

# The odd sea



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

The 'The Odd Sea' by Frederick Reiken is not the type of book that changes your life forever. Nor is it the definitive book you will cherish for the rest of your life. It is the type though that is kept on the corner of the bookshelf, read on an idle day, when there is not much choice but rather a leisure reading you can finish in a matter of hours. It is unimposing and unintimidating as any light read should be. But it contains a subtle reality that impresses upon its reader a sense of the unimaginable yet consequently unavoidable. The moment that the novel is finished, it is one that like love itself, is unforgettable. It transforms much like the characters in the novel. It gives off a sense of how lives can be altered through art, both for the reader and for the characters within the story.

The narrative is told through the eyes of Philip Shumway, whose years-long quest to find his brother led him to the craft of writing. People deal with grief differently, some wallow in despair, others dedicate themselves to work, there are those who wish to continue remnants of the lost ones and then there are others who content themselves in letting out through writing. It becomes the outlet which enables some people to face the reality of desolation.

This was the case of Philip and the people that surrounds him. With the lost of his brother, he was able to find the healing therapy that writing can bring. Then there is their father who dedicates his time to the perfection of the seemingly simple craft of carpentry to forget his sorrows. The way he oversees his art of timber framing is flawless. At one point, Philip recognizes his father's talent as an artist among all of the members of the family. And then there is Ethan's girlfriend Melissa, who takes up painting with much intensity to disregard the pain of losing young love. All of them found in art

the capacity to go on living though with a whole that can never be filled. The rift that the tragedy, at the very least, be given brief moments to be unnoticed the broken ties that could never be completely mended but.

This is art in its highest form. More than anything, it should be able to transport us and change us as it lets us experience its transformative facility. It presents a polarity of the effects that the event brought to Philip. His loss was manifested through a personal alteration of his life as well as a creative materialization of experiences. On the process he was able to discover his self and his purpose. Through his writing he eventually came to terms with his childhood and the life-changing events that have enveloped it.

It is the potential that we attribute to the young that makes it hard to swallow the death of children. In Chinese custom, parents are not allowed to attend the funeral of their children. It is incomprehensible for them to take part in something that is against the nature of things. The children should bury their parents, not the other way around. As the cycle of life goes, parents attend to their offspring, then when parents get old their children takes it as their responsibility to return the favor. This sequence is the proper order of things and what is expected to happen. But what if all this is shattered? How do we deal with loss? And how do we deal with grief once we are faced with the inevitable reality?

Such is the story of 'The Odd Sea,' the title is based upon the childhood story Philip's father often tells them. His dad's personal adaptation of Homer's 'The Odyssey,' it was based on how he remembers it and what Philip later on discovers as the well-known Greek epic. The novel revolves around the family's loss of Ethan. Considered to be the talented and most affectionate among them, the travesty of his disappearance puts their lives

into shambles. Overnight, the once happy family is at a loss with how they could move on living a normal life when everything is nothing but so. The therapy of pen and paper is what brought Philip to overcome his plight that spans most of his life. Later on in the novel when they discovered Ethan's body, on a time when there was little to no hope of ever finding him, it was more of relief that the family can now go on living and put a period on a dragging chapter of their lives. There was finally an answer. No over-the-top explanations or scenarios, just the simple fact that he was a victim of serial killing. It was that, the simple and sad reality. As he goes back in memory, through his writing he was able to finally let go of the past and face his future ahead.