

Gardens of Water Study Guide

Gardens of Water by Alan Drew

(c)2015 BookRags, Inc. All rights reserved.



Contents

Gardens of Water Study Guide.....	1
Contents.....	2
Plot Summary.....	3
Part 1, Chapters 1 - 5.....	5
Part 1, Chapters 6 - 10.....	7
Part 1, Chapters 11 - 15.....	9
Part 1, Chapters 16 - 21.....	11
Part 2, Chapters 22 - 26.....	13
Part 2, Chapters 27 - 31.....	15
Part 2, Chapters 32 - 36.....	17
Part 2, Chapters 37 - 41.....	19
Part 2, Chapters 42 - 46.....	21
Part 2, Chapters 47 - 51.....	23
Part 2, Chapters 52 - 54.....	25
Part 3, Chapters 55 - 58.....	26
Part 3, Chapters 59 - 61.....	28
Characters.....	30
Objects/Places.....	34
Themes.....	37
Style.....	39
Quotes.....	42
Topics for Discussion.....	44



Plot Summary

"Gardens of Water" is a 2008 novel written by American author Alan Drew. The book takes place just before and following the 1999 Marmara, or Izmit, earthquake in Turkey. Alan Drew was in Istanbul when the devastating earthquake hit and was living in Turkey as an English literature teacher. The book is a work of fiction based on the people that Alan Drew met and his understanding of Turkish customs and the Islamic religion. The characters of Sinan and his family deal with issues that Alan Drew saw amongst many Turkish families following the tragic earthquake that killed 17,000 and left over half a million people homeless.

When the book begins, Sinan and his son Ismail are returning to Gölcük after spending the day in Istanbul. It is the day of Ismail's circumcision and the pre-teen boy is nervous. Everyone showers Ismail with attention, giving him free food and congratulating him. This makes his older sister Irem jealous. She spends every day at home with her mother Nilufer, cleaning and cooking and keeping her head covered with a scarf to show her modesty. Irem loves her little brother but wishes that she too had the freedom and adoration from her parents. Her rebellion shows through in a harmless relationship that she has with her American neighbor Dylan who lives in the apartment above hers. They talk to each other at their windows, despite the scandal it would cause if either set of parents found out.

Several hours after Ismail's circumcision and party, an earthquake hits in the middle of the night. Sinan is awake and sitting on his roof when the quake hits and he can see the devastation throughout the city of Gölcük. He is separated from his son, daughter and wife. Four days pass before Sinan can locate his son under the rubble. Ismail is alive, but barely, protected by the arms of the American mother from the apartment above who is now dead. Once Ismail is found, Sinan realizes that he has not bothered to find his wife or daughter in the four days that have passed and he and Ismail set out to find them. The family is reunited and moves into a tent on the outskirts of town.

With no food, clean water or home, Sinan and his family eventually move into the American relief camp that has been set up. Sinan is reluctant to take any charity from Americans — who he finds deplorable — but his family faces starvation without the help. Sinan manages to find a job at a large grocery store that takes him over an hour to reach each day. Nilufer spends her time in the tent, cleaning and keeping an eye on the children. Ismail begins playing soccer with the other boys in camp and Irem starts finding secret ways to see her American boy, Dylan. Rumors begin to spread in the camp about Irem's immodesty and it leads to tension in her family. Irem views her meetings with Dylan as innocent but simply being seen with him is considering improper by the other people living in the village.

Eventually the pressure becomes too great, and Irem and Dylan run away together. They go to his family home in Istanbul and Irem soon finds that she is unhappy outside of her comfortable surroundings. She does not fit in with Dylan's fast crowd of friends. After a night of drinking and dancing, Dylan and Irem have sex. Irem is so ashamed



when she wakes up in the morning that she leaves Dylan to return to her family. She pleads with her family to take her back but her parents are cold and unwilling to listen. On a walk with her father, Irem admits that she lost her virginity to Dylan and that she is ashamed of it. Sinan realizes that his daughter will only bring shame to his family if she returns, and he tells her that she is no longer welcome there. When she cries and pleads with her father to stay, he shows her a knife in his hand. Irem sees that she can no longer return home and she runs away again. Later that night, she jumps off a bridge and kills herself.

The story of Irem's suicide is front-page news, and Sinan goes with the police to find her body. He struggles with the guilt of knowing that he drove her to her fate. As the book ends, Sinan, Nilufer and Ismail are on a train heading to Sinan's homeland in the country. Sinan has hope that his family can have a new start away from Gölcük and the ghosts of their past.



Part 1, Chapters 1 - 5

Part 1, Chapters 1 - 5 Summary

Part 1, Chapter 1: "Gardens of Water" is a fictional novel based on the real-life events of the Marmara Earthquake in Turkey in 1999. The author Alan Drew is an American who was living in Istanbul at the time of the tragedy and working as an English literature teacher. The story of Sinan and his family following the deadly quake is one that Alan Drew constructed based on similar struggles he saw among families in the area, and the clash between American culture and conservative residents of Turkey.

As the book opens, Sinan and his nine-year-old son Ismail are riding the ferry boat back to Gölcük after spending the day in Istanbul. The trip was in honor of Ismail's upcoming circumcision — an event that the child is not looking forward to. When they arrive back at their apartment several hours later, Sinan's wife Nilufer and his daughter Irem are preparing food for the party that will accompany the circumcision that evening. When Nilufer tells Sinan that she has invited their American neighbors to the event, Sinan is angry because he does not trust Americans. He says that his father was killed because of Americans but Nilufer ignores him and tells him it is right to invite the neighbors.

Part 1, Chapter 2: Irem leaves the kitchen to go to her room. She slams her door loudly enough to alert the American boy, Dylan, who lives above her that she is in her room. Both teens go over to their windows and talk to each other — a routine they have been doing for some time without their parents' knowledge. Dylan smokes a cigarette while he talks to Irem and she is clearly more nervous about being discovered than Dylan. He tells Irem that he has been invited to the party at their apartment and that he cannot wait to meet her face to face.

Part 1, Chapter 3: Sinan leaves the apartment to go to the grocery store that he co-owns with his brother-in-law, Ahmet. Ismail has been hanging out at the grocery store since the men returned from Istanbul and his uncle is spoiling him with candy, knowing that the boy is nervous about the circumcision. Sinan is conservative and serious, while Ahmet is a joker who drinks a lot. The two run a successful business, however, and Sinan borrows several items that are needed for the party. Ismail leaves with his father to go back to the apartment.

Part 1, Chapter 4: After Dylan tells Irem that he is coming to the party, she does her best to look beautiful. She pulls out her secret stash of olive oil and colorless lip gloss and puts her hair up in her best scarf. She uses tweezers that she keeps hidden to pluck her eyebrows and any stray hairs on her face. Before leaving the bathroom, she dabs rosewater on the back of her neck for good luck.

Part 1, Chapter 5: The party begins around 7 p.m. and soon Sinan's apartment is filled with guests. Nilufer and Irem serve food and clean up after the guests. The American family arrives and Sinan tries to ignore them as they stand in the doorway, looking lost.



Eventually he greets them and the other guests do as well. The sunnetci arrives to perform the circumcision and Sinan is just as nervous as his son. The men gather around the bed and the women stand on the other side of the room. Ismail does not cry or let out any sign of pain during the procedure and the sunnetci treats the wound and tells Ismail that he hopes his pain will pass quickly.

Part 1, Chapters 1 - 5 Analysis

Readers are given insight into the life and routine of Sinan and his family in the opening chapters. They lead a mundane, but comfortable, existence. The dynamics of the family are explored and readers see a traditional Turkish family with Muslim beliefs. Ismail appears to be favored by both of his parents over Irem because he is the son. Irem does her "womanly" duties like cleaning and cooking, but she is clearly looking for something more in her life. Though Irem's relationship with Dylan seems harmless by American standards, it is clear that it is dangerous by Turkish standards. Irem is aware of the danger and takes great pains to hide the relationship from her parents.

The first reference to Sinan's hatred of Americans is presented early in the book. Sinan believes that through inaction the Americans allowed his father to be killed by the Turkish government. Sinan believes that his father would be furious to know that he has invited his American neighbors to his son's circumcision but he allows his wife to win the argument. It is clear that Sinan is "behind the times" while the other members of his family seem intent on progressing forward.



Part 1, Chapters 6 - 10

Part 1, Chapters 6 - 10 Summary

Part 1, Chapter 6: Irem acts nervous throughout the entire party because Dylan and his family are there. When she takes a large stack of plates to the kitchen, Dylan follows her in. He says that it is too much work for one person to do and begins helping her with the dishes. Irem is nervous that she will get in trouble and acts anxious in the presence of Dylan, but she does not kick him out. When he gets too close in the kitchen, she pushes him away and tells him "not in this house."

Part 1, Chapter 7: After the party is over and the rest of his family is asleep, Sinan goes to the roof of the apartment building to think. He looks out over Gölcük and immediately thinks about his homeland, Yesilli. He reflects on the night his father was murdered by the government for protesting and feels guilty again for having the Americans in his home earlier, especially since his father hated Americans so much. Sinan hears a low rumbling sound that soon escalates to a loud roar. Before he realizes what is happening, Sinan is being tossed across the roof in the midst of an earthquake. He falls to the ground below, and sees Ismail come tumbling through the window on his circumcision bed. Ismail and Sinan lock eyes before Ismail goes crashing down into the rubble.

