house and learn how to make stuffed grape leaves, or sarma, from Turkey. Senem called Ruth with the instructions for making the rice filling. "Soak plain white rice in water for 30 minutes and then broil it with onion, tomato paste, and lemon."

The next day, Senem and Martha walked into Ruth's kitchen. The kitchen smelled like something had burned.

Ruth took a shallow pan out of the refrigerator. It was full of gooey pink and gray rice with a crisp black top.

"What is it?" asked Senem.

"Broiled rice," said Ruth. "I followed your instructions."

Senem put a pan on a burner on top of the stove. "You cooked like this? With olive oil and other things?"

Ruth began to laugh. "No!" She opened the oven. She pointed to the heating element at the top of the oven. "I used the broiler."

Senem turned on the heat under the pan on the stove. “I put food here and cook with stirring. What is the word for this?”

“Sauté! What an airhead I am!” laughed Ruth.

“Let’s make sarma,” Senem said. The three friends got to work, laughing, talking and cooking together.

The good times with her friends helped Senem’s nightmares. But, one night, in her nightmare, there was an earthquake in her home city of Ankara. When she woke up, she told Tarkan of her dream. He rubbed her back, but she could not calm down.

“*Let’s look at the news,*” he said finally. “*You will see, everything is fine in Turkey.*” Tarkan and Senem turned on the television. Senem’s nightmare was there, on the screen. Clouds of dust rose from mounds of debris. Dazed and wounded men, women, and children wandered through the ruins. It was a scene from hell.

A reporter said, “All of northwestern Turkey is devastated. You can see behind me all that is left of a residential section of the city of Izmit. Thousands of people are dead.”

Izmit! Hulya, Senem’s dear oldest sister, was in Izmit. And Emine was in jail in Izmit. Tarkan’s family lived in Istanbul, which was only 55 miles east of Izmit. Immediately, Tarkan tried to call their families in Turkey. All the lines were busy.

They waited all day for news. Finally, in the evening the phone rang.

“*It’s my father!*” Tarkan said. “*Everyone in my family is okay.*”

Later, Senem put Hasan to bed. When she returned to the living room, Tarkan was talking quietly on the telephone.

“Who is it?” she asked.

Tarkan handed her the telephone. It was her mother.

“Senem, we are all safe in Ankara. We only felt a little tremor. We have some bad news. Hulya was in Izmit She’s still missing.”