



HOME – YOU

SETTING: present day; Tbilisi; a film shoot.

THEMES: trauma and PTSD; love; family; motherhood; fatherhood; forgiveness.

GENRE: psychological drama; family drama.

ADAPTATION: feature film.

SHORT SYNOPSIS:

Nia is an actress. Her life and peace of mind were turned upside down when her husband and daughter endured an earthquake together. Demna, her husband, has severe PTSD as a result of war and his enforced flight. He had run out of the house leaving his daughter behind and that has scarred the child for life. She has developed Resignation Syndrome to the point of stupor. Nia lives with the pain of her daughter's condition, but over time finds a way to forgive her husband when she plays the role of a refugee, which helps her understand his trauma.

CHARACTERS:

Nia – an actress and a mother

Gabriella – the daughter with Resignation Syndrome

Demna – Nia's estranged husband, a refugee from Abkhazia

Nani – Demna's aunt who rescued him from the war zone as a child

MOVIE REFERENCES:

Revolutionary Road (2008) a film by Sam Mendes

Changeling (2008) a film by Clint Eastwood



BOOK SAMPLE

SUMMARY:

Nia, a young actress, lives with her bed-ridden daughter, Gabriella, aged 14. Once, when Nia was on a film shoot, a strong earthquake almost destroyed their family home. At the time, Nia's husband, Demna, and their daughter were at home together. When the walls began to crumble, Demna fled rather than save his daughter, which caused her to develop Resignation Syndrome. Nia severed all ties with her husband and moved out of the unsafe house to become a single mother.

Her new situation obliged Nia to accept supporting roles, and even uncredited parts. Depressed by her constant failure to achieve success, Nia contemplates giving up her career, but allows herself one last try. A famous director is shooting a film about the war in Abkhazia. The heroine is a young refugee who escapes the war zone by taking a perilous cross-country route, losing her baby on the way. At the audition, the director sense a certain connection between the heroine and Nia, so she gets the part. It turns her life around. While she is busy on location, her mother and a carer look after Gabriella.

Nia has a habit of talking to her sleeping daughter, telling her stories of her film shoots, and of Demna. Through her stories we learn that Demna is a refugee, too. When his father was killed in the Abkhazian war, he was a little boy. His aunt, Nani, brought him over a dangerous mountain path to safety.

When Nani visits Nia to see Gabriella, she talks about the day their house was shelled in Sokhumi. Demna as a young boy witnessed the killing of Nani's husband, but miraculously survived himself. This is the first time Nia has heard this story. Her feelings and anger begin to shift. She remembers how at the beginning of their relationship, when they were deeply in love, that Demna expressed his feelings by using an Abkhaz phrase 'I see you well' which is the equivalent of 'I love you'. Her old feelings are rekindled and she tries to understand his reactions as the earthquake struck.

Playing the part of the refugee also affects Nia. While filming the escape route the refugees took over the mountain pass, her attention is drawn to a 13-14-year-old boy walking with his mother. Holding her baby, Nia inches forward, and sometimes crawls, but she can't help looking at the boy which brings Demna's story to her mind. She wants to touch and hug the boy, but her feet refuse to move towards him. She associates this with Demna's childhood, and finally understands the effect this trauma could have had on him. Above all, Nia is devastated by the fact that her character, exhausted, hungry and cold, falls asleep by the fire and in the morning discovers her baby has frozen to death in the night. Weary and sleepless, Nia confuses her role with her reality and loses the ability to differentiate between spontaneous decisions made in life and those required by a film script.

As she dozes off during a break in filming, she dreams of Demna and hears his voice. Soon she realizes that it's not a dream, he really has arrived. The reason is quickly revealed: the feverish Gabriella has high blood pressure, unable to reach Nia, her mother phoned Demna. They rush home together from location. Demna becomes emotional and starts to talk about the earthquake, saying he has no recollection of how or why he fled when the walls began to shake.

The combination of playing the refugee role, Nani's story, and Demna's confession change Nia's heart. Talking again to her comatose daughter, she tells her that when the earthquake struck Gabriella was at home with a little boy, not her father, and that the boy knew the only way to survive was to run away, because one can only escape death by flight.

Nia allows Demna to visit their daughter again. Waking up one day, Nia discovers Gabriella isn't by her side. She looks out of the window to see Demna kneeling by Gabriella's wheelchair. To have a better view she takes her phone and zooms in on the scene to record it. She gasps because she can clearly see Gabriella has opened her eyes wide. She sends the recording to Demna, whom she has now forgiven completely. The final words of the novel are Demna's reply: 'Me, too. I always see you very well.'

ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

A former journalist and TV anchor, Ekaterine Togonidze made her debut in 2011 and was widely acclaimed as one of the most interesting voices in contemporary Georgian literature. Currently, Ekaterine is a tutor in a PR school. Besides her writing and teaching, she video-blogs for various media channels and works as a Marketing and PR manager in the Georgian-American University. She is also involved in various social responsibility projects and cooperates with several NGOs protecting the rights of people with disabilities. Her themes are defined by this work: most of her characters are people with disabilities who are fighting for their rights. She mainly writes about women who live in a misogynistic society and often the victims of abuse.