Part 1, Chapter 8: Sinan awakes from a state of unconsciousness to the sounds of his wife Nilufer screaming. She is with Irem and they are both safe and not injured, though they are very frightened. Nilufer asks about Ismail and Sinan assures her that Ismail is safe though he does not know where he is located. Sinan leads Irem and Nilufer out of the rubble to a small patch of grass in the middle of the road and tells them to stay there while he searches for Ismail. Irem begs Sinan not to leave them but he rushes back to the rubble to find Ismail. He digs past body after body but is unable to locate Ismail. A feeling of helplessness washes over Sinan as he wonders if he will be able to find his son in time or if it is already too late.

Part 1, Chapter 9: For three days and nights, Sinan works around the clock digging through rubble to find his son. He pleads with God to save his son's life and then his pleas turn to anger as he wonders why God would take his son from him. Finally Sinan makes peace with God's will. Shortly after he reaches his epiphany, another worker finds a body that he believes to be alive. Sinan helps dig and the American man who lived above him also shows up to help. They discover the body of the American's wife, Sarah, and she is dead but there is a sound of breathing. They keep digging and discover Ismail — alive and in the embrace of the dead American woman. Sinan pulls his alive son from the rubble, thankful he is alive.

Part 1, Chapter 10: Ismail is transported to a hospital run by Germans where the doctor is amazed that he is still alive. He tells Sinan that Ismail is exhausted but should recover with no problems. Sinan sits by Ismail's side and watches his son sleep. When Ismail



awakes, he immediately asks about the American woman, Sarah Roberts. Ismail says that the American kept him alive by telling him stories about her life and the snow in America. Ismail says that Sarah kept reaching back into a puddle of water and dripping it into Ismail's mouth. Sinan realizes that because of the American woman, his son is still alive. Ismail asks about his mother and sister and Sinan realizes that it has been days since he contacted them.

Part 1, Chapters 6 - 10 Analysis

The comfortable life of Sinan and his family is destroyed in an instant when the earthquake hits. In a symbolic fashion, Sinan is separated from his family when the earthquake strikes. He tries to reach his family but is thrown to the pavement instead. He sees Ismail come through the window and the vision of his son alive is what keeps Sinan going for the long days and nights when he searches for his son in the rubble. It is very telling that Sinan leaves his wife and daughter unprotected and alone for several days in order to find his son, despite the fact that his daughter begs him to stay.

Like many people who face tragedy, Sinan begins bartering with God to save his son's life. He passes through several stages of the grieving process, including bargaining, anger and acceptance as he digs blindly through the destruction for Ismail. All of his hard work pays off when he finds Ismail in the rubble but one wonders at what cost. Will Irem ever be able to forgive her father for leaving her when she is the most scared and vulnerable? His actions prove her belief that Ismail is the preferred child, and Irem will never be able to forget that fact.



Part 1, Chapters 11 - 15

Part 1, Chapters 11 - 15 Summary

Part 1, Chapter 11: As Sinan searched for Ismail in the rubble, Irem and Nilufer wander the streets looking for food and Ismail. Nilufer believes that every child she sees, alive or dead, is Ismail. Irem tries to keep her mother sane while she searches for Dylan and her friend Dilek. After four days, Sinan arrives and tells them that Ismail is alive and being cared for at the German hospital. Nilufer is relieved but Irem feels a pang of jealousy that her father deserted her for Ismail.

Part 1, Chapter 12: Sinan sets up a small tent on the outskirts of town for his family. Three other families are also camped there, as well as a lone man who is constantly drunk. Sinan refuses to sleep because he does not want anything bad to happen to his family. There is little food and one day, Sinan sees a shepherd walk across the field with a small flock of sheep. The shepherd gives the animals away to those who ask for one, and Sinan slaughters a sheep for his family to eat. As he is walking back to his tent, Sinan sees a series of trucks and buses with what appear to be disaster supplies. He sees his American neighbor in one of the buses and is ashamed that he never thanked the man for his wife's sacrifice to save Ismail.

Part 1, Chapter 13: Irem feels suffocated in the small tent that she is sharing with her family and decides to venture out when her father is gone and the other two are asleep. She finds her friend Dilek alive with her mother. Dilek tells Irem that her father died in the earthquake. The two girls walk alone for awhile and discuss the earthquake, who is alive and who is dead. Dilek tells Irem that Dylan is alive but that he returned to America with his father. Irem is relieved that Dylan is alive but disappointed that he went back to America. Dilek and Irem see the same parade of trucks and buses that Sinan sees and Irem spots Dylan in one of the vehicles.

Part 1, Chapter 14: Sinan finishes skinning and draining the sheep and throws it over his shoulders to return to camp. He watches the line of American vehicles stop and begin to set up a camp. He walks to the camp and approaches his American neighbor, Marcus Roberts. He thanks Marcus for his wife saving Ismail's life. Marcus invites Sinan and his family to live at the American camp but Sinan refuses. He tells Marcus that he wants to provide for his family alone, with no extra help. Marcus says that he will keep visiting Sinan every day until he reconsiders the offer.

Part 1, Chapter 15: Irem runs to the bus where she sees Dylan and he is happy to see her. He tells Irem that they went to America, buried his mother and then returned to help with the relief efforts. Irem can see her father speaking to Dylan's father and she is careful to hide from their view. When she sees her father leaving the camp, she decides that she needs to beat him back to their tent. She goes home a different direction and her father is already there when she returns. Instead of being angry with Irem, her parents are preoccupied with a small cut above Ismail's eye. They do not even care that



she was gone. Irem fantasizes about being buried in the rubble, instead of Ismail, and her parents showering attention on her.

Part 1, Chapters 11 - 15 Analysis

The arrival of the American relief effort causes Sinan to have mixed feelings. He has always been suspicious of the Americans to the point of despising them, but it is hard for him to deny their generosity. First, the American woman was willing to give up her own life in order to save Ismail. Now the Americans are trying to help the earthquake victims by providing safe shelter and food — things that the Turkish government has neglected to do. The internal struggle of Sinan's pride and family honor versus his personal experience with the Americans begins to heighten.

Irem continues to feel abandoned by her parents — especially her father. When she returns home from seeing Dylan, she expects anger from her parents and questions about her absence. Instead, neither parent seems to care that she was gone, or even to notice. They are too focused on the cut above Ismail's eye to care what Irem has been up to. In order to deal with her feelings of inferiority, Irem begins to fantasize about her own death or tragedy befalling her so that her parents will care about her.



Part 1, Chapters 16 - 21

Part 1, Chapters 16 - 21 Summary

Part 1, Chapter 16: Nilufer continues to stress over the cut above Ismail's eye. Ismail leaves the tent to play soccer with the other children, and Nilufer tells Sinan that they need a doctor. Irem tells her mother about the American camp and says that they should take Ismail there. Sinan is angry that Irem has made such a suggestion but Nilufer is filled with hope. Nilufer cooks the lamb and Sinan wrestles with the idea of accepting the generosity from the Americans or staying in their own private tent.

Part 1, Chapter 17: Sinan begins looking for a job but finds that there is nothing available in the devastated city. He runs into another business owner named Kemal who says that his cousin can get Sinan a job. Kemal calls his cousin on his cell phone and the next day, Sinan reports for work in Istanbul. He begins carrying televisions from one place to the next on his back. The weight of the televisions is unbearable and Sinan struggles with his club foot but he does the work in order to make money for his family. His new boss seems pleased with the amount of work that he does, and tells Sinan to come back the next day at 7:30 a.m.

Part 1, Chapter 18: It takes Sinan three hours to return home to Gölcük from Istanbul. He arrives at his tent to find Marcus and Dylan Roberts standing outside. Marcus tells Sinan that he really wants to speak with Ismail. Sinan is reluctant because he does not want his son to have to relive the pain of the earthquake, but he allows the Americans inside the tent. Marcus asks Ismail to tell him the details of the last moments of his wife's life and Ismail tells him the truth and tells him that she did not appear to be in pain. Dylan stares at the ground during the conversation and leaves the tent abruptly, crying. Sinan tells Marcus that the two of them are like brothers in an effort to ease the tension.

Part 1, Chapter 19: Irem tells her mother that she needs to go use the restroom and instead she goes to find Dylan. She sees him near the tent and tries to comfort him. Dylan is upset with his father and blames him for his mother's death because they should have been in America, not Turkey. Irem embraces Dylan to comfort him and their parents spot them. Back in the tent, Sinan is angry with Irem. She lies and says that she was coming back from the restroom and saw Dylan crying so she was trying to help. Sinan says that other people can see her and that it is not proper. Sinan seems to buy Irem's story, though, and does not punish her further.

Part 1, Chapter 20: After Irem and Ismail fall asleep, Sinan and Nilufer argue about the Americans. Sinan says that he does not trust them and that they must want something to be showing so much interest. Nilufer says that she thinks that they are just trying to help. She encourages Sinan to allow the family to move to the American camp but he still refuses. She sees how hurt his foot is from carrying televisions all day and she



washes it for him. Sinan considers what she says about the American camp but feels like it would mean he was giving up.

Part 1, Chapter 21: Sinan's boss asks to look at his foot after another worker revealed that Sinan had clubfoot. Sinan's boss is angry that Sinan "lied" to him but Sinan says that his foot should not matter because he is only paid for the televisions that he actually delivers. His boss agrees to give him one more chance but tells him that he must move 38 televisions that day. Sinan struggles to move the televisions and drops three of them when he walks through a busy market. He goes to the ferry and realizes there is no use going back to his boss because he will be fired and have to pay for the damages. When he returns to camp, he sees Ismail playing soccer with the American father, Marcus. The American notices that Sinan is moving with a lot of difficulty and offers to bandage his foot. As Marcus works, Sinan explains his dislike for Americans and his reasoning. Marcus encourages Sinan to move to the American camp before leaving the tent. Nilufer tells Sinan that they must move to the American camp and Sinan reluctantly agrees.

