



by Mina Hava
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Fiction

For Seka *Für Seka*

review

For Seka is a powerful debut novel about the experiences of a young woman dealing with trauma and loss in the aftermath of the war in Bosnia.

Seka is a twenty-two-year-old woman with Bosnian roots who lives in Switzerland. She is coming to terms with the national trauma of the war in Bosnia, as well as with a difficult family situation and her own experience of breast cancer. Seka's father, a violent man who mistreated her and her mother, has left her an envelope containing photographs. These bring back memories Seka has repressed, which lead her back to her parents' departure from Bosnia for Switzerland, and thence to the discovery of the concentration camp in Omerska, where Bosnian Serbs committed war crimes as recently as 1992.

Seka feels the repercussions of this terror in her family. At the same time, she witnesses the denial of recent history in the interests of capitalism: mining operations have started up again in places where mass murder was committed in 1992, and where its victims are buried. Seka feels her own history has been annihilated.

For Seka is written in the third person, mostly from Seka's perspective, and has a fragmentary, experimental structure that reflects her disturbed state of mind. The book consists of Seka's observations, memories, and thoughts about her life so far. Some of these fragments relate to Serbian atrocities, others talk about Seka's

relationship with her mother and her wider family, and some are highly theoretical. Seka and the author, Mina Hava, have much in common: both were born in 1998, have a Bosnian background and currently reside in Switzerland.

In Switzerland, both Seka and her mother suffer the trauma of her father's violence, while Seka's brother suffers from the absence of a father figure and becomes suicidal. A cousin self-harms and eventually kills himself. Seka attends university, runs, swims, and reads. These activities distract her and keep her from thinking about her painful past and her difficult present. Her cancer treatment becomes a focus that allows her to see how her personal story intersects with that of her country, and, beyond that, with global history. Seka becomes increasingly aware of the connections between colonial heritage, capitalism, environmental destruction, and male violence.

For Seka is a captivating and meaningful read by a talented young author.

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about the author

Mina Hava, born in 1998, studied Global History and Science Studies at the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology in Zurich and Creative Writing at the German Institute for Literature in Leipzig. *Für Seka* is her debut novel.

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