

Away from it all
The road finds itself.

Benjamin Riedewald

Chapters

- Chapter 1: The Glass House
- Chapter 2: A Day Like Any Other
- Chapter 3: The Sound of Silence
- Chapter 4: Lessons Not on the Schedule
- Chapter 5: The Guy with the Guitar
- Chapter 6: The Fault Line
- Chapter 7: Confidential Territory
- Chapter 8: The Calm Before the Leap
- Chapter 9: Letters to the Quiet
- Chapter 10: On the Path to the Horizon
- Chapter 11: The Border and the Desert
- Chapter 12: Roots in the Sand
- Chapter 13: The Call of the Mountains
- Chapter 14: Echoes in the Quiet
- Chapter 15: The Breath of the Heights
- Chapter 16: Desert of Reflections
- Chapter 17: The Winds of the Oasis
- Chapter 18: Letters to the Past
- Chapter 19: The Voice of the Mountain
- Chapter 20: The Eye of the Storm
- Chapter 21: The Deep Road to Palenque
- Chapter 22: The Silent Mountains of San Cristobal
- Chapter 23: The Echo of the Quiet
- Chapter 24: The Road to Oaxaca
- Chapter 25: Returning Inside
- Chapter 26: The Return

Chapter 1: The Glass House

The sun streamed in like liquid gold through the tall windows of the house just outside Ann Arbor, Michigan. It was an architectural gem, shining and sleek like a museum, featuring white walls, black leather couches, and marble floors that echoed with each step. This was the house where David Monroe had spent his childhood. He was familiar with every nook and cranny, every room, yet it still felt like he was just a visitor.

David was the youngest member of a prominent family. His father, Richard Monroe, was the kind of guy who could open doors with just a handshake and a smile. He served as the CEO of a top construction company that boasted impressive projects all over North America. Richard was all about control, oversight, and management. Every chat with him felt like a negotiation. Even at home, he was always in a suit, and when he talked, it was like he was speaking to a board of directors.

His mother, Catherine Monroe, hailed from a long-established East Coast family. She was the quiet strength behind many of Richard's business achievements—a former financial advisor who had set aside her career for the family but still managed the household budget like it was a stock market trust. She appreciated order, elegance, and discretion. Their home was adorned with gallery artwork, antique rugs, and pristine china that was never used. It was a space where silence and perfection coexisted. David had one sister: Ellie. Five years older, she was always his partner in a world focused on performance and image. While David often felt invisible in his parents' realm, Ellie was the one who filled his quiet moments with conversation and understood his insecurities. She worked as an illustrator, a career their parents quietly deemed “impractical.” Living in Chicago, she was far enough to have her own life but close enough to drive to David's for a stroll in the park or a long lunch.

David was a kid who seemed to have it all, but he often felt invisible. He had a love for books that went way beyond his school assignments—philosophy, poetry, and stories about people who valued simplicity over material things. Music was his escape, especially those old blues records he'd dig up at flea markets, and he would strum his guitar softly in his room when the atmosphere at home felt a bit too heavy. His room was the only colorful spot in the house, filled with posters of Miles Davis and Dylan, a wall lined with books, and a view of a little garden where he used to build forts in the hedges as a kid. In the closet, there was a collection of designer clothes, either gifted to him or bought under his parents' gentle nudging. But he felt most like himself in worn-out jeans and a flannel shirt. His days were pretty regimented: wake up at six, go for a run, shower, and then have breakfast with a smoothie his mom whipped up from a diet book.

Then it was college, study group, and the library. Dinner with his parents when they were around – chatting about the stock market, political news, and the value of networking over drinks. After that, it was homework, often lasting until midnight.

In his third year of college, he started dating Claire, who was majoring in journalism. She had a laugh that could light up even the dreariest lecture hall. Claire was all about spontaneity, enjoying late-night strolls and bonfires by the beach. For the first time, David felt truly happy with someone.

But it didn't last long. She once told him, "You're living in a world that doesn't belong to you, David. You're just playing a part. But I can see that deep down, there's someone else. Someone more genuine." When she left for an internship in New York six months later, she sent him one last letter. It simply read, "When you discover who you really are, come and find me. Not before." David found himself reading that letter often. He kept it in the notebook he always had with him, alongside thoughts he couldn't share anywhere else.

Every time he listened to his dad discuss careers and his mom talk about investments, he could feel that letter burning a hole in his jacket pocket. It looked like a perfect life from the outside. But there was something stirring underneath. Something he wasn't ready to put a name to just yet.

Chapter 2: A Day Like Any Other

The alarm buzzed at six on the dot. Not the loud beep of a traditional alarm, but a gentle vibration on his wrist. It was a gift from his dad—a smartwatch with features David hardly ever used. Yet, he still wore it, maybe out of courtesy or just habit. He got up, stretched leisurely, and headed to the bathroom, where the marble countertop felt chilly against his fingers.

After a quick shower—cold, as he had trained himself to do to “keep the mind sharp”—he slipped into his gym clothes and strolled through the early morning mist to the park just a few blocks away. Running had turned into a ritual for him. Not because he loved the sport, but because he needed it. It provided him with a sense of control and direction. The paths were quiet, covered with the first leaves of autumn. Each step felt mechanical, and every breath was deliberate.

When David got home, his mom was already in the kitchen, as usual. She was an early riser. Without even glancing up from her tablet, she handed him a glass of green smoothie and a small bowl of supplements. "You need to stay sharp this month," she mentioned, her eyes glued to an article about the stock market. "They're coming from that office in New York this week for an introduction. It's important to make a good impression." David just nodded, took a sip of the bitter drink, and felt the familiar unease in his stomach. He didn't say a word, and neither did she. That was just how they operated: functional, efficient, and quiet.

The day at the university unfolded like any other. Professors were up there, sharing their lectures with a blend of enthusiasm and fatigue, while students were subtly refreshing their screens, nodding along. David was seated at the front, jotting down notes in tidy block letters. He had a knack for making an impression. Still, he often found himself wanting to gaze out the window.

It felt like there was something out there that held more truth than anything he was learning here. During lunch, he found himself sitting alone on a bench at the edge of campus. His sandwiches—whole wheat and neatly wrapped—remained untouched in their foil. He flipped through his notebook. Mixed in with the legal jargon and diagrams were words he barely dared to say to himself: emptiness, despair, escape. He quickly shut the book as another student strolled past.

That afternoon, he found himself in the library, supposedly wrapping up an essay. But honestly, he was just gazing at a map of North America on an old globe for a while. His finger traced down the California coast, heading south toward Baja, Mexico. He had never been there, but just the name felt intriguing.

The house was pretty quiet that night. His dad was in Toronto for an investment meeting, and his mom was at a dinner for an arts foundation. It was only at the big, shiny kitchen table that David felt the emptiness more than usual.

He grabbed some leftovers from the fridge—a slice of quiche and half an avocado—and put on an old record in his room. Dylan. Shelter from the Storm. Lying on his bed, he looked up at the ceiling, his hands tucked under his head. The day felt like any other, but still, something had changed. Something tiny, something nearly unnoticeable. Like a hairline crack had formed in the glass.

He grabbed his notebook once more. He wrote a single sentence, slowly and steadily:
Maybe life isn't meant to be all about schedules.
Below that, he sketched a thin line and an arrow pointing south.