

APPENDIX

SYNOPSIS OF ZDENA FRÝBOVÁ'S *FOR UNKNOWN REASONS* (1988)

The plots of the other two examples of fiction which I analysed in detail, that is, Radek John's *Memento* (1986) and Tereza Boučková's *Indian Run* (1991 and 1992), was possible to summarise sufficiently briefly in the main body of the text. That leaves *For Unknown Reasons* as the only text which may need summarising at this place to avoid possible confusion in the twists of the plot.

The novel frequently uses flashback, and the narrator feels compelled always to give the whole story when a new character is introduced, thus the more than five-hundred-page novel abounds with diversions and subsidiary story-lines. The main story-line can be summarised as follows: The heroine, Anka Berková, grows up in an affluent environment, but lacks the warmth of the home, because her parents (who are a perfect match for each other), are too busy to spend time with her. She seeks surrogate parents: a widowed neighbour; the French family of a famous biochemist with whom she spends some time in France; and Marek, a successful surgeon and a former suitor of Anka's mother's sister. At the age of nineteen, Anka loses her parents to a car accident. In a state of shock, she is being taken care of by Marek. Marek is twenty-three years older and with somewhat fatherly feelings toward Anka. Anka moves to his flat and they live as good friends for several months, before a romance develops and they start a relationship. Several more months later, Anka suddenly leaves Marek with a note of explanation that she began to date someone else. Marek is hurt, but does not contact Anka. The reader is told that Anka is somehow deeply hurt by Marek, and she is obviously *not* dating anybody else. Hints are dropped throughout the text that her pain made her sexually unresponsive to men.

She graduates in biochemistry and begins to work in a prestigious research institute. On a holiday, which she plans to spend alone, she meets Miloš, her institute's director and fifteen years her senior, who is also alone. His reasons for being single are very different from Anka's, as the reader by then knows from the story of his life by means of one of the flashbacks. He grew up in a traumatising family environment with a domineering and possessive mother. This, the reader is told, caused his insecurity, impotence, and warped his character. He becomes the novel's villain.

Both Anka and Miloš suffer from the pressure of the environment to have a partner of the opposite sex. Miloš does not tell Anka his true story, but makes up a narrative of a dead girlfriend, and proposes marriage by agreement to Anka as a solution for both of them to escape the social pressure. They marry and live happily and asexually for ten years and seven months until Miloš' death of heart attack.

The heart attack is brought about by extreme stress which Miloš imposed on himself, but Anka blames herself for it. The original cause is that Miloš suddenly takes it to his head that he is going to lose Anka, because he is not a successful scientist, like other men around her. He begins to experiment feverishly, but unsuccessfully. In a desperate effort to produce results, he switches research material approved for testing on humans for his, so far unapproved, and three patients die after

its administration. Anka has no knowledge of any of this. The case is investigated by the criminal police and Miloš does his best to divert their attention from himself and keep them in error.

At the same time, Anka learns by coincidence that twelve years ago she left Marek because of a mistake. She believed he was taking bribes from a patient, and could not continue to live with someone who compromised his moral values. Now that she discovers it was a misunderstanding, she asks Miloš for a divorce, in order to terminate their marriage of convenience and set right the wrong she did to Marek. This is a serious blow to Miloš's security and, also, arrives at the height of the crisis at the institute. In an attempt to save Anka for himself, Miloš resorts to a false story that Marek is not going to live for much longer anyway, because he has terminal cancer.

Anka leaves the house enraged at Miloš's opposition to a divorce and hurt because of Marek's supposed illness. She wishes that Miloš's weak heart failed in the hot bath he went to take. Her rage subsides shortly and she returns home after a brief walk, but Miloš indeed dies in the meantime. She takes the blame for his death and falls ill because of all the stress. Nevertheless, she does not regret Miloš's death.

She does not go to Marek immediately for fear of breaking down in front of him and revealing his condition to him. Nevertheless, a week after Miloš' funeral, she gathers enough strength to enquire about Marek's health from other people and finds out that he is in sound health. The novel ends with Anka coming to see Marek again. It happens at the point in Marek's life when he is planning to marry another woman, Kamila, but Anka's arrival changes his intentions and he proposes to her to move in with him.