Part 1, Chapters 16 - 21 Analysis

Sinan is determined to take care of his family, even if it means working like a "donkey" and carrying televisions on his back for money. The insistence of the Americans, and his wife and daughter, that the family move to the American relief camp seems to only make Sinan more persistent to take care of his family on his own. When he sees Irem standing with Dylan, Sinan immediately reverts back to his original distrust of Americans and he tells his wife that they must want something to be so nice. Still, Sinan runs out of options and at the end of Part 1, finds himself on the brink of accepting the generosity of the Americans in order to keep his family alive.

Irem and Dylan's relationship is beginning to come to light. She is not as careful as she once was, justifying her public actions as things that "no one will care about" since most of the people have bigger worries, like starvation and homelessness. It is possible that Irem's perspective on life is changing due to the death and destruction she saw in the earthquake. It is also possible that she feels rising rebellion towards her parents, her father in particular, and it makes her less afraid of being seen with Dylan.



Part 2, Chapters 22 - 26

Part 2, Chapters 22 - 26 Summary

Part 2, Chapter 22: Irem enjoys the freedom that she now owns as a result of the earthquake. She is able to wander through the American relief camp for several hours each day without her mother. She spends the time visiting her friend Dilek and looking for Dylan. Irem goes just outside the camp to the beach and wades ankle-deep in the water. Dylan finds her there and the two discuss the conservative ways of Turkish culture. He gives her a music player with the music of Radiohead playing on it and though she is stunned by the gift, Irem accepts it.

Part 2, Chapter 23: Now in the American camp, Sinan is finally able to get some sleep. He sleeps for 18 hours straight before waking up to find himself alone in the tent. Nilufer brings him breakfast that was prepared by the Americans and tells him not to worry about the children because they are safe and off playing. Still exhausted, Sinan rests his head on Nilufer's exposed shin and allows her to comfort him.

Part 2, Chapter 24: Irem and Dylan hear someone coming on the beach and they both leave, going different directions so that they will not be seen together. The man approaching the beach is carrying a fishing pole and does not notice the teenagers. Irem returns to Dilek and her other friend Alyse, who are jumping rope. Though it is not allowed by her parents, Irem begins to jump rope with the girls.

Part 2, Chapter 25: Sinan loses his sense of purpose living in the American camp without a job. He has no rent to pay and the Americans feed his family. His children play with the other kids at the camp and Nilufer keeps up the domestic duties of the tent. Marcus continues coming to clean and rebandage Sinan's foot every night and the two continue to talk politics. In a quiet moment, Sinan tells Nilufer about his depression and the fact that if he died, she would have plenty of people to take care of her. Nilufer tries to reassure him by telling him that no one can take care of her the way that he can.

Part 2, Chapter 26: Irem and Dylan begin meeting at the beach more often, usually at night. On a rainy afternoon, they meet up and spend several hours together. They kiss repeatedly and Irem feels guilty, though the kissing does not escalate to anything more. When they part ways, Dylan goes a different route than Irem. A man stops Irem and implies that he plans to tell her father about her rendezvous with Dylan. He begins kissing her forcefully but Irem manages to escape and run away. She recognizes the man as Kemal, from her father's store. When she stumbles into the tent late, Irem expects her parents to be angry but they are already asleep. Her mother tells her not to come home so late and then falls back to sleep. Heart still beating quickly, Irem cries silently into her sleeping bag.



Part 2, Chapters 22 - 26 Analysis

Sinan and his family adjust to their new life living at the American relief camp. Nilufer is relieved to be safe and so close to medical care for Ismail. Irem enjoys the first taste of freedom that she has known for years and is able to wander the camp freely, without her mother by her side. Ismail spends time playing soccer with the other kids. Sinan has mixed feelings about the family's new existence. On one hand, he is relieved to have the responsibility and stress of trying to provide food and shelter for his family off of his shoulders. On the other hand, with no financial responsibility and the safety of his family assured by the Americans, Sinan feels depressed with no sense of purpose. He cannot even find the strength to scold Irem for coming home late because he has lost his drive.

Irem and Dylan's innocent relationship begins escalating. Instead of meeting secretly on occasion, they begin meeting more frequently and openly. At least one person — Kemal — is aware of the relationship between Irem and Dylan. Just as Irem has suspected, the way that people view her changes when she is seen with Dylan. Kemal, for example, believes that he has the right to a physical relationship with Irem because she has already lost some of her innocence with Dylan. Though Irem has nothing to feel guilty about in the scenario with Kemal, she runs home and cries in shame because she truly believes her secret relationship with Dylan warrants the attack by Kemal.



Part 2, Chapters 27 - 31

Part 2, Chapters 27 - 31 Summary

Part 2, Chapter 27: Sinan's depression worsens and he no longer attends morning prayers at the makeshift mosque, a fact that angers Nilufer. She tells him that they must leave the American camp and he asks her how they plan to leave with no money to their name and no job for him. That afternoon, Sinan receives a letter from his Aunt Melike in his homeland of Yesilli. She says that she hopes his family is well after the earthquake and that the soldiers have left the Yesilli area. The letter goes on to say that there is a home waiting for Sinan and his family in Yesilli if they want to come back. Sinan finds Nilufer and tells her the good news — that they can go home. Nilufer is overjoyed at the news. Sinan attends the mosque for evening prayers and realizes that earthquake needed to happen in order for him to return to Yesilli.

Part 2, Chapter 28: Dylan approaches Irem as she is hanging laundry and asks her where she has been. She tells him about what happened with Kemal a few nights earlier, and Dylan vows to kill him. He takes Irem by the hand and the two walk publicly that way. Several people stop to stare and express disgust, including Kemal.

Part 2, Chapter 29: Kemal approaches Sinan as he is leaving evening prayers at the mosque. He tells him that Irem has been seen around the camp with the American boy, Dylan, and that people are starting to talk. Sinan notices a scab on Kemal's lip and Kemal lies and says that he got the injury playing soccer with the boys. Sinan says that Irem is a "good girl" and Kemal says that he knows she is and that is why he wanted to tell Sinan what people are saying in order to keep it that way. Kemal says that he wants Sinan's name to remain honorable.

Part 2, Chapter 30: Irem and Dylan continue to walk through the camp and Irem becomes more confident in letting Dylan touch her as they walk. Just before it hits her on the forehead, Irem sees a rock coming towards her. She sees that an old covered woman has thrown it. Irem falls to the ground.

Part 2, Chapter 31: Dylan brings Irem back to the tent, her forehead bleeding. Ismail runs to get the doctor and Sinan and Nilufer question Irem in the tent. She says that she was just talking to Dylan, but both of her parents are angry and tell her that she brought the attack on herself. Sinan tells Marcus that his son needs to stay away from his daughter and Marcus disagrees, saying that it is innocent and Irem makes Dylan "happy." Sinan realizes that he needs to find a job to raise the money to move back to Yesilli. He sees a young man from camp dressed in a uniform from the large superstore Carrefour. The young man tells Sinan that the store is hiring and Sinan goes the next day to apply. The manager hires him on the spot and asks him to begin by working a double shift the next day.



Part 2, Chapters 27 - 31 Analysis

Sinan finds renewed purpose in life when the letter arrives from his aunt in Yesilli. For years, he has dreamed of returning to his homeland but feels trapped in Gölcük. Now Sinan is able to see the "silver lining" in the earthquake because it will lead him back to Yesilli in the end. The letter is not the only bit of Karmic energy that works in Sinan's favor; he also finds a job at Carrefour, despite the fact that so many others are unable to find work. Sinan has dreams of moving back to Yesilli and the reality gives him the added boost of energy that he needs to work towards his goal.

Irem begins to lose sight of her good judgment and to listen to Dylan when he insists that their relationship is nothing to be ashamed about. She is so caught up in the emotion of her relationship with Dylan that she is naive about how the other people in the camp view her. When she is hurt, her parents are not angry with the attacker — but are angry instead with Irem because they believe she has brought it on herself.



Part 2, Chapters 32 - 36

Part 2, Chapters 32 - 36 Summary

Part 2, Chapter 32: Sinan begins his job at Carrefour and is a hard worker. He enjoys his tasks and feels that he has a sense of purpose again. He works several double shifts in order to quickly earn the money to move back to Yesilli. Irem feels remorse for what happened with Dylan, and how it embarrassed her parents and she is especially good around the tent. One night Ismail awakes with a scream. He is only having a nightmare but Sinan discovers that Irem is not in her sleeping bag. He finds her just outside the tent in a chair, listening to the CD player that Dylan gave her. When she notices him, he takes it from her but tries not to be too angry. He apologizes for not being a better father to her. On a break at Carrefour, Sinan listens to the Radiohead CD and finds an odd beauty in it, though he cannot understand what is being said.

Part 2, Chapter 33: Though Irem has been acting remorseful, she is still seeing Dylan. The two teenagers take a bus to Istanbul where they are safe and away from the camp. Dylan takes Irem to several places that he knows around town, including a neighborhood that is full of other young people that are college age. Irem and Dylan debate the differences in values between her family and other girls in the area. Dylan tells her that he has a surprise place that he wants to take her.

