

THE SHORT STORY

Haystack

Tedo Sharadenidze

“It must be somewhere here,” my cousin said, looking around curiously.

“I didn’t know this house had such strong walls,” I said, touching the damp, bare bricks. “I know that my neighbor set fire to it when the owner of the house killed her brother in front of her very eyes. I wonder why she wasn’t arrested?”

“I guess, back in the day, nobody cared about that,” he replied.

“How was he killed?” I asked, even though I already knew.

“With a log.”

We were wandering around the abandoned garden in search of sawdust. We knew that woodcutters often took advantage of the fact that no one would notice if they cut down a tree or two.

We found what we were looking for, a small pile of sawdust swollen with rainwater.

“Where’s the bag?” my cousin asked.

I don’t know why, but he sounded more excited than I was when we found the sawdust. I was in the 8th grade then; my cousin was a year behind. When half my body was covered with leaves and burdocks, I couldn’t think about Keti or the warmth that poured into my neck when she walked past me.

“Give me the bag,” my cousin whispered.

I felt like a villain. Why did he whisper when the house stood in a desolate neighborhood? Probably what we were doing was meant to be kept a secret.

“I forgot to bring one,” I said.

He looked indignant. “Come on, put it in your pockets, and we’ll dry it when we get home.”

A few minutes later, my thighs could feel the wetness of the sawdust. This feeling was nothing like the one I’d experienced while walking on the bridge and listening to Adele’s *Someone Like You*. The lyrics didn’t make much sense then; I just enjoyed the tunes.

I had no idea where I was going to dry the sawdust. I didn’t want my parents to get suspicious.

“Spread it in your backpack. It’ll get dry before Sunday,” my cousin instructed me. “I have a small bottle. We’ll pour some petrol in it, and that’s it. We’re all set.”

That night, I swung in the hammock and listened to Sia’s *Chandelier*. *One, two, three, one, two, three, drink...* I didn’t know that the song was about suicide. I enjoyed the leaves rustling above my head after each swing of the hammock.

Keti lived about 8 kilometers from me. Her family had just bought a house next to my classmate, who once lost his middle finger in a fireworks accident on New Year’s Eve. I remember looking for his finger with a flashlight and hearing his desperate screams: “Don’t step on it! It must be reattached!”

“Come on, hurry up. The haystack caught fire,” my cousin shouted.

“I think we should let them know what’s happening. It’s dangerous. The haystack is close to the barn,” I said worriedly.

“Have you lost your mind? Then they’ll know it was you.”

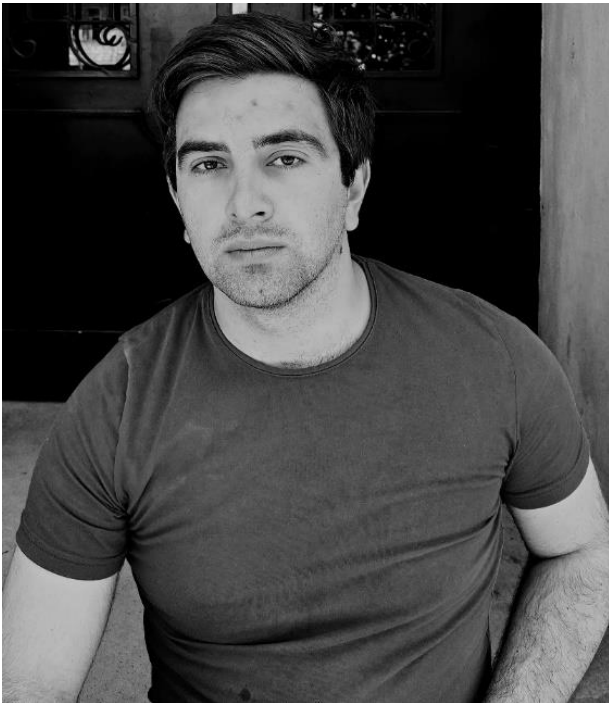
“They’ll still know that it was me.”

The heart-shaped fiery display near the haystack would surely tell on me. The grass near the display was very dry, and the fire spread to the haystack quickly.

“Okay, I’m out of here,” my cousin said and ran away. The noise from the house made me run, too.

I immediately fell out of love.

Author’s Note



Tedo Sharadenidze is a 24-year-old scholar, teacher, and published author of poetry and prose from Batumi in western Georgia. He obtained a Bachelor’s degree in Humanities (English Studies) from Batumi Shota Rustaveli State University. During his undergraduate program, he studied for a

year at the University of Alcalá de Henares in Madrid, Spain, in the Faculty of Philosophy and Letters. After finishing his BA degree, he continued at Batumi State University in the Faculty of Education and Exact Sciences completing the Teacher Certification Program. He then earned a Master’s degree in Humanities (English Linguistics) at Batumi State University. He is a Senior Teacher at School Nike in Batumi, teaching English as a Second Language. He is also the Head of the Department of International English Exams at the EuroLingua European Language Academy.

Tedo’s writings mainly address the themes of alienation, indifference, eccentricity, internal conflict, childhood mirth, and the inability “*to defy what fate has thrown at you.*” He is motivated to write by the desire “*to turn simple, day-to-day occurrences into something magical...something that would inspire others to put pen to paper.*”