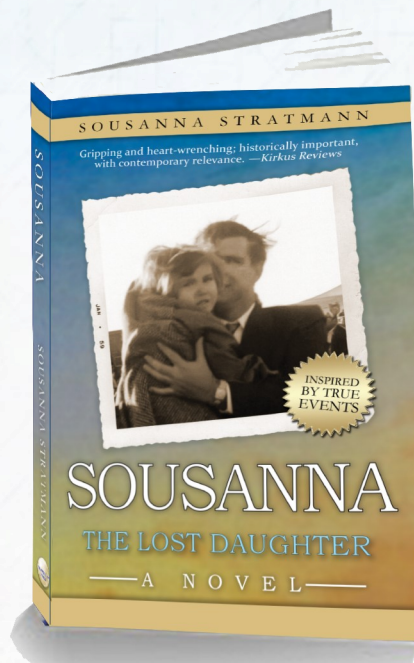


SOUSANNA: The Lost Daughter



By Sousanna Stratmann

Book Club and Readers Guide

Sousanna: The Lost Daughter

Book Club Questions (contains spoilers)

Do you think the multiple perspectives added to the story, or detracted from it? Did reading Sousanna's chapters in her "present" voice add to the emotional impact?

How did your opinion of each major character change over the course of the story? Do you feel equal sympathy with each member of the family? Why or why not?

What character in the book did you most relate to? Why?

Which character would you most like to meet, and why? If you could ask or tell that character one thing, what would it be?

Do you think Sousanna's parents could have done anything differently? Would it be harder to watch your child starve, or to let a stranger take her/him away?

Share a favorite quote from the book. Why did this quote stand out?

Do you think the author told the whole story? Why or why not? If you could ask the author one question, what would it be?

The proverb says that absence makes the heart grow fonder. Do you think Sousanna's missing of her natural family caused her to remember them and their life in Greece as better than it really was?

What aspects of the history were new to you? Did learning about them have any effect on your perceptions of Greece, Germany, WWII, etc.?

How is adoption today different from when Sousanna was adopted? Do you think the added rigorousness in vetting parents is worth the cost of turning off potential adopting families? Why or why not?

Throughout history, education has often taken a back seat to putting food on the table. Do you agree with Niko's decision to pull his children from school to help in the fields? If not, how would you explain your reasons to him?

Although the author did not compare her story to situations today, did current news come to mind as you read? Do you think this book has anything to add to the conversation? If so, what?

Bonus Book Club Questions for a More Personal Conversation

Do you feel that you understand Margaret's attitude toward Sousanna? Discuss their relationship. How was it similar to, and different from, your relationship with your mother?

How do you decide if a risk is worth taking?

Are you a part of, or do you know, an adoptive family? What about someone who has given up a child for adoption? How might these situations be made less hurtful or stressful for those involved?

How much of the animosity among the Greek family members do you think was caused from the circumstances by which Sousanna was separated from her family? Do you think each member was reasonable in his or her reactions? How might some of this animosity have been overcome? Is there a past situation in your family that is still having repercussions? How might it be resolved?

Did Sousanna's experience have any influence on your perception of immigrant children today—particularly those separated from their parents? If so, how?

Common Greek sayings:

You make my liver swell! (You make me sick.)

God ascends stairs and descends stairs. (Everything is possible for God.)

An old hen makes the tastiest broth. (Quality improves with age.)

He won't give her any chestnuts. (He wouldn't cut her any slack.)

I tell it to my god, and he tells it to his tail. (This is said to pass the buck.)

I went for wool, and came out shorn. (I got taken.)

Faith is the power of life.

Save your tears for something that matters.

It's the life!

Greek Recipes

Horta Vrasta, boiled greens, are a staple in any Greek household, as they are inexpensive, easy to prepare, and have a clean, pure taste.

Ingredients

3 pounds curly endive, chard, or chicory (or any combination)

Several quarts of fresh water and 1 cup white vinegar

Several more quarts of fresh water

1 Tablespoon salt

2 Tablespoons extra virgin olive oil

1 lemon's juice

Salt and pepper to taste

Preparation

Remove coarse stems and brown leaves. Fill a large tub or sink with clean water and the vinegar and soak the greens for a few minutes. Swish them around so sand will fall to the bottom. Discard the vinegar water. Rinse the greens well.

Bring a large pot of fresh water to a boil. Sprinkle in the tablespoon of salt. Add the greens, making sure they are submerged completely and boil just until the stems are tender, about 15-20 minutes.

Drain well and place in a bowl.

Toss with extra virgin olive oil, lemon juice, and a bit of salt and pepper to taste. Serve warm or room temperature.

Moussaka

Moussaka is a classic Greek casserole, warm and comforting. It takes time to prepare, but is oh, so worth it.