Part 2, Chapter 34: Sinan is sent home early from Carrefour because there will not be another truck and his boss does not need him to stay. Sinan tries to convince his boss to let him stay and work because he needs the money, but his boss tells him that his bosses "check these things." He gives Sinan his first paycheck and even though it is only for a couple of days, Sinan is shocked at the amount of money he receives. He decides to go find out how much a train ticket to the station near Yesilli costs before heading home. He discovers that it will cost 140 million lira per ticket for his family to get back to Yesilli, a number that seems like a small fortune. An elderly man is attempting to sell one ticket to Malatya — a station further from Yesilli but still pretty close. Sinan buys the ticket and debates hopping on a train. He is ashamed when he realizes that he is considering leaving without his family and keeps the useless ticket instead of using it.

Part 2, Chapter 35: Dylan takes Irem through a secret door into a Christian church. The building is empty except for prayer candles lit throughout it. He tells Irem that his mother used to take him there when he was a kid. He shows Irem a large picture of the Virgin Mary and tells her that she is the one who had it difficult because she had to watch her son die. Dylan asks Irem to marry him, right on the spot in the church. He gives her his black bracelet as a symbol of the union and Irem accepts. She realizes that the marriage is not "official" but is flattered by the idea just the same.

Part 2, Chapter 36: As Sinan rides the bus away from the train station, he thinks that he sees Irem walking through the streets with her arm around a man. He realizes that it is just a vision and his thoughts return to going to Yesilli. He calculates how long it will take



for him to save up enough money to afford train tickets for his family and decides it will be another three weeks. Sinan is overwhelmed with joy at the thought of being able to escape the American relief camp in less than one month.

Part 2, Chapters 32 - 36 Analysis

Sinan's dreams of returning to Yesilli inch closer to reality as he plans his family's escape. He receives his first paycheck and is able to calculate how much longer it will take for him to earn enough to leave the American relief camp and return to his homeland. Sinan is so overwhelmed at the idea of going back to Yesilli that for a few moments, he considers leaving his family behind and just going there alone. His better judgement wins out, however, and he does not use his ticket to freedom. Sinan begins to count down the days until he can make his dream come true.

Irem and Dylan pledge their commitment to each other in an impromptu wedding ceremony in a small church in Istanbul. Though the ceremony is not official, Dylan gives Irem his prized black bracelet as an outward symbol of his love for her. In Dylan's mind, he is married to Irem, though she is still in denial that someone like Dylan would want to be with someone like her. They are smart enough to see each other away from the danger of the camp but they know that they are still walking on thin ice by seeing each other at all.



Part 2, Chapters 37 - 41

Part 2, Chapters 37 - 41 Summary

Part 2, Chapter 37: Nilufer finds the CD player that Dylan gave to Irem and she is angry. She shows it to Sinan when he returns from work and he tells her that he already knows about it. He tries to diffuse the fight between Irem and Nilufer, saying that the CD player is "just music." Nilufer smashes the CD player on the tent floor and Irem runs from the tent crying. Nilufer tells Sinan that if he loved his daughter, he would not let her act the way that she is acting. Sinan finds Irem crying near the beach and he tries to talk to her calmly. She admits that she kissed Dylan and Sinan forbids her from seeing him anymore. He tells Nilufer not to let Irem leave the tent alone. Sinan goes to his boss and asks for an advance on his pay but the boss tells him that it is not allowed. He gives him a ten million lira note from his own wallet though, a gesture that Sinan finds generous but then angers him because the man can give away money so easily.

Part 2, Chapter 38: Nilufer will not let Irem out of her sight. She forces Irem to clean everything in the tent over and over again, and then to just sit inside when there is nothing to do. Ismail comes and goes as he pleases and Nilufer dotes on him. Irem takes a glass shard from her shirt pockets and cuts her wrists in the bathroom — just enough to hurt but not enough to kill herself. She decides the pain will help her get through the next few days with her mother.

Part 2, Chapter 39: A young boy dies in the American camp from a violent illness. Marcus visits Sinan at work and tells him that the boy could have been saved with pills but the boy's parents would not let the Americans into the tent. Sinan tries to explain the distrust of Americans to Marcus, but Marcus insists that it is ill conceived. At the boy's funeral, Sinan is told that the boy died just days after the Americans came into his tent and tried to convert him to Christianity. The father believes it was this action that made his son ill in the first place which is why he would not allow the Americans to come into his tent again to bring medication.

Part 2, Chapter 40: After the boy's funeral, Nilufer focuses all of her energy on Ismail who was a friend of the deceased. He sits in a corner of the tent and refuses to eat, spending all his time drawing pictures that reflect death. Irem is no longer the focus of Nilufer's rage but she still must stay in the tent and do chores on command. After returning from doing laundry, Irem and Ismail are alone. He asks her why their mother is so mean to her and Irem says that she does not know. She manages to get Ismail to eat and he notices the bandages on her wrists. He tells Irem that she is scaring him but she reassures him, telling him that everything will be all right.

Part 2, Chapter 41: Dylan approaches Sinan as he exits the mosque after evening prayers. He tries to reason with Sinan and tell him that his intentions with Irem are pure. Sinan will not listen and tells the boy to leave his daughter alone. When he returns to the tent, Nilufer is in a panic because she has been looking at Ismail's grim drawings.



She is worried about Ismail's mental state. Sinan finds Ismail playing soccer with some Americans and other boys and Sinan begins to kick the ball around too. When just Sinan and Ismail remain, Sinan asks Ismail to talk to him about what is bothering him. Ismail asks about the meaning of life, Heaven and why people have to die. Sinan tries his best to answer the questions and Ismail lets on that Marcus has already been talking to him about the Christian version of Heaven. Sinan's answers seem to please Ismail and he smiles at his father.

Part 2, Chapters 37 - 41 Analysis

The mental state of Ismail is explored in depth for the first time in the novel in this section. The boy is the youngest in the family and arguably has been through the most trauma but seems to be the most resilient. After the death of his friend, Ismail appears to fall into a depressed state and his emotions flood into his graphic drawings. Though the drawings disturb his mother, the fact that Ismail is expressing himself at all is a sign of his mental stability. This becomes clear when he has a reasoned conversation with Sinan about life, death, religion and Heaven. In contrast, Sinan, Nilufer and Irem all keep their darkest emotions bottled up and it leads to more dangerous scenarios.

The pure intentions of the American relief workers come under fire when the young Turkish boy dies. Rumors begin spreading through the camp that the Americans are trying to convert the Muslims to Christianity and that they are targeting the vulnerable children. Even Sinan, who trusts Marcus, begins to question the true intent of the generosity of the Americans. It appears that the rumors have some merit when Ismail tells Sinan that Marcus has spoken to him about the Christian version of Heaven and other points about Christianity. Sinan begins to feel that his original distrust of the Americans was founded after all.



Part 2, Chapters 42 - 46

Part 2, Chapters 42 - 46 Summary

Part 2, Chapter 42: Irem watches her father and Ismail play soccer together and feels a pang of sadness for the days that her father used to play with her and take her fishing. Now that she was considered a "woman" it was improper for her to run around and have fun. Dilek finds Irem and tells her that she has a message from Dylan: he wants to see her, that very night. Dilek tells Irem to ignore what other people are saying about the relationship Irem has with Dylan because they do not know anything. She also tells her that she is jealous of the relationship. When Irem expresses angst over going against her parents' wishes, Dilek tells Irem that her parents are "backward."

Part 2, Chapter 43: Sinan confronts Marcus at his tent about the Americans preaching to the Turkish children. Marcus does not deny the accusations, but tells Sinan that the missionaries were the only ones who were willing to come to help the relief effort on such short notice. Marcus warns him that there will be trouble if the Americans keep trying to convert the Muslim children to Christianity.

Part 2, Chapter 44: Irem goes to the beach to meet Dylan. He is not there when she arrives and she stands alone, thinking about her future. When Dylan arrives, he tells Irem that he tried to talk to Sinan about getting his blessing to marry Irem but Sinan refused. Dylan tells Irem that they should run away together and she is unhappy with the idea, saying that she wants her family to accept him instead. Dylan tells her it will never happen. When Irem returns to the tent, her father is clearly unhappy with her but says that he does not have time or energy to "deal with her." Irem climbs into Ismail's sleeping bag with him and holds him for several hours in the night.

Part 2, Chapter 45: The next morning Irem was gone. She ran away with Dylan. Nilufer and Ismail go to see Sinan at work and tell him that she has run away. Nilufer asks Sinan what he plans to do about it and he says he wants to just finish his shift. Nilufer is upset with his inaction and storms out with Ismail. After work, Sinan is confronted by Kemal who tells him that people in the village are saying that Irem is pregnant. Kemal tells Sinan that everyone will understand if he kills Irem. Sinan is offended and considers striking Kemal but then decides that there is some merit to what he is saying and that Kemal is only trying to help.

Part 2, Chapter 46: Dylan and Irem take a bus that drives them out of Turkey and into Europe. Irem is still hesitant about her decision but she quickly feels empowered. As they approach the big buildings of a big city, Irem begins to cry because it is so beautiful and she will never get to share it with her family.



Part 2, Chapters 42 - 46 Analysis

Irem makes the difficult choice to run away with Dylan. It is difficult to know if she is actually running away because she wants to be with Dylan or because she is desperate to get away from her family. She does not make any amends with her parents but takes the time to say her "good byes" in a way with Ismail. Though she is at odds with her parents, Irem grieves the fact that she must leave them behind. Her parents may be "backward" as Dilek points out, but they are still her parents and the only home that Irem has ever known. She cries when she sees the beauty of the big city — not because she is upset but because she is homesick already and wishes that she was sharing the experience with her family along with Dylan.

