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CHAPTER 11 · STILL WORTH IT

The Man Who Did the Same Thing Every Day

A story about a life well chosen

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There was a man in the village who had done the same thing every day for forty years.

He woke before light. He walked to the bakery he had owned since he was twenty-three. He started the ovens. He made the bread.

Every day. The same bread. The same ovens. The same walk in the dark.

The summer Ana visited her grandparents, she noticed him. He was old, she thought — maybe sixty-five or seventy — and he always seemed to be in a good mood, which she found surprising given how repetitive his life seemed.

One morning she stopped at the bakery while he was arranging the loaves in the window.

"Don't you get bored?" she asked. "Doing the same thing every day?"

He didn't seem offended. He thought about it genuinely. "No," he said.

"Should I?"

"I don't know," said Ana. "It seems like it might get old."

He handed her a small roll — the ends were always sold cheaply at this hour — and leaned on the counter. "Tell me something. Have you ever eaten the same breakfast twice?"

"Yes," she said.

"And yet here you are."

She frowned. "That's different."

"Is it?" He straightened up. "I make bread for this village. I have made bread for people who are now grandparents, who come in with their grandchildren, who come in with their own children. The baker's daughter who married the butcher on the other street — I taught her to bake. Three of the young men who have their own bread businesses in the city worked here first." He picked up a loaf. "Every day the same thing. But every day it feeds someone. Every day it is new to the people eating it."

Ana ate her roll on the way back to her grandparents' house and thought about what he'd said.

She'd been taught that a good life meant variety. New places, new achievements, new challenges. She still believed that, mostly.

But she thought there might be another kind of good life — the kind that chose one thing and gave it everything, year after year, without apology.

*Some people find their life in constant change. Others find it in
deep devotion to a single thing. Both are whole lives.*

N O I R A C I E L

A companion to “Still Worth It”

Contributions help fund The Invisible Roots Scholarship —
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