



# HIDEOUT

**SETTING:** the 1993 war in Abkhazia; present day Tbilisi; Germany from the mid-1990s to the mid-2000s.

**THEMES:** home; identity; processing trauma; war; depression.

**GENRE:** drama; trauma fiction.

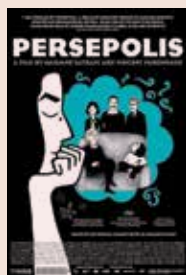
**ADAPTATION:** feature film

## SHORT SYNOPSIS:

The story of Aniko and her family begins in 1992 when, as an 8-year-old girl, she leaves her home in war-torn Abkhazia with her mother and younger brother and embarks on a perilous journey to safety. Her life is full of pain, fear, and injustice, but also love and hope. Taking the perilous road to safety is a scarring experience, but the war leaves deeper wounds. Aniko must encounter difficult and painful challenges: leaving her homeland, adapting to life in a foreign country, fighting to establish herself, and then care for her family. But she also meets her true love, and that turns her orderly life up-side down.

## MOVIE REFERENCES:

*An American Rhapsody* (2001) a film by Éva Gárdos  
*Persepolis* (2007) animated film by Marjane Satrapi and Winshluss



## CHARACTERS:

- Aniko** – a, young female refugee from Abkhazia, now living in Germany
- Nina** – Aniko’s mother who has never recovered from the trauma of the war
- Misho** – Nina’s dead son
- Gu** – Nina’s childhood friend
- Marko** – Aniko’s Serbian boyfriend
- Alle** – the Georgian psychiatrist with whom Aniko has a secret affair, and who is accused of malpractice and the abuse of female patients
- Alzu** – Aniko’s female friend



BOOK SAMPLE

## SUMMARY:

This is the story of Aniko, a young woman who has spent her life on the move. She is a refugee from Abkhazia, an annexed region of Georgia. Aniko had to forcefully relocate from her home in the early 90s after an unfathomably cruel war. The story begins with her return to her homeland. She arrives at the airport and is greeted by her mother's childhood friend whom she calls Gu, who makes a living as a taxi driver. They are both on edge, but are also sentimental and happy. The narrative then takes us back to her troubled childhood and leads us through her life's search for a home.

Aniko has grown up in Germany. Her family can be considered luckier than most as they ended up in a country with a strong economy and sufficient resources to take care of refugees. Although their living conditions are more than decent, the family cannot shake off the shadow of their lost home and the trauma they experienced. Aniko's mother, Nina, is housebound by her depression, spending much of the time sleeping, and barely communicating with her daughter. Flashbacks tell the story of their harrowing and difficult journey to safety after war broke out in Abkhazia. They ran away together with Nina's friend, Gu, but she lost her son on the way, and almost lost her daughter, too.

Aniko gets good attention at school. The director and her teachers try to help her adapt, but she doesn't make friends and feels unwelcome. She also fails to be recognized for who she is as most of the time she is called Russian, which is twice as traumatic for her, given it was intervention by Russia that caused the loss of her home. She even fails to find Georgia on the map during a geography class.

The first time Aniko manages to find a friend is at university. Marko is a young Serb who shares a similar trauma. They become a couple and start to live together, but Aniko cannot shake off a sense of restlessness. As long as she and her family continue to live with trauma, their attempts at happiness seem futile.

Years later, having graduated in psychology, Aniko is working in a Pizzeria in the evenings while by day she is serving her internship at a clinic where she meets an accomplished Georgian psychiatrist with a private practice. Aleksander, whom she calls Alle, is leading research into post-traumatic conditions, and she volunteers to join the study as a patient. Aniko becomes more and more drawn to Alle, who forgets medical ethics and begins an affair with her. This turns out to be yet another tragedy in Aniko's life as a month later she finds out from the director of the clinic, Herr Müller, that Alexander has abused his power and has manipulated other women in the experiment, too.

In the final section of the novel, Aniko is alone, left by both Marko and Aleksander, and challenged by mental disorder. We are shown how she struggles with her sanity helped by the professionals in the clinic. In recurrent flashbacks, she connects with her mother, understands and hugs her, and, embracing her own trauma, finally sees the hope of complete healing.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

Elene Japaridze is a professor of Psychology at the University of Georgia. Over the years she has worked extensively on children's and women's mental health. In 2015, she established her own private psychotherapy practice. Elene also leads the clinical therapy practice at the Mental Hub Clinic, working with individuals and groups of patients. *Hideout* is her debut novel. Since its publication, she has written and published two other books.