The conversation that Irem has with Dilek is interesting because Dilek says the very things that readers are likely thinking. Dilek represents a Western voice and readers can understand where she is coming from when she talks to Irem. Though Irem wants to agree with Dilek, to make her parents out to be the "bad guys," her upbringing is so engrained into her being that she still feels that her parents have a right to treat her the way that they do. Maybe her parents are "backward" but Irem has never known a life that is any different so she still feels the need to defend her parents.



Part 2, Chapters 47 - 51

Part 2, Chapters 47 - 51 Summary

Part 2, Chapter 47: Sinan considers Kemal's suggestion about killing Irem, but immediately is filled with guilt at the thought of doing such a thing to his little girl. He takes Ismail to the showers and Ismail asks where Irem went. Ismail asks if Irem is doing "bad things" and Sinan does not answer him. Back at the tent, Marcus is waiting to talk to Sinan. He tells him that he thinks he knows where Dylan and Irem are and that he will take him there tomorrow.

Part 2, Chapter 48: Irem and Dylan go to his family's apartment. Dylan showers and Irem wonders what his body looks like naked. He convinces her to take off her head scarf and they get ready to go out. He meets up with three of his friends — Attila, Serkan and Berna. They are all very secular and wealthy and Irem feels self-conscious around them, especially the female in the group, Berna. The five of them visit several hot spots and Irem drinks alcohol for the first time. They go back to Attila's large apartment and Dylan and Irem have sex for the first time. She is drunk and it hurts more than she thought it would.

Part 2, Chapter 49: Sinan and Marcus take a bus to the European side of Istanbul to find Irem and Dylan. They ride in silence and Sinan brings his knife along. They visit the apartment and Marcus tells Sinan that they were there, but are gone now. They walk through the streets to several locations that astonish Sinan because of their wordliness but cannot find the teenagers. Sinan angrily accuses Dylan of taking his daughter but Marcus reminds him that Irem is just as much to blame.

Part 2, Chapter 50: Irem wakes up several hours later next to Dylan and she is sick about losing her virginity. There is blood on her skirt and she realizes that no matter what she does, she will not be able to turn back the clock and erase what happened with Dylan. As she puts on her shirt, she realizes that she has lost a button and she searches for it in a panic, hoping to find it and sew it back on and pretend like the night never happened.

Part 2, Chapter 51: Irem returns to her family late that night and stumbles into the tent. Nilufer turns her back on Irem and will not speak to her. Sinan agrees to go for a walk with her and they go down to the beach. Sinan at first feels compassion for his distraught daughter. As she tells him her story, he begins to feel disgust towards her. When Irem tells him about losing her virginity to Dylan, Sinan tells her that she is no longer his daughter. Irem pleads with him to let her stay but he puts his hand in his pocket and grabs his knife. Irem realizes what he is considering and walks away from him, down the beach and into the darkness.



Part 2, Chapters 47 - 51 Analysis

Irem's affair with Dylan reaches a critical point. She makes the decision to leave her family and run away with Dylan — a move that has more to do with acting out against her parents than it does with actually wanting to be with Dylan. Once she has left, Irem realizes the error of her thinking as she is uncomfortable around Dylan, his friends and the new lifestyle. Making matters worse is the fact that she tries alcohol for the first time and her judgement is further impaired. Instead of her first time being meaningful and full of love, Irem loses her virginity while she is drunk and scared. When she wakes up in the morning, she is ashamed of what she has done and longs for the comfort of her parents, brother and home.

Sinan struggles with his feelings toward Irem and what she has done. When he sees her crying and upset, he immediately feels sympathy towards his little girl and wants to comfort her. When the reality of what she has done comes to light, however, Sinan must make a choice: forgiving his daughter or protecting his family name. In a moment of anger, Sinan chooses Nilufer, Ismail and family honor over Irem. He disowns her and even considers killing her for a brief moment. In the end, he is merciful enough to let Irem walk away, allowing his relationship with his daughter to end over one bad decision made in her youth.



Part 2, Chapters 52 - 54

Part 2, Chapters 52 - 54 Summary

Part 2, Chapter 52: As Irem walks down the beach, Ismail finds her. He begs her to come back home. He says that Sinan is crying and that he knows their father will forgive her if she just comes back. Irem is unemotional in her response and tells Ismail that she is just going for a walk. She tries to reassure him that everything will be okay before he leaves her to go back to the camp.

Part 2, Chapter 53: Sinan camps outside the tent of Marcus and Dylan, waiting for the perfect moment to kill Dylan. He stays there until dawn and realizes that no one is inside. Both Marcus and Dylan have left the camp. Sinan returns to his own tent and Nilufer asks about Irem. Sinan tells her simply that Irem is gone. Ismail retreats into his sleeping bag, pulling it over his head when he hears his father's words.

Part 2, Chapter 54: Irem walks down the beach until the next afternoon, contemplating her fate. She leaves the beach and gives her head scarf to a man sitting by the road. She hails a taxi and tells the driver to take her to Beyoglu where she is meeting her husband. Irem has no money on her and watches the meter on the taxi rise. As they approach the city, she asks the driver to drop her off on a bridge. He says that it is illegal and that he must drive her to the other side. When the taxi is stopped in traffic, Irem flees the vehicle and jumps to her death over the side of the bridge.

Part 2, Chapters 52 - 54 Analysis

The final hours of Irem's life are described in detail in this section of the book. When she realizes that she is on her own, Irem loses her will to live. Even seeing the sweet face of her little brother does not give her hope. If anything, she views taking her own life as the best thing that she can do to protect Ismail and make life easier for him. Irem feels that she has run out of choices and that the only option is to take her own life. Just as she fantasized the emotions of her parents at her death earlier in the book, Irem knows that this one final act will ultimately get their attention. She would rather die than to live on her own without her family, bearing the burden of bringing them shame.



Part 3, Chapters 55 - 58

Part 3, Chapters 55 - 58 Summary

Part 3, Chapter 55: Sinan is called to the scene of Irem's suicide. On a police boat, he goes with the officers to try to find Irem's body in the water. The police boats are followed by members of the press, snapping photos of the search. Sinan holds out hope that they will find Irem alive, swimming in the dark waters just below the bridge. They find her body floating lifeless and Sinan insists on pulling her from the water on his own. Much of her skin is showing and Sinan is shocked to see the body of a woman, not his little girl, dead in the water.

Part 3, Chapter 56: Many people from the village attend Irem's funeral. Sinan feels guilty because he knows it is his fault that Irem killed herself. At least if he would have killed her, she could have entered Paradise. According to Islam, a person who takes his or her own life cannot enter Paradise and Sinan grieves that fact for his daughter. Five days after the funeral, Marcus arrives at his tent. Marcus tries to console Sinan with the words of Jesus Christ and tells him that Christ forgives Irem. Marcus tells Sinan that Dylan is back in America and Sinan says to keep him there because if he ever sees him again, he will kill him.

Part 3, Chapter 57: After Irem's funeral, Ismail refuses to talk or eat. Nilufer and Sinan are afraid that he will die of starvation and try everything to get him to eat. Sinan returns to work after a week off and his paycheck is only 19 million lira short of buying the boat tickets for his family so he will have to work another two weeks. Rumors begin spreading around the camp that the Americans have converted more children and have done things like slip pork into the soup. The Muslims in the camp become restless and angry with the Americans. An orphaned Gypsy boy walks through the camp one evening, wearing new, expensive American clothing and a gold cross around his neck. Ismail perks up for the first time in days and watches the boy with interest. Sinan determines that he will not lose his son too.

Part 3, Chapter 58: In an attempt to cheer up Ismail, Sinan takes him into Istanbul to a large mosque. He wants to show his son how beautiful being a Muslim can be and the wooden, makeshift mosque at the camp is not a great example. Ismail spends the day in silence and refuses any treats his father buys for him. At the mosque, Ismail follows Sinan's lead during prayers and struggles with much of it. On the ferry ride on the way home, Ismail asks Sinan why he sent Irem away. Sinan tells him he did it because she hurt him but that he was wrong. Ismail asks if Irem is in Heaven, and Sinan says that he hopes so.



Part 3, Chapters 55 - 58 Analysis

Sinan, Nilufer and Ismail try to go on with life after the suicide of Irem but it proves very difficult. Sinan contemplates his own suicide but his concern for the health of Ismail keeps him from going through with it. Though Nilufer was cold to Irem and turned her back on her daughter, she is grief-stricken at Irem's death. The very same people who were slandering Sinan and his family attend the funeral and bring food to the family tent. It is difficult to know whether the other villagers felt guilty about their actions or simply felt an obligation to Sinan and his family. The whole situation is made even more painful by the involvement of the press and the way that Irem's death is being played out as a news story. There seems to be no escaping the painful truth and Sinan literally cannot escape because he still does not have enough money from working at Carrefour.

Ismail breaks his silence by asking his father difficult questions about Irem's death. The wisdom of Ismail, a boy, is greater than that of the villagers or his parents. He cannot understand why his father would send Irem away over a simple mistake or argument. Though Sinan has already made peace with the fact that Irem is not in Paradise, he lies to Ismail and tells him that he hopes Irem is in Heaven. Sinan is terrified of losing his son to Christianity and he knows that if he tells him the truth, Ismail may reject Islam.



