

Synopsis: Fragments for Those Who Kept Living

Some people keep living long after they have drifted away from themselves. They continue working, answering messages, caring for others, and saying they are fine, while quietly learning how to disappear without ever leaving.

In *Fragments for Those Who Kept Living*, Noel H. Hodgson explores these silent forms of survival: the exhaustion of existing, the loneliness that becomes familiar, the fear of receiving something good, the need to make oneself smaller in order to be loved, and the impulse to abandon a connection before the other person has the chance to do it first.

Through intimate, deeply human, and unguarded prose, these fragments do not attempt to turn pain into a lesson or present a life that has been perfectly rebuilt. They speak of wounds that still carry weight, friendships that offered companionship without trying to rescue, writing as a way of staying, and the small returns that occur when a person stops treating himself like his own enemy.

This is not a book about overcoming everything. It is a book about remaining here without denying what happened; about learning to inhabit your own life without apologizing and recognizing that, even after so much silence, there may still be a part of you willing to return. Not completely. Not without fear. But enough to say: **I was there too, and I am still here.**

I Left Before They Could

Sometimes I have left before anyone had the chance to ask me to stay.

Not always with a goodbye.

Not always with a door closing.

Sometimes I left by replying less often. By allowing a conversation to grow cold. By convincing myself that it did not matter that much. By turning distance into a decision that seemed peaceful, when in truth, something inside me was already preparing for the loss.

For a long time, I thought it was indifference.

I thought certain things simply stopped mattering to me.

People.

Connections.

Possibilities.

I thought that was just who I was.

That there was a part of me too tired to insist, too proud to ask, too accustomed to being alone to fight for something that might not stay anyway.

But now I am not so sure.

Sometimes I think I called it indifference because I did not know it was an old form of fear.

Because I did not always leave when I stopped feeling.

Sometimes I left when I began to feel too much.

When someone moved closer in a way that could begin to matter. When a conversation started to carry weight. When a presence began to occupy a place I could no longer pretend was accidental.

That was when something inside me pulled back.

Not suddenly.

Not violently.

Only a little.

Enough that the other person would not notice at first.

Enough that I could tell myself I was not running away.

I was only busy.

I was only tired.

I was only letting things become whatever they were meant to become.

I have used that sentence many times.

As though life always knew where it was going when I did not want to admit that I was letting go of the wheel.

Letting things become whatever they are meant to become can sound wise.

Sometimes it is.

But at other times, it is an elegant way of giving up without admitting that you were afraid to try.

I have done that.

I have remained still while something drifted away.

I have watched a conversation lose its warmth and pretended it did not hurt. I have left messages unanswered with the excuse that I would reply later, even though somewhere inside me I knew that later was a room where many of my possibilities would slowly die.

I have allowed people to become distant, not because they did not matter to me, but because I was afraid to reveal how much they might come to matter.

That is difficult to admit.

Because there is a particular kind of shame in recognizing that you abandon people too.

Not in the same way.

Not always cruelly.

Not always with the intention of causing pain.

But you abandon them.

Sometimes you abandon them first so you never have to stand there again and watch someone else decide to leave.

Sometimes you abandon them quietly, with good manners, brief replies, and a calmness that resembles maturity but is only a defense underneath.

I know that calmness.

I have used it.

I have mistaken it for dignity.

I told myself: I will not beg.

I will not insist.

I will not chase anyone.

I will not place myself somewhere they can see how much I need them.

And there was some truth in that.

You should not lose yourself trying to convince someone to stay.

You should not have to beg for someone's presence.

You should not call it love when it only responds after you have broken loudly enough to be noticed.

But there is another truth too.

Sometimes I confused not begging with not trying.

I confused dignity with absence.

I confused protecting myself with leaving before I knew whether I truly needed to go.

Things are lost that way too.

Not every loss happens because someone abandons us.

Some losses happen because we begin behaving as though the abandonment has already been decided.

