

## Settling In

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# Settling In

by [rebecca\\_selene](#)

## Summary

Hideko and Sook-hee settle into their new home.



“Sook-hee, we hired Feyge’s family for that.” Hideko took the broom from Sook-hee and leaned it against the wall. “I thought you understood.”

Sook-hee sighed. “Sorry, m—Hideko. It’s habit, that’s all.”

Hideko brushed a lock of hair from Sook-hee’s face. “Are you happy?”

“Yes!” Sook-hee leaned against Hideko, burying her head in her shoulder.

“Good.”

Sook-hee looked up sharply. “Are you?”

Hideko chuckled. “Yes.”

“Good.”

After her family had arrived, Feyge had taken to her role as head of the household staff like she had been born to rule. Hideko and Sook-hee had been happy to step aside and let Feyge manage everything marvelously. In the month they had been living at the new estate, Feyge had assigned roles to everyone (minor ones for the children, to allow them to focus on their studies with the tutors Hideko and Sook-hee had hired), rearranged or gotten rid of existing furniture, ordered new furniture, and been generally a smiling, whirlwind force. She whipped the kitchen into shape along with her sister, Golde, whom Sook-hee had discovered was responsible for the delicious potato pastries she had fallen with love with from the family’s

stall in Shanghai. Sook-hee had spent three days with one of the tutors to learn how to ask Golde, in Russian, to please take over the running of the kitchen and to make the *knishes* as often as possible. With a smile that matched her sister's, Golde had readily agreed.

Now, with *knishes* at the ready and the household settling into as much routine as was possible with so many children running around, the only problem was Sook-hee's boredom.

"We should continue our studies of Russian," Hideko said.

Sook-hee sighed. "We should, but I don't want to today."

"Decide on new curtains for the bedroom?"

"Let Feyge do that, she'll pick better ones than we will anyway." Sook-hee waved a hand dismissively.

"Go for a walk?"

Sook-hee bounded out of Hideko's arms, nearly causing Hideko to lose her balance. "Yes!"

So they went, exploring further around their grounds than they had before, pointing out freshly dug clods of earth that someone, probably Golde's husband Shmuel and his brother Yakub, had prepared for new growths.

Far out of view of the house, they found a small pond and broken-down bridge running over it. "It'll be beautiful once it's fixed and the weeds are gone." Sook-hee sighed dreamily, sitting at the water's edge and skimming a finger over the water's surface.

Hideko sat down beside her. A light breeze rustled their hair, bringing the sounds of chirping insects, singing birds, children chasing each other.

Hideko closed her eyes and breathed deeply. "I am happy," she said, the truth in her voice striking her, and she wasn't sure if she meant those words more for Sook-hee or for herself.

A light weight rested on her hand, and she opened her eyes to Sook-hee's bright, smiling face. Sook-hee leaned in and kissed her, and they stayed joined for a long time, surrounded by nothing but the rippling water, the warm afternoon sun, and the love of their newfound family.



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