Part 3, Chapters 59 - 61

Part 3, Chapters 59 - 61 Summary

Part 3, Chapter 59: Sinan returns to the camp and finds that there are soldiers stationed at the entrance. Nilufer tells him that Ismail is eating again and out playing soccer with his friends. Sinan arrives at the field just in time to see a goal from Ismail and to cheer for him. Ismail looks disappointed to see his father and tells him that he was looking for someone else — Marcus. Ismail tells his father that Marcus has been talking to him about religion again and about Heaven. In anger, Sinan goes to Marcus' tent and enters without warning. He puts his knife to Marcus' throat and Marcus tries to defend himself by saying that he was only trying to give Ismail hope. Sinan removes his knife and leaves the tent without killing Marcus.

Part 3, Chapter 60: Sinan goes back to his tent and waits outside for the military police to come arrest him. They do not come and in the morning, Sinan tells Nilufer to be ready to leave that night. On his way to work, Sinan stops and talks to another man from the village. He shows him a Christian religious pamphlet that he found with Ismail and tells the man that they are trying to take away his son. Sinan lies and tells the man that the American boy raped Irem and that is why she jumped to her death. Sinan finishes a double shift at Carrefour and steals 20 million lira from his boss' wallet when he is out of the room. He returns to the camp and it is in complete chaos. All of the Turkish residents have revolted against the relief workers and the entire camp is in shambles. Sinan leads Nilufer and Ismail away from the camp and loads them on a bus. Ismail is concerned about Marcus and asks Sinan if he is okay. Sinan promises his son that Marcus is fine and Ismail seems relieved.

Part 3, Chapter 61: Sinan, Nilufer and Ismail board the train bound for Yesilli at midnight. Sinan watches Ismail as he sleeps on his mother's lap and he yearns for Irem. As they approach the station, Sinan notices an old man with a donkey cart loaded with apples who is moving slowly across the street. Sinan is thankful for his family and promises never to let anything take away his strength again.

Part 3, Chapters 59 - 61 Analysis

Sinan's bitterness finally becomes too much to bear. He has survived losing Irem but cannot stomach losing his son to the Christian religion. He lashes out in anger and nearly kills Marcus as a result. He also stoops to lying about Irem being raped and stealing money from his boss' wallet. In short, Sinan reaches his breaking point and snaps. All he can think of doing is getting away from the relief camp and shuttling his family to safety.

Where Sinan is misguided is in the thought that changing locations will be able to protect his family. He cannot keep them safe from natural disasters, like another



earthquake, and he cannot stop opposing ideas from entering Ismail's mind. It is too late to take back the American and Christian influence on Ismail and though he is still young, he will be able to seek out the ideals again in his life if he so chooses. It is fitting that the last symbol the author presents to readers is an old man with a donkey cart, slowing down the progress of the train. Sinan is just like the old man, and just like the train, the progressive thinking in his son's life will continue despite setbacks from his father.



Characters

Sinan Basioglu

Sinan is the main protagonist of the book. Sinan is a Kurdish grocery store owner who lives in the Turkish suburb of Gölcük. He is father to two children, a teenage girl named Irem and a nine-year-old boy named Ismail. His marriage to Nilufer was arranged by their parents and the narrator comments that their relationship is more like siblings than spouses. Sinan is very traditional and runs his household with very strict principles. He insists that his daughter and wife wear head scarves, and will not allow Irem to date the American boy who shows interest in her. Sinan distrusts Americans and blames them for the death of his father at the hands of the paramilitary in Turkey. He believes that through inaction and by supplying weapons and vehicles, the Americans are responsible for enabling the groups who killed his father. This distrust of Americans pops up numerous times throughout the story, even after an American woman is responsible for saving the life of his son Ismail.

Everything in Sinan's world changes after the Marmara Earthquake. He loses his home, his grocery store and control over his family in a matter of moments. Sinan struggles to cling to his beliefs and his strong work ethic even after he is forced to accept the generosity of the Americans in order to keep his family safe and fed. He goes through a period of depression because of his reliance on other people and the fact that he cannot support his family in the way that he always has in the past. When he gets a menial job stocking shelves at a big superstore, Sinan's mood improves. He is inspired by the idea of returning to his homeland and works hard to earn enough money to escape Gölcük with his family. Sinan's dreams come true in the final pages of the book, but not in the way that he originally envisioned. He rides the train back to his homeland with only his son and wife, following the suicide of his daughter Irem.

Irem Basioglu

Irem is the 15-year-old daughter of Sinan and Nilufer and she has the role of the secondary protagonist in the novel. Irem comes from a very conservative Kurdish family who practices Islam. Though they are not as strict as fundamentalists, Irem is required to stay in the home with her mother, helping with chores and must keep her hair covered by a scarf at all times. Irem dreads becoming just like her mother — in an arranged marriage and whose purpose is to serve everyone else. She dreams of having the freedom of her friend Dilek and of American women, especially after she falls in love with an American boy. Though she loves her little brother, Ismail, Irem resents how much her parents dote on him and all of the attention that he receives. She looks forward to getting into trouble simply because it proves that her parents are paying attention to her.



Like Sinan, Irem's life completely changes as a result of the Marmara Earthquake. While Sinan's world crumbles around him as a result, Irem's world actually improves. Her parents are so preoccupied with Ismail and his minor illnesses and the turmoil of the earthquake that Irem is allowed a lot more freedom than she experienced before the earthquake. She is able to wander through the American relief camp without being chaperoned by her mother and she enjoys the time to herself. The freedom leads to a dangerous situation with the American boy, however, because she begins to feel uninhibited. Irem and Dylan show their affection towards each other in public — an act that earns Irem a bad reputation and ultimately leads to her suicide. Irem is like many teens in that she has natural feelings of rebellion towards her parents. Unlike American teenagers, Irem's rebellion has grave consequences because her society cannot accept her progressive attitude.

Ismail Basioglu

Ismail is the nine-year-old son of Sinan. He is attractive, bright and a good soccer player. Ismail is the object of his parents' unconditional affection and can do no wrong in their eyes. In return, Ismail is an obedient son who is respectful of his parents and does not complain, even when it means that he will face physical pain — as in his circumcision ceremony. Ismail is buried in a pile of rubble following the Marmara Earthquake and is found three days after the tragedy. Amazingly, he is alive. As he recovers, he tells his story of survival that includes being given water by an American woman who ends up dying. Throughout the novel, Ismail faces the most trauma but he does not complain. When one of his friends from the village dies, Ismail begins drawing graphic pictures of death and destruction in order to express his feelings. In a touching scene, Ismail asks his father about the meaning of life, if there is a Heaven and why God/Allah would cause some people to experience such pain in their lives. Ismail seems content with his father's explanation that even if there is suffering, life is a beautiful thing. Ismail tries to patch things up in his family between his parents and Irem and is crushed when he learns of his sister's suicide.

Nilufer Basioglu

Nilufer is the wife of Sinan. She cares for the home and the children while Sinan goes out to earn money for the family. Nilufer seems content with her role and is angry when Irem shuns the modesty that is expected of her to chase after the American boy. Though Nilufer accepts her husband as the provider, he is not the one completely in control of the home. She voices her opinion when it comes to family affairs and tells Sinan when she believes it is time to move to the American relief camp. After they have lived there for awhile, Nilufer tells him that they must leave and when Sinan tells her that they do not have the money to leave, she tells him that she is angry that she married such a man.

There is a dark side to Nilufer that presents itself in her relationship with Irem. She is mean, vindictive and borderline abusive to Irem when she believes that her daughter is



ruining the family name. She repeatedly tells Irem that she is a "stupid girl" and tells her daughter that she deserved the physical attack that she encountered from a woman in the village. When it seems to Nilufer that Sinan is being too lenient with Irem, she tells him so, even showing up at his job and demanding that he do more to keep their daughter under wraps. Nilufer does not demonstrate any of these qualities with her son, Ismail, and the only time that Irem gets a break from the strictness of her mother is if she is preoccupied with Ismail. It is possible that Nilufer is jealous of the potential freedoms that her daughter could feasibly enjoy in her life or that she is simply trying to keep her daughter safe. While Nilufer seems to be more progressive than her husband in many ways, she is set in her ways in other realms.

Dylan Roberts

Dylan Roberts is a sixteen-year-old American boy who lives in Gölcük with his parents who are Christian missionaries. Dylan contrasts the traditional Kurdish teenagers around him with his tattoos, dark clothing and alternative music choices. When the book opens, Dylan lives in the apartment above the Basioglu family and his relationship with Irem begins when they talk to each other from their apartment windows. After Dylan's mother dies in the earthquake, he becomes depressed and withdrawn — until he begins spending more time with Irem. He wants to marry her and even considers converting to Islam. When Sinan refuses to give his blessing to the relationship, Dylan convinces Irem to run away with him. The change in lifestyles proves too much for Irem, however, and she kills herself shortly after she and Dylan have sex for the first time.

Marcus Roberts

Marcus Roberts is a Christian missionary who lives in Gölcük with his wife Sarah and son Dylan. Sarah dies in the earthquake but Marcus stays in Turkey to help with the relief effort. He is responsible for bringing in a group of American volunteers who care for the misplaced earthquake victims. Marcus is especially fond of Ismail, despite the fact that his wife died saving Ismail's life. Sinan and Marcus form a friendship even though their lives are completely at odds with each other.

Sarah Roberts

Sarah Roberts appears briefly in the story before she is killed in the Marmara Earthquake. Her body is found by Sinan and Sarah's husband Marcus three days after the quake, buried in a pile of rubble. In her last act of life, Sarah found ways to keep Ismail alive by giving him water from a puddle and forsaking any nourishment for herself.



