

SAMPLE

REVERSIBLE

Based on a true story

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SAMPLE

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AUTHOR'S NOTES

“Life can only be understood backwards; but it must be lived forwards.”

— Søren Kierkegaard

We move forward through life without clarity, without certainty, and often without understanding the meaning of the choices we make. Each decision is taken in partial darkness, guided by instinct, hope, fear, and desire. Only later—sometimes years later—do the fragments assemble into something recognizable, and we can see the shape of our lives.

When we look backward, we recognize the cost of the things we gained, the things we left behind to move forward, and the moments that silently shaped everything that followed.

Understanding belongs to the past.

Yet life refuses to wait there.

This book explores that tension.

How to read this book

This book can be read in two directions.

Begin as you normally would, from the first page to the last.

When you reach the final page, do not stop. Start again from that page, and continue by turning the pages in the opposite direction—from right to left.

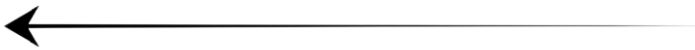
No special effort is required. Simply follow the pages.

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CHAPTER I



THE END



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The last light of the day carried a kind of mercy. In the park, the air grew gentler. Ada lingered near the fountain, watching the water catch the light and scatter it into wavering shards, and I stood just behind her.

“You’re nervous,” she murmured without looking at me.

“I write novels. And I teach literature,” I replied. “I’ve spent years looking for the right ending.”

She turned then, and I reached into my pocket.

The red velvet box felt heavier than it should have. I opened it and knelt on the pale gravel beneath me.

“Ada,” I said, the ring glinting softly, “marry me.”

Her breath stilled. She looked at the ring, then at me, and something in her expression softened into certainty.

“Yes.”

Simple. Immediate. Entire.

I slid the ring onto her finger. It fit.

She pulled me to my feet and stepped into me without hesitation, her arms wrapping around my shoulders. I held her tightly, aware of the tremor in my hands.

She leaned back just enough to look at me.

“Otto, you’re trembling.”

“From happiness,” I whispered.

And it was true.

In that moment, the future opened with impossible promise.

Among all the books I would write, I wanted this story to belong to her—to the one I loved, who had always been there for me. I saw the pages ahead like a bright corridor, and I saw her walking through it with me, patient and luminous.

We stood there longer than necessary, the world continuing politely around us.

I believed—utterly—that I had made the right choice for my life.

This was not a climax.

This was only a new beginning.

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It was March 12th, 2021. In Vilnius, the weather held its usual cold for that time of year. Though spring was approaching, winter still seemed stubbornly unwilling to leave the city.

I was dressed as I often was in those days—casual at first glance, more carefully arranged on closer inspection.

A gray coat rested open over a dark waistcoat, its soft folds stirring faintly each time the breeze passed through the park. Beneath it, my crimson checked shirt held its careful order, the burgundy tie set straight with almost ceremonial precision. My trousers fell in a clean line to brown shoes worn just enough to soften their shine.

To me, details had always spoken before words did—that a collar, a cuff, a shade of fabric could suggest intention, discipline, even destiny.

Standing there in the park, I felt assembled into the man I always wanted to be. A recognized and famous writer. There was a deliberateness in the way I carried myself, as though I were presenting myself to a future audience not yet present.

Ada, beside me, had a presence that did not need arrangement.

Her blouse was a gentle green scattered with small white petals, partly hidden beneath a cream wool coat that shaped her silhouette with quiet elegance. A thick white scarf rested around her neck, softening the severity of the cold. A slender silver bracelet circled her wrist as she moved her hand.

She wore sleek ankle boots beneath tailored dark trousers that fit her with natural grace. A structured brown suede tote rested against her side, and her wool-felt hat echoed it in tone and color. The brim cast a soft shade across her face, so that her eyes seemed to appear gradually whenever she lifted them. A few strands of hair had slipped free beneath the hat, resting against her cheek.

Where I seemed arranged, she seemed effortless.

Where I suggested intention, she suggested ease.

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We stayed in the park for a moment.

Somewhere beyond the trees, the bell from the nearby cathedral's clock tower rang—half past six. Its sound carried lightly through the evening, indifferent to whatever waited ahead of us.

"What are you thinking about?" she asked, laughing.

I glanced at her and shook my head.

"Nothing."

Ada slipped off her silver bracelet and fastened it around my wrist.

"So you don't drift too far," she said.

I looked down at the bracelet. "You think I would?"

"Sometimes," she replied. "You look at life the way you look at your stories—like you're already somewhere else inside them."

"Not now," I assured her. "I'm exactly where I want to be."

She looked at me—the way she does when she suspects I am observing instead of simply being.

"You're already turning this moment into a story."

"Maybe," I admitted. "It deserves one."

She narrowed her eyes playfully.

