

lost it. Ellen observes that “suppressed memories jump out at the strangest times” (150).

The most dramatic clash between the first and second generations in Ellen’s family occurred between her younger sister Janet and their parents. Jan was an artist too, a free soul, perhaps the most acculturated member of the family yet at the same time the most eccentric. Ellen writes that when Jan was in high school, “she hit a wall” with their parents over her clothes and hairdo. She was always angry and threatening to move out, which she did as soon as she graduated. But physical distance from her parents proved to be only a temporary solution (146).

It was the 1960s in America and young people were attracted to the Hippie movement, moving out, living free, experimenting, and using recreational drugs, especially in the San Francisco Bay Area. This happened in many Armenian families during that period. But even if parents were not immigrants with the burden of Old World culture and traditions, if they were a little more permissive toward their children’s New World ways and lifestyle, could they prevent the breakdown of moral order and the breakup of the family? Janet led a turbulent life. After she moved out in 1960, she lived with her American boyfriend, an art student, supporting him by working as a waitress. But after ten years of living together, her lover betrayed her. She was devastated. After that, she traveled near and far until she ran out of money, then returned to San Francisco with broken wings (146).

By the late 1960s, the three older children had all moved out and it was the lot of their youngest sister, Lucy, to bear their father’s alcoholism and their mother’s despair.