Ahmet

Ahmet is Nilufer's brother and co-owner of the grocery store with Sinan. Unlike Sinan, Ahmet is more worldly. He uses bad language and drinks alcohol but still manages to run a successful business. Ahmet, his wife and his children are killed in the earthquake and Sinan must identify their bodies after the disaster.

Dilek

Dilek is a teenage girl and a friend to Irem. She comes from a less conservative home than Irem, and encourages Irem to chase after the American boy, Dylan. Dilek is more worldly than Irem and speaks her mind. She is the opposite of Irem and acts the way that Irem wishes she could behave.

Kemal

Kemal is a business owner from Gölcük who owned an electronics store before the earthquake. He is often talking on his cell phone and though Sinan does not like Kemal's personality, he admires his business savvy. Kemal helps Sinan get a job hauling black market televisions in Istanbul. Kemal has an evil side, however, and physically attacks Irem one night after she has been secretly meeting with Dylan. He kisses Irem forcefully but she manages to escape before anything else happens. When Irem becomes the subject of rumors around the camp because of her relationship with Dylan, Kemal implies to Sinan that he should kill his daughter rather than allow her to ruin the family name.

Sinan's Boss

Sinan's boss at Carrefour is a just, honest man who is happy to have Sinan for a worker. He is a very sensitive boss who gives Sinan time off after Irem commits suicide. He recognizes Sinan's strong work ethic and rewards him with a lot of shifts and chances to make money for his family. He even offers Sinan money out of his own wallet when Sinan asks him for an advance on his paycheck.



Objects/Places

Gölcük

Gölcük is a suburb of Turkey, located about three hours from Istanbul by ferry. The town is located at the northern gulf of Armutlu Peninsula on the coast of Marmara Sea. Sinan and his family live in Gölcük in a small apartment when the devastating Marmara Earthquake hits, destroying the town and killing 17,000 people in 1999.

Istanbul

Istanbul is the largest city in Turkey, with a population of about 13.4 million people. It is a three-hour ferry ride from Gölcük and several of the characters visit there throughout the course of the book. Sinan takes a job carting televisions there and Irem escapes to Istanbul with Dylan when their relationship becomes too dangerous in Gölcük.

Apartment of Sinan and family

Sinan and his family live in a modest apartment in the suburb of Gölcük when the book opens. The apartment is described as looking nice from the outside, but being made of cheap materials on the inside. Sinan hates the apartment, preferring the country life to one in the city. An American family lives in the apartment directly above Sinan's family and all of the tenants share the common space on the roof. The apartment building is completely demolished during the earthquake.

Brothers' Grocery

Brothers' Grocery is the store that is owned by Sinan and his brother-in-law Ahmet. It is a small store with loyal customers but begins to lose business to the grocery store giant Carrefour. It is destroyed in the earthquake and Sinan becomes depressed, feeling he no longer has any purpose if he cannot support his family with his store.

Carrefour

Carrefour is a large super store that is located just outside of Gölcük that sells everything from groceries to televisions. Carrefour is the biggest competition to Sinan's small grocery store in Gölcük before the earthquake but Sinan ends up getting a job there following the earthquake. With the money Sinan earns working at Carrefour, he is able to move his family back to Yesilli.



Cigarettes

Dylan smokes cigarettes throughout the novel and it is an indicator of his tough, rebellious personality. Irem pretends to take puffs from his cigarette on several occasions, though she never inhales.

Yesilli

Yesilli is the homeland of Sinan and the area that he fled with his family when the Turkish paramilitary, or Special Teams, took over the region. He dreams of someday returning there throughout the book and it is where Sinan, Ismail and Nilufer are going in the final pages of the book.

Knife

One of the only belongings that Sinan recovers from his demolished apartment is a small knife. He uses it to slaughter a sheep in the days following the earthquake and carries it with him throughout the novel. When Irem tells Sinan about losing her virginity to Dylan, Sinan tells her to leave and never return. When she begs for his forgiveness, he shows her the knife he holds in his hand and it serves as an implied threat that he is willing to use it on her.

The American Camp

Following the earthquake, a group of American volunteers sets up a relief camp. Sinan at first refuses to live there but gives in to the pleas of his wife when their son becomes ill. The Americans provide food, shelter and recreation for the children but rumors that the workers are trying to convert Muslim children to Christianity causes tension in the camp.

Head Scarves

Irem and Nilufer are required to wear head scarves at all times to maintain modesty. When Irem runs away with Dylan, one of the first things he wants to see is her hair underneath the scarf. Irem views her head scarf as an old-fashioned tradition that is pointless, and it is a symbol of the changing attitude of Kurdish youth at the time of the novel.

CD Player

Dylan has a CD player that he listens to Radiohead on. He gives the CD player and CD to Irem as a gift and she finds the music beautiful. Sinan discovers her listening to it one



night and allows her to keep it. When Nilufer finds it in the tent, however, she smashes it on the ground.

Black Bracelet

Dylan gives Irem a black bracelet as a symbol of his commitment. Since the two can not be officially married, Dylan gives it to her and does his own version of wedding vows. Irem accepts it and is wearing it when she dies.

Catholic Church in Istanbul

One of the places that Dylan takes Irem in Istanbul is an old Catholic church. He shows her a picture of the Virgin Mary and opens up about his relationship with his mother. Irem and Dylan perform their own wedding ceremony in the church and Dylan gives her a black bracelet as a symbol of his love.



Themes

Rebellion In Youth

The many ways that children rebel against their parents and other forms of authority are presented in the novel. The most obvious example lies in the character of Irem, who goes against her parents' wishes and spends unchaperoned time with the American boy Dylan. Though Irem's initial interactions with Dylan are innocent, she feels guilty from the start because she is hiding it from her parents. As time goes on, she becomes more brave in her actions and the relationship becomes mildly physical. Irem justifies her actions by reasoning that her parents do not love her as much as her brother or that they are "backward" in their thinking. It is not until she loses her virginity that she realizes that in many ways, her parents were right to have her best interest at heart because the relationship is no longer innocent.

There are other subtle rebellions and testing of authority that are present in the novel too. Though Ismail is respectful of his parents, he is already questioning the ways of his religion and his parents' principles. Ismail sees the happiness of the Americans and buys into their message of forgiveness and Heaven. Ismail wants to believe in what his father tells him about Islam and the way that Irem was treated but based on his life experience, Ismail is already leaning away from the teachings his father so desperately wants him to believe. Dylan also represents rebellion in a more stereotypical way. He has tattoos, black hair and listens to alternative music. Though he may appear as a rebel to the outside world, the irony is that his parents allow the behavior so he is not actually disobeying them. Dylan's form of rebellion is against the culture he finds himself surrounded by and in some ways, he is speaking out against Christianity.

Perspective of Tragedy

The way that different individuals perceive a tragedy is explored throughout the novel. All of the characters experience the same earthquake but all of their lives are impacted in different ways. For Dylan and Marcus Roberts, their life is changed in an instant when Sarah Roberts is killed. Instead of feeling resentment, however, Dylan and Marcus return to the affected area as soon as Sarah is buried to help with the relief efforts. Marcus tells Sinan many times that he believes it was "God's plan" to take Sarah and that he feels no anger about what happened. Sinan, however, who loses no family members to the earthquake harbors feelings of bitterness for the entire book. He becomes despondent when he no longer has a home, job or way to support his family. Though he is alive and healthy, Sinan feels that his life has been snatched from him and cannot be thankful for his surroundings.

The way that Irem views the earthquake is probably the most interesting of all the characters. She realizes that she is actually grateful for the earthquake because it allows her freedom for the first time in her life. She is free from the strict rule of her



parents — her mother in particular — and can roam the relief camp as she pleases. This new taste of freedom makes Irem feel empowered and it leads, at least in part, to her prohibited interactions with Dylan. Irem also views the earthquake as a wake up call to live life to the fullest because it can be snatched away in an instant. It is difficult to tell how much Irem would have blossomed with her new philosophies if she had not made the rash decision to end her life so soon.

Anti-American Sentiment

The way that other countries and cultures view Americans is looked at by the author. Living for many years in Istanbul himself, Alan Drew is able to give an accurate description of the ways that some other people view American culture, specifically Muslim nations. Sinan encapsulates the Anti-American sentiment of Kurdish Muslims the best. Though Sinan has never had a direct negative interaction with an American, he blames the entire nation for the death of his father. When Sinan sees a Jeep driven by the paramilitary, he points out that it was made in America. He says that same thing about the weapons that the paramilitary use against their enemies. His hatred is so great that he does not even want to invite his neighbors to his son's coming of age ceremony, despite the fact that they are his neighbors.

The Anti-American sentiment becomes more specific in the book and targets Christians in particular. Through the act of trying to convert new followers, the Christian relief workers are presented as being sly and dishonest. Instead of preaching openly to the fathers of Muslim families, the Christians speak to the children in an effort to convert them. Though it is likely that the Christians do not see their preaching as a "big deal," it is highly offensive to Sinan and other fathers. The American concepts of freedom of speech and religion are inherent in the workers but do not translate well in the Turkish community and lead to eventual upheaval and retaliation from the families.