Ingredients

- 1 (28-oz.) can whole peeled tomatoes, undrained
- 1 pound ground lamb
- 1 Tablespoon extra virgin olive oil
- 1 teaspoon cayenne
- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon ground cinnamon
- $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon ground ginger
- $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon ground allspice
- 6 cloves garlic, finely chopped
- 2 medium yellow onions, finely chopped
- 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ cups canola oil
- 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ pound eggplant, cut crosswise into $\frac{1}{4}$ " thick slices
- 1 pound russet potatoes, cut crosswise into $\frac{1}{4}$ " thick slices
- 6 Tablespoons unsalted butter
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup flour
- 2 $\frac{1}{4}$ cups milk
- 1 bay leaf
- Freshly grated nutmeg, to taste
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup plain Greek yogurt
- 3 egg yolks
- 1 cup grated parmesan
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste

Preparation instructions on next page

Moussaka continued

Preparation

Purée the tomatoes in a blender and set aside.

Heat 1 tbsp. olive oil in a large pot over medium-high heat. Add the lamb, garlic, onions, bell pepper, and spices. Cook, stirring to break up the meat, until the meat is browned and the vegetables are soft, about 10-15 minutes.

Add the reserved tomatoes and bring to a boil. Reduce heat and simmer until thickened, about 30 minutes. Remove from heat and set aside.

Heat the canola oil in a large skillet over medium-high heat. Working in batches, fry the eggplant slices, turning occasionally, until tender, about 5 minutes. Transfer to a paper towel to drain. Working in batches, cook potatoes until tender, about 5 minutes, and transfer to paper towels.

Melt butter in a saucepan over. Sprinkle in the flour and cook, whisking constantly, until pale and smooth, about 2 minutes. Whisking constantly, add the milk in a steady stream. Add the bay leaf and cook, whisking often, until reduced to 2 cups, about 15 minutes. Season with salt, pepper, and nutmeg. Discard the bay leaf. Let sauce cool for 5 minutes.

In a small bowl, whisk together the yogurt and egg yolks to make a smooth sauce.

Heat oven to 400°. Place the reserved potato slices in the bottom of an oval 3-qt. baking dish and season with salt and pepper. Layer on the eggplant slices and season with salt and pepper. Cover with the meat sauce, then pour the béchamel over the top and spread evenly. Sprinkle parmesan cheese over the top and bake until browned and bubbly, about 50 minutes. Let cool 20 minutes before serving.

Souvlaki

Souvlaki is a Greek kabob made with tender cuts of meat. It is often served in a pita with Tzatziki sauce.

Ingredients

- 1 lemon, juiced
- ¼ cup olive oil
- ¼ cup soy sauce
- 1 teaspoon dried oregano
- 3 cloves garlic, crushed
- 4 pounds meat (pork, chicken, or lamb), cut into 1” squares

Preparation

In a large glass bowl, mix together lemon juice, olive oil, soy sauce, oregano, and garlic. Add meat and stir to coat. Cover and refrigerate several hours.

Preheat grill to medium-high heat. Thread meat onto skewers.

Lightly oil grate. Cook, turning skewers frequently, to desired doneness.

Tzatziki Sauce

Ingredients

- 6 oz. plain Greek yogurt
- ½ cucumber, peeled, seeded and minced or grated
- 1 Tablespoon olive oil
- 2 teaspoons white vinegar
- 1 clove garlic, minced
- Pinch of salt

Preparation

Mix yogurt, cucumber, 1 tablespoon olive oil, vinegar, 1 clove minced garlic, and 1 pinch salt together in a bowl. Refrigerate tzatziki sauce for flavors to blend, 1 to 2 hours.

Stifado

Stifado is a Greek stew made with rabbit, lots of onions, and some tomato. It can be made with chicken instead of rabbit.

Ingredients

- 1 whole rabbit (or chicken), cut into pieces
- ½ cup olive oil
- 15 whole, small onions
- 6 whole cloves of garlic
- Flour for dredging
- Salt and pepper to taste
- 2 ½ Tablespoons tomato paste
- 1 cup water
- 1 cup dry red wine
- 3 bay leaves
- 1 cinnamon stick
- Fresh black pepper

Preparation

Pre-heat oven to 350 degrees.

Rinse cuts of meat and pat dry. Lightly dredge in flour seasoned with salt and pepper.

After cutting up your rabbit into pieces, rinse and pat dry and lightly dredge in flour seasoned with salt and pepper.

Add olive oil to a large Dutch oven. Sear meat over medium-high heat, then set aside.

Reduce heat. Add wine and deglaze the Dutch oven, scraping up the brown bits at the bottom of the pot. Add the meat back to the pot, along with remaining ingredients.

Bring to a boil and cover. Place in oven for about 90 minutes.

Remove the lid and place back in the oven for another 30 minutes to evaporate any remaining liquid and brighten the sauce to a warm reddish color.

