THE LIVES YOU NEVER LIVED



The memory of things that never happened.

THE FED SAGA

FERDINANDO FREGA

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THE FED SAGA — 23

For much of our lives we believe memory is an archive.

A place where we keep what happened.

Photographs.

Faces.

Dates.

Conversations.

Places.

A kind of warehouse of the past.

Then comes a stranger discovery.

Memory does not keep only what happened.

It also keeps what never happened.

And this is where the matter gets interesting.

Because human beings don't live in a single story.

They live in many stories at once.

The one they have lived.

And the ones they could have lived.

The university they did not attend.

The city they did not move to.

The person they did not call.

The plane they did not take.

The company they did not start.

The door they did not walk through.

The child they did not have.

The risk they did not run.

The answer they did not give.

Missed chances have a curious quality.

They don't age.

A real memory is slowly worn away by time.

An imagined memory is not.

It stays perfect.

Unchangeable.

Intact.

Because it was never submitted to reality.

The person you really loved can disappoint you.

The person you never had stays perfect.

The career you chose has problems.

The career you did not choose keeps looking brilliant.

A lived life produces friction.

An imagined one does not.

That is why many human beings end up negotiating with ghosts.

Not the ghosts of the past.

The ghosts of possibilities.

Alternative versions of themselves.

Parallel existences.

Biographies never written.

Sometimes I think Wall Street works in a similar way.

Markets don't trade only reality.

They constantly trade futures that don't exist yet.

Possibilities.

Probabilities.

Scenarios.

Expectations.

And when a possibility dies, it does not really disappear.

It leaves a trace.

Just as it happens to people.

Every choice produces two effects.

It creates one road.

And eliminates a thousand others.

We celebrate the road we chose.

We rarely reflect on the roads that vanished.

And yet they go on existing somewhere.

Not in the world.

In the mind.

It is a particular form of memory.

The memory of what did not happen.

One of the most powerful.

Because it cannot be verified.

No one will ever be able to prove your life would have been better.

No one will ever be able to prove it would have been worse.

The alternative future is immune to facts.

And for exactly that reason it has an enormous allure.

Reality has to deliver results.

Possibilities don't.

Possibilities can stay perfect forever.

Maybe that is why regret is one of the most stubborn emotions.

It is not about the past.

It is about a future that was never born.

A person rarely suffers for what he did.

More often he suffers for what he did not do.

For the question he did not ask.

For the journey he did not take.

For the risk he did not accept.

For the courage he did not find.

Over time I began to notice an important difference.

Real memories teach.

Imagined memories seduce.

The first contain experience.

The second contain infinite possibilities.

And infinite possibilities are very hard to abandon.

Because giving up a dream that failed is simple.

Giving up a dream never tested is almost impossible.

The doubt always remains.

Maybe.

Maybe I should have.

Maybe it would have gone better.

Maybe it would have gone worse.

Maybe.

The word maybe has built more imaginary worlds than any religion.

The more I watch life, the more I realize that maturity does not consist in erasing these worlds.

It consists in living with them.

Without being governed by them.

Accepting that every choice inevitably creates a graveyard of possibilities.

Every yes contains many noes.

Every life contains many unlived lives.

Every identity contains many abandoned identities.

And maybe that is as it should be.

Because a person is not defined only by what he achieves.

He is also defined by what he gives up.

Identity is a selection.

Not an accumulation.

That is why time is so important.

Not because it creates possibilities.

Because it closes them.

And by closing them it makes visible who we are becoming.

In the end there remains a question no central bank can measure.

No market can price.

No algorithm can calculate.

A question that belongs only to memory.

Which of the lives you never lived is still living inside you?

Ferdinando
THE FED SAGA — 23
Human Behavior as Story

We don't sell books. We build relationships.