

Nowhere in africa

[Literature](#), [Novel](#)



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Desperate situations create good autobiographical novels. To meet those situations, an individual looks out for desperate remedies. To face worst situations, the best and the bravest within the humanpersonality, surfaces. For the new and unexpected situations solutions are found. The seemingly impossible, becomes possible. New situations not only become tolerable, but acceptable. One comes to enjoy beautiful experiences. The routine and protected life, when suddenly disrupted, finds new vibrant alternatives. The new way of life, gives rise to new views about life. The strange surroundings turn out to be divine blessings. Nowhere in Africa turns out to nowhere in Africa!

The Film:

The autobiographical novel-based movie is about such happenings in the life of Stefanie Zweig. Walter Redlich was a successful lawyer in Germany, when Hitler rode to power. The persecution of Jews in Nazi Germany was gathering speed, and to remain in Germany was to invite grave danger to life and property for the Jews. Walter moved to Kenya. But his wife Jettel and daughter Regina stayed back. This decision of Jettel, shows her love for the

social life in Germany, her reluctance to give up the comforts of city life. She also wishes to keep her daughter under her protective wings.

She doesn't like the dark and backward country Kenya. She is a prominent figure in the social circles in Germany, and she is enamored by the glamour of social life in Germany. As the Nazi persecution goes on unabated, Jettel has no alternative and she joins her husband in Kenya along with Regina. Her worst fears about the life and living in Kenya come true. She is accustomed to live a cozy life in Germany, and she resents the rugged farm labor imposed in her new Kenyan pattern of life.

Another psychological problem surfaces for Walters as he discovers that Germans are not liked by British settlers in Kenya. The young Regina suffers the most, initially. She finds herself lost in the new and unfamiliar surroundings and nothing fascinates this young girl---except their African family cook, Owuv. Gradually, she begins to like the natural beauty of Kenya. A deep friendships prouts between Owuvr and the young child.

Subsequently Germany invades Africa, and the German National Walter is taken to a British internment camp along with his wife and daughter. The beauty Jettel, seduces a British Army Officer, Walter is put in charge of another farm, and Regina is admitted to boarding school. The strength of the movie is that it searches the real Africa, its soul, through the innocent and affectionate view point of the child, which has malice towards none. She is kindled with curiosity to know the ways of the world around her.

The vast gorgeousness of Kenyan plains has tremendous appeal to her. The transformation that takes place in the city -kitten Jettel as a professional farmland Manager, is real and worth noticing. She understands now, and is not fussy. But human nature being what it is, she continues to be culturally insensitive. She came to Kenya to escape torture and certain death at the hands of Nazis, but it is tormenting to watch how she discriminates against the native Kenyans –then where lies the difference between her and the Nazis?

The strength of the film lies in the authentic portrayal of the characters, how they face the ups and downs of the family relationship and the gradual growth and the relevant changes related to its characters. This film is suitable for family viewing. But the short sex scenes and those related to animal sacrifice do not contribute to the overall dignity of the movie.

Nowhere in Africa, an Autobiographical Novel, Stefanie Zweig.

That the movie is based on this best-selling autobiographical novel won the 2002 Academy Award for the best foreign language film speaks about the merit of the novel. The book describes the harsh realities for the Redlich family, moving from a western country, Germany, to the remote farmlands of Kenya. Regina, their five year old daughter has no problems to adjust and adopt the new way of life. Their cook, Owuor is their languageteacher as well. They begin to love the country of their forced choice, but when the war is over, the real problem surfaces. Walter wishes to return to Germany, but once the- Kenya-hater Kettel, wishes to stay back in Kenya. The German

children, on their return to Germany after the War, are strangers in their own land. They have to learn German from the beginning.

Whenever a book is made into a film, changes in many areas are inevitable. The actress shown in then film (Kettel) and the real mother of the novel are diametrically opposed to each other. Many other parts of the film are true to the contents of the novel. The African cook speaking Swahili gives the genuine touch to the conversation. Stefanie wrote the book under strange circumstances. The paper for which she was working closed down and then she joined a tabloid paper in Frankfurt, as Arts Editor. There she did many a film reviews. She admits the limitations of making a film out of a book, when she says, “ So I knew that the film and the book weren’t going to be the same.”

The reality of Walter family returning to Germany after the end of the war has been very well depicted in the book. The great love of Stefanie for her father is also touchingly narrated on more than one occasion in the book. She was asked to do a thing, which she did not like-returning to her own Germany, which was a strange land to her on all counts but she did it for the sake of her love for her father. In a novel the author has lots of freedom to write detailed descriptions, but the director of the film has limitations. Therefore, then film is not the true representation of her life, as compared to the book.

The emphasis in the book is for the story of the little girl Regina (Stefanie), but in the film it shifts to her parents and their marital problems. In a highly complicated novel like Nowhere in Africa, with several characters interacting

with each other and shifting locales, film adaptation is very different from the original text. The undercurrent of love is seen through the characterization of all characters in the novel, that's why it is said, the novel tells something deep within the author. It was her father's advice not to hate. Also the life of 1938 as depicted in Kenya is much different from what is portrayed in the film.

More importance is given in the film to the Walter couple and they talk of their marriage incessantly, sidetracking the real problems of their forced migration. Their intense talk about adjusting and saving their marriage looks unrealistic in the given circumstances. At least that is not what is described in the novel. The family escaped from Nazi Germany certainly not to settle scores about their marriage relationship, they had other priorities in life, according to the book. But the film ignores it. That is moving from the tracks of reality.

From the point of view of generating revenue for the film, the leading lady of the novel has got to be glamorous, she has to have some peculiar characteristics either positive or negative, and Jettel has been accordingly shown as a cold, calculating and a woman filled with vanity. The book views the qualities in a different perspective. She is not at all that had as shown in the film. To be unhappy is one thing. But what is chiseled in the film is no justice to Jettel.

The film presents a more luxurious pattern of life than what is depicted in the novel. As a child Regina was very poor and she could not afford the costly costumes shown in the movie-that is not what is shown about her at that

age. But the Regina of age 12 in the book and the movie are one and the same. Her deep love for Ouwor is shown realistically in the movie as compared to the book.

The book was hailed as the Society's best juvenile title in The Netherlands. So also, the movie, whose main focus is on the parent's relationship. She wrote the book out of respect for her parents. The strong influence of her father played a big part in shaping of the book, which the film could not show in detail due to the limitations of time and other related factors. The actress does not convey the real Jettel in the book. Besides being tough, she was a charming human being also. You see and experience the lasting human love between her and the family cook Ouwor. That's a great characterization in the book.

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