Greek Potatoes

Ingredients

3 pounds potatoes, peeled and sliced or cubed

3 cups hot water

½ cup fresh lemon juice

1/3 cup + 1 Tablespoon vegetable oil

1 ½ teaspoons dried oregano

2 teaspoons salt

½ teaspoon black pepper

2 cloves garlic, minced

¼ cup fresh parsley, chopped

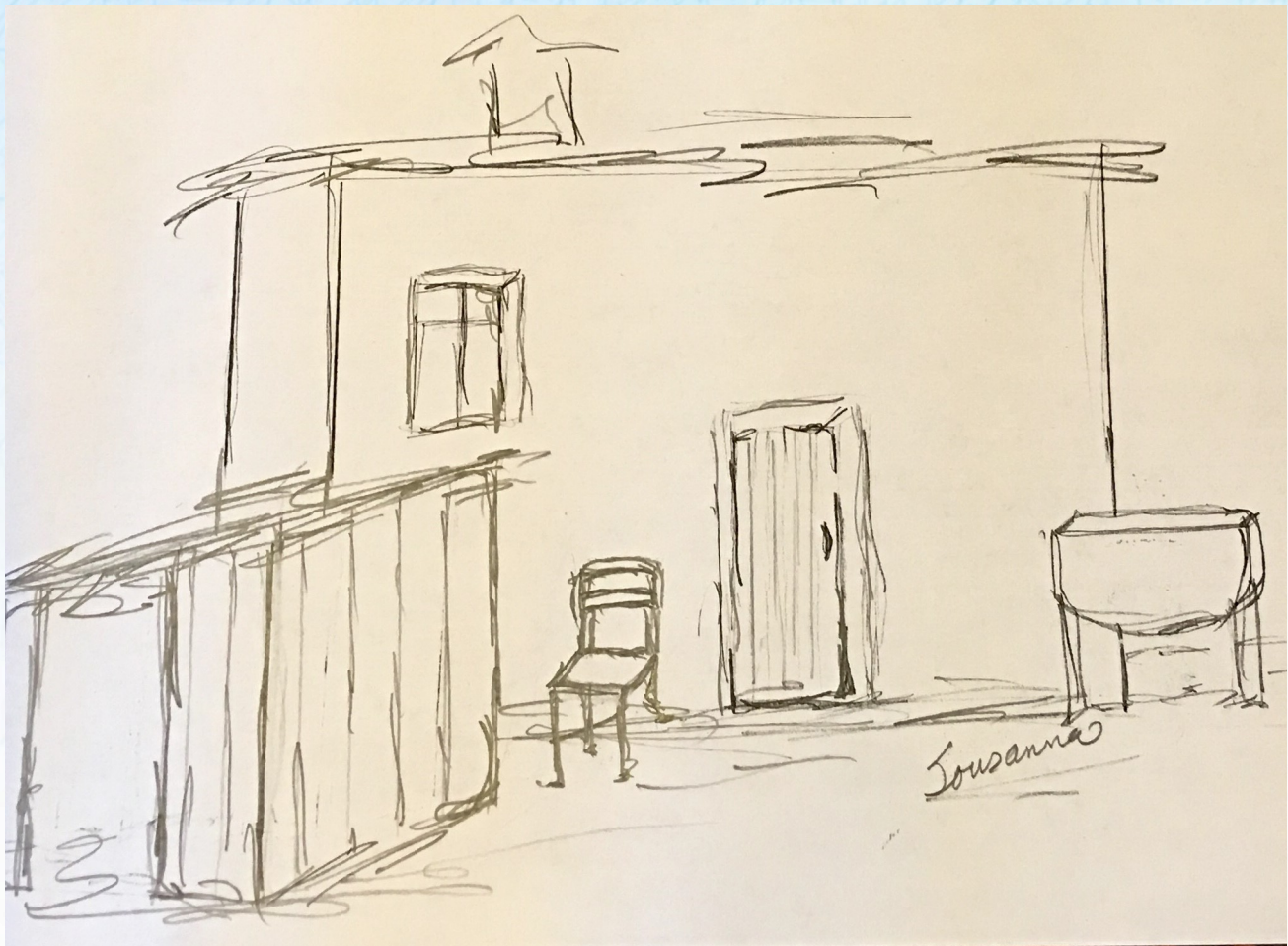
Preparation

Preheat oven to 475 degrees.

Place the potatoes, water, lemon juice, vegetable oil, and olive oil in a 12x18 inch baking dish or roasting pan. Season with oregano, salt, pepper, and garlic.

Roast, uncovered, stirring every 20 minutes, until golden brown and tender, about one and a half hours. Through cooking, add water as necessary to prevent sticking, but allow to evaporate in the final 20 minutes of cooking.

Stir in fresh, chopped parsley. Serve warm.



This sketch drawn by Sousanna depicts her childhood home in Greece as she remembers it. Notice the chair her father sat in outside the door, the washtub she blew bubbles from, and the goat shed Marios built with Nikolas.



This sketch drawn by Sousanna depicts her with her mother that fateful morning.
Notice the missing legs on Sousanna,
a powerful testament to the fact that she did not want to go away.



This is the convent/monastery to which Nektarios' sister went in fulfillment of her vow when he returned safely from the Greek Civil War.