"Then don't make it dramatic. Keep it beautiful."

I smiled.

"I'll try."

She seemed unconvinced.

"Promise me something."

"Anything."

"Don't fall in love with the story of us more than us."

I laughed, certain that love and story were indistinguishable.

"I promise."

The word left my mouth easily.

We began walking along the path that curved around the fountain. Our hands remained joined, our shadows stretching ahead of us as though eager to arrive before we did. The sky softened, the light easing into something dimmer, the day loosening its hold, as if reminding us that even beautiful hours must yield.

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Around us, the park began to empty, voices lowering, footsteps fading, as everything was quietly called home.

Known as Bernardine Garden, the park was not especially large, but it carried itself as though it contained more than it did.

A curved gravel path moved gently around a central fountain whose water rose and fell with elegance. Benches followed the curves of the paths, placed with careful intelligence. Linden trees along the edge spread their branches wide enough to gather the last of the afternoon light. Beneath them, shadows formed slowly, like thoughts assembling.

There were always people, but never enough to intrude. A woman reading. A man walking a small, impatient dog. Students crossing diagonally through the grass. Conversations drifted and dissolved before they became distinct.

What I had always admired about this park was its restraint. It did not attempt to astonish. It allowed space. It let moments arrive without framing them too tightly.

Light behaved differently there. It did not flood. It settled. It chose certain surfaces—the edge of the fountain, the worn wood of the benches, the low branches of the linden trees—and rested there as if aware of its own significance.

Toward evening, the sky held what remained of its light—pale gold fading into blue, softening outlines and blurring certainty. The gravel path darkened first. The fountain seemed to recede as the light dimmed, its surface holding the last reflections in soft fragments.

If one stood still long enough, the park began to feel separate from the rest of the city. Not entirely public, not entirely private—just a place where people arrived with thoughts they did not carry elsewhere.

And for that reason, it became the kind of place people returned to without fully knowing why.

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When I arrived at the park, Ada was standing near the fountain. As I walked toward her, I found myself thinking again about the way I had always understood life.

I had always believed that a life should amount to something measurable.

Even as a boy, I distrusted obscurity. Not poverty, not hardship—obscurity. The idea of moving through the world without leaving an imprint unsettled me more than failure ever could. Failure, at least, suggested an attempt.

And I wrote because somewhere inside me, long before anything was published, I had decided I would become a famous writer whose name people would speak of.

I had become a teacher of literature because it allowed me to remain among stories, to the idea that words could survive the people who wrote them. I told my students that language was the closest we came to defeating time. They nodded, asked questions, scribbled notes, and returned to lives that would not remember my sentences.

But I remembered them. Every unwritten page pressed against me with unspoken accusation.

The drive was not loud in me. It did not roar or boast. It settled. It waited. It studied the room. It calculated how to remain after the room emptied.

When Ada looked at me, she saw a man who loved words. She did not yet see how urgently I needed them to love me back.

I did not chase admiration for vanity. I chased it for evidence—proof that I had been here, that I mattered beyond the circumference of a single life.

Perhaps that was the most dangerous kind of hunger: the one that disguised itself as purpose.

If I was honest, even then, I could feel it—
a persistent insistence that what we were living was not enough unless it became something others could witness.

And I had never been certain where that instinct would one day lead me. But that evening, I was certain of one thing: I wanted a future with her.

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Unlike me, Ada never measured her days in attention or anticipation.

She works as a librarian in the national library near the parliament, by the Neris river. The building is large, its pale stone and glass, almost austere at first glance. Inside, the space opens into a calm that seems made for thought. She says she likes it for that—for the way its architecture makes it feel less like a library and more like a sanctuary for books.

She reads everything. Philosophy, poetry, obscure novels that have not been borrowed in years. She remembers passages not to recite them, but to understand the minds that shaped them. When she speaks, it is never to impress. It is to refine a thought until it rests clearly between us.

I am aware of my volume. She is aware of her stillness.

Where I stretch toward what might be, she anchors herself in what is. If I speak about legacy, she asks about dinner. If I stay up chasing a paragraph, she opens a window to let the night air cool my urgency.

I do not confuse her simplicity with smallness. Ada is not simple because she lacks depth. She is simple because she does not complicate what is already sufficient.

Meeting her felt less like discovery and more like correction.

She did not resist what moved me forward. She balanced it. She did not question my desire to be remembered. She only asked whether it required being absent from the present.

We shared many routines together. The park was part of them. After her shifts ended, we would walk there instead of going straight home—past the fountain, along the curved paths, beneath the trees that gathered the best light before evening. The place felt familiar and intimate at the same time. It became ours without declaration.

That is why I chose it as the place for my proposal.

I arrived early that day, as evening began to gather, following the same usual path.

Ada was already waiting for me.

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