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A Turkish Summer Day

The best way to pass the heat of a Turkish summer day is horizontally. My son taught me that. Sprawled out on the bed with the fan oscillating on high, I follow his lead. Drifting off to sleep we wait for the afternoon to escape us. Only slightly more than two feet tall, he takes most of the bed. I'm accustomed to that though, he does the same at night. Around three months we abandoned any idea of raising him in an American fashion using a crib, stroller or baby devices meant to make life easier. Our decision was born partially out of theory, but mostly of necessity. Baby devices are hard to come by in Turkey for those without money and we are those without money. But we found a way to get by.

The days of a Turkish housewife and mother are excruciatingly long. Summer is the worst. Maybe it's the same in America but I don't know. I've never been an American housewife. Prepared baby food and clothes dryers that offer aid to the American mom aren't used here. In rural Turkey, there are no playgroups where a mom can get a few moments of deeply needed adult conversation reassuring her that the brain she once had is still there. It didn't turn to whirred peas after so many days, weeks, and months of blowing raspberries and singing "The Wheels on the Bus." There's no *Sesame Street* to offer a much needed familiarity. I've learned the songs from the Turkish children's shows but I don't always understand what we're singing. I'm thankful he's still too young to realize his mommy is that foreigner who mispronounces so many words in his language. I don't speak well but I get by.

For my little Turk and me, location makes summer life even harder. We live at the water treatment plant where my husband is an engineer. Perched atop a sandy mountain in a remote area of Turkey is our lone apartment. There is nothing else. No car to take us to the sea. No place to go for a walk. The small garden out back is inhabited by snakes and scorpions. The dead grass that is their home is no place for a little boy to run and play. The intense heat makes it impossible to go outside except in the early morning and late evenings. Like our neighbor boy upstairs, we've made the balcony our hideout, our magic fortress. It's far from ideal but we get by.

It's just the two of us, passing the day while Baba works. After more than a year, we've learned what it takes to get by. He hands me clothespins as we hang out the laundry. He stirs the flour as we make the bread. He cuddles up next to Mommy during those long naps to help remind her why she is doing all this. Although we are on the other side of the world, my life is not unlike the one my mom knew stuck on an isolated Iowa farm making bread and hanging out laundry assisted by small children. And as my mom did, I will continue to find a way to get as long as my family needs me to.