As though we are merely bringing the ending forward.

As though closing the door from the inside will hurt less than waiting for someone else to close it from the outside.

I do not know whether it hurts less.

I do not think it does.

It only hurts differently.

It hurts with a kind of false control.

With the bitter peace of someone who says: I chose this.

Even when, deep down, there was not much of a choice.

Even when, deep down, all you did was obey an old wound.

A wound that learned to read signs too early.

A change in tone.

A shorter reply.

A busy day.

A pause.

A word that did not arrive with the same warmth.

And then, before asking, before waiting, before allowing the connection to have a human explanation, something inside me would begin to pack.

Not physical belongings.

Only presence.

Possibility.

Availability.

Hope.

I left in pieces.

First, I stopped sharing.

Then I stopped asking.

Then I stopped imagining.

Then I said I was fine.

And by the time the distance finally became visible, I had already been living there for a long time.

There is sadness in that too.

Because a person can spend years wishing someone would stay and then, when someone seems willing to come closer, have no idea how to remain without feeling endangered.

A person can want companionship while distrusting the place that companionship begins to occupy.

A person can long to be chosen and then, when someone chooses to come closer, behave as though he never noticed the gesture.

Not because it means nothing to him.

But because believing in it would mean becoming exposed again.

And there are forms of exposure the body remembers even when the mind is trying to be brave.

I do not want to justify all of my absences.

I do not want to turn my fear into a perfect explanation.

I know I may have caused pain too.

I know someone may have experienced my distance as rejection, coldness, or a lack of interest.

I know there may have been people who did not understand that I was not only leaving them.

I was leaving the possibility of being abandoned again.

But harm does not always ask where we came from before it reaches someone else.

I have had to learn that too.

A wound can explain.

But it does not always absolve.

A defense may have saved me once, but now it can also leave me alone in a way I no longer want to call destiny.

Because perhaps I was not born to leave first.

Perhaps I only learned how.

And if I learned that, perhaps I can learn something else.

Not immediately.

Not as though one day I can simply decide to trust and be done with it.

That would be a lie.

There are still moments when I feel that retreat beginning inside me. That voice telling me: do not write. Do not ask. Do not show interest. Do not get excited. Do not let anyone see that something matters to you.

There are still days when losing something quietly feels safer than risking asking for clarity.

But something inside me is growing tired of anticipating endings.

Something inside me is beginning to wonder how many things did not end on their own, but were pushed toward an ending by my fear.

And that question hurts.

But it also opens something.

Because if I once left before they could, perhaps one day I can stay before assuming they will.

Perhaps I can breathe a little longer.

Wait a little longer.

Ask instead of disappearing.

Say: this matters to me, even though I am embarrassed that it matters.

Say: I do not know how to stay well, but I am trying not to run.

Say: if you feel far away, I do not want to turn myself into distance before knowing whether there is still something here.

I do not know how to do that every time.

I do not know whether I will learn soon.

But I want to learn.

I want to stop punishing new connections for old abandonments.

I want to stop treating every closeness like a farewell being prepared.

I want to stop leaving places where perhaps I could still have stayed.

I left before they could.

Many times.

Because of fear.

Because of habit.

Because of a wound that learned to close doors with very polite hands.

But now, although it still frightens me, I want to try something different.

Not chase.

Not beg.

Not lose myself.

Only stay long enough to discover whether, this time, the ending had not been written yet.

Author's Note

Each of my books begins with a question, a wound, a memory, or a part of life that needed to find its way into words. I do not write to offer perfect answers, but to approach with honesty those emotions we often feel and do not always know how to express.

I invite you to enter these stories without rushing, to discover the different voices, characters, and fragments that shape my literary world. You may not recognize yourself on every page, but perhaps you will find a sentence, a scene, or an emotion that stays with you and reminds you that someone else has been there too.

Each book opens a different door.

This one may be the first.

Welcome to my work.

Noel H. Hodgson