

Senem's Journey to a New Beginning
Modified Version
Barbara Vaille and Jennifer QuinnWilliams

Chapter 8

Senem's Journal, Monday, November 1

I am feeling very sick. I can tell you now a secret. I am pregnant! He or she will come in early July. I am excited but I miss my mother.

Karen's Response

WOW! Congratulations. Do you want me to keep this a secret?

Karen smiled and looked at Senem.

“Okay, no secrets,” Senem laughed. “I will tell all the class a riddle. What makes you sick, and still you get fat even you can't eat?”

Karen wrote it on the board: What makes you so sick that you can't eat, but you still get fat? Everyone laughed. Natasha, the Ukrainian student said, “I guess you will have a baby!”

“I wish you good, happy, easy time,” said Flor, a Mexican student. Senem thanked her. Flor smiled.

Senem felt tired and sick a lot. She was getting good prenatal care at Denver Health. Before she got pregnant, she and Tarkan bought health insurance under a special program for low-income families. Many of the people in her class did not have insurance

because they were in the United States illegally. She had asked the person helping them buy the insurance what would happen if a family was in the country illegally.

“We would still treat them,” he said. “But it would be more expensive.”

One day she cut her hair short so that she wouldn’t have to take care of it. When Hasan saw her, he asked if she was a boy.

“No,” said Senem, *“I’m still your mother, a girl!”*

Senem got a bag out of the closet. In the bag were a big block of clay, some plastic sculpting tools, and a set of small, funny body parts.

“You can play with this while I rest.” said Senem. *“As soon as I get up, we have to put it all away.”*

Hasan loved the clay, and he didn’t disturb Senem at all. When Tarkan came home, Hasan showed Tarkan ten little men with strange combinations of body parts.

“Don’t bother Mama,” he whispered. *“And don’t be surprised, she almost turned into a boy.”*

Tarkan went in and kissed Senem on the cheek. Senem put her hand on her short, short hair. *“Do you like it?”*

Tarkan looked at her carefully. *“Are you a boy now? Because boys can’t have babies.”*