Style

Point of View

"Gardens of Water" is written from a third-person point of view with specific focus on the thoughts of Sinan and Irem. Each chapter is guided by the actions of either Sinan or Irem, and their inner thoughts are explored by the narrator. The way that the other characters are perceived is told through the eyes of Sinan and Irem, so readers really only have a definite idea of what Sinan and Irem are feeling at each moment. Alan Drew uses an interesting narrative device by having two protagonists. The exact same events are experienced by both characters but each responds in a vastly different way. It can be assumed that the same events are experienced in completely different ways by the other characters in the novel, though their thought process is not explored. By his choice of storytellers, the author is showing that the joys, tragedies and everyday experiences of life are viewed differently by each individual.

Outside of the inner thoughts of Sinan and Irem, the story is told through dialogue. The words of particular characters are more poignant to readers based on the knowledge they have from previous parts of the book. A good example of this is the character of Kemal. Readers know that he attacks Irem and forces her to kiss him and she narrowly escapes him doing anything else to her. Kemal is also the character who acts like Sinan's best friend and ultimately makes the suggestion that Sinan kill Irem to protect his family name. While Sinan believes that Kemal is being genuine, readers know that Kemal has a darker reason for wanting Irem dead and may have in fact killed her himself if he had the chance. There are other examples where the informed reader is the only one who can put all the pieces of the story together to know the full picture.

Setting

The book is set in Gölcük, a suburb outside of Istanbul on the Marmara Sea on the Armlutu Peninsula in the year 1999. In the opening pages of the book, the Basioglu and Roberts families live in the same apartment building in Gölcük. The Roberts live in the unit above Sinan and his family and the narrator mentions the paper-thin walls that the families can hear each other through. After the earthquake destroys the apartment building, both families end up living in tents in the American relief camp. The families have even less privacy in this setting and the close quarters and prying eyes of neighbors are the source of a lot of conflicts that arise in the book.

Some of the action takes place in Istanbul, which is separated into a Turkish and a European side. Sinan visits the Turkish side to visit a famous mosque and also to take Ismail on a fun day trip before his coming of age ceremony. Irem and Dylan visit the European side of Istanbul when they run away from the camp to be together. The contrast of cultures is described in great detail by the author and Irem immediately feels like she is an alien when she sets foot on the other side. There are several specific



settings, like the beach near the relief camp, the Catholic church in Istanbul, the makeshift mosque at the camp and the super store Carrefour that have significance in the story as well.

Language and Meaning

The book is written in a straightforward style that gives ease to the reading. It is written in English but several Turkish words pop up throughout the novel to give it an authentic feel. The names of the Turkish characters are written with the proper punctuation and the American names are very common — Marcus, Sarah and Dylan. It is clear that the author once lived in the area that he writes about because of his accurate use of real-life places and events to help tell his story. Though the characters are fictional, the world where they live is an actual place and the earthquake that took place was an actual event. The author blends the use of real events and places with his fictional characters in such a way that their lives seem believable.

The way that characters speak in the written dialogue is very specific to each personality. Sinan is very respectful when he talks, even to strangers or people that he clearly dislikes. Dylan uses cuss words and pokes fun at everything around him, having no regard for the customs of people outside of his own culture. Nilufer has a fiery temper and it shows when she speaks to her husband and daughter. Ismail is still innocent and unworldly and his essence of purity is expressed in the questions that he asks his father about Heaven and in the way that he pleads with Irem to return to the family tent. On the opposite end of the spectrum, Kemal is an evil character and the way that he speaks expresses his dark side. The author does a good job of changing speech patterns and word use depending on which character is speaking.

Structure

The book is structured into three parts with a total of 61 chapters. The first section of the book sets up the storyline and shows the first few weeks after the devastating earthquake. The second part of the book begins when Sinan and his family move into the American relief camp. It is the longest section of the book and chronicles the trials that Sinan and his family face in the wake of the deadly earthquake — particularly Irem's affair with the American boy, Dylan, and how it leads to family destruction. The third section of the book begins after Irem kills herself and discusses the aftermath of the tragedy and what the rest of her family does to recover and move forward. The book ends with Sinan, Nilufer and Ismail riding a train away from Gölcük and back to Sinan's homeland of Yesilli to make a fresh start.

The plot of the book is one particular family's struggles as they relate to changing cultures and as it is affected by a natural disaster. The Basioglu family already has troubles before the earthquake that are just exaggerated once they face the despair of homelessness and near-death. Sinan's attempt to rebuild a life for his family, Ismail's attempt to understand religion and Irem's scandalous affair with an American boy all

contribute to the main plot of the story. Subplots include the grief of the Roberts family in losing a wife and mother in Sarah, the rumors that the American workers are trying to convert young Muslims to Christianity and the politics involved in the earthquake cleanup. Other lives are examined but only as they relate to the Basioglu family and what it means for their future.



Quotes

"It will hurt, but that pain will pass and God will know you're willing to endure pain for him. A man has to endure pain, Ismail. But it will pass." — Chap. 1

"He didn't know what it was about fifteen-year-old girls, but he had never known a child so rude to her parents." — Chap. 1

"He wanted to tell her how beautiful she looked, but he didn't want her to start acting pretty. Beauty attracts the wrong type of attention." — Chap. 5

"There were people in the world that never had to face death, except in old age, when death is almost comforting. But they never had to face the violence of a young death." — Chap. 14

"No matter who you were, no matter how weak and helpless, once you were dead you knew what it meant to be with God and the living did not know and the not knowing haunted the living and the haunting was the doubt that God existed at all." — Chap. 14

"The boy looked fine, but some harmful things, he knew, could not be seen." — Chap. 20

"There was no Istanbul, no destroyed town, no camp, just the two of them on the beach — a tiny warm bubble of music and their naked legs together in the cool water." — Chap. 22

"He looked like the people Sinan used to see on television — the ones in the commercials with the unlined, happy faces, the ones who seemed to belong to a special television race who looked nothing like the people he saw in real life." — Chap. 31

"Children recovered from their wounds, they had the energy to do so, but adults carried them around like rocks in a grain sack." — Chap. 32

"If a man has one good eye, he doesn't curse God for not giving him two. He thanks him for sight. It's all a gift. All of life is a gift." — Chap. 41

"If each man was the image of God, then God was a malformed thing, given to weakness and petty selfishness. Yet his son, this boy, seemed the perfection man was supposed to reflect." — Chap. 47

"Our children are not ours. That's our mistake. We think they are. It seems so for a while — a few brief years — but they aren't. They never were." — Chap. 49

"But it is one thing to give up a child who lives and another to lose a child to death. In death she becomes more your child, more a limb of your own body, and her death is also your own." — Chap. 57

"He had thought of murderers as monsters, as profoundly debased human creatures, but now he realized that he was as capable of murder as he was of love." — Chap. 59



Topics for Discussion

Describe the historic Marmara Earthquake of 1999. What role does the earthquake play in the plot of the book? How would the story be different if there was no earthquake? What parts of the story would be the same, even without the earthquake? How do different characters react to the tragedy? What do Sinan's actions in the days following the earthquake say about his family loyalty? How do the Americans take advantage of the tragedy of the earthquake?

Discuss the Basioglu family. How is Sinan different from the rest of the members of his family? Is Nilufer a good mother or too strict? Describe the relationship between Nilufer and Irem. Why does Irem not want to be like her mother? How do Sinan and Nilufer treat their children differently? Why is it that Ismail gets so much attention from his parents? Do you think that Irem would have run away with Dylan if she had a better relationship with her parents? Why do you believe that Irem returns to her family after running away?

Discuss the conflict of religions in the novel. What are the American relief workers accused of doing? How does Sinan explain Heaven to Ismail? What does Dylan say that he is willing to do in order to marry Irem? Describe the friendship between Marcus and Sinan. What is Marcus' response when Sinan asks if he has been "preaching" to Ismail? When Sinan is depressed, why does he refuse to go to the mosque? Why is Marcus not resentful towards Ismail over his wife's death?

Discuss the ways that Irem changes throughout the novel. How does she view her mother? List some of the reasons that she rebels against her parents. Do you believe that Irem is right in being jealous of her brother Ismail? What is it about Dylan that draws Irem away from her core belief system? Why does losing her virginity impact Irem so greatly? In your opinion, did Irem have to kill herself? Was Irem's life unfair? What significance did her head scarf have to Irem's personality?

How does the earthquake affect Sinan? Why does he fall into a state of depression? Why does Sinan blame the Americans for his father's death? Why do you believe that Sinan forms a friendship with Marcus, despite his hatred of Americans? How does Sinan differ from the rest of his family? The rest of his neighbors? In the final pages of the book, the author describes a donkey moving slowly with an old, broken-down cart. How is this donkey symbolic of Sinan? Is Sinan correct to blame himself for Irem's death? Why is he so shocked when her body is pulled from the water?

Irem describes the photos of Sarah Roberts in her youth and how beautiful she looks. What changes about those photos as time goes on? What does this fact say about the role of women who become mothers? What specifically about her own mother did Irem want to avoid? What did Irem wonder about Sarah Roberts when she looked at the photos? Describe Dylan's relationship with his mother. How does it differ from the relationship he has with his father? How are the Basioglu and Roberts families



different? How are they alike? What is the overarching message about families that readers should take from the book?

When Sinan takes a job at the Carrefour, he sees how people outside his small community live and spend money. What are feelings about the customers at Carrefour? How does he feel about his boss? What is Sinan saving his paychecks for? Describe Sinan's work ethic. What benefits did he bring to the grocery store that he co-owned? How does Sinan's work ethic affect the other parts of his life? Do you think that Sinan is too strict with his children and wife? Why does Marcus tell Sinan that he lives in a "different world?"