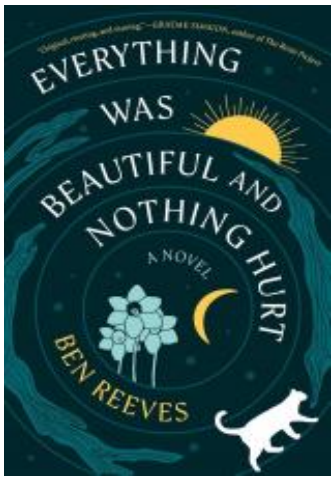
Everything Was Beautiful and Nothing Hurt

by Ben Reeves



About the Book

For fans of Fredrik Backman and Virginia Evans, an unforgettable and exquisitely moving novel about finding beauty, hope and meaning in the brevity of life, as narrated by the one who knows it best: Death.

Travis is Death in the modern world. He wears jeans and a T-shirt and lives in a small, gray town. His job is to offer people comfort in their final hours of life. He?s stoic, gentle and a little naive, despite everything he knows. He?s young and handsome, despite who he is. Each death he witnesses is meaningful to him. He listens, never judges and, most importantly, never tries to change anyone?s fate. He knows that every life must eventually end to maintain the balance of the universe, and he respects the cycle.

Then he meets Dalia, a midwife, and her boisterous eight-year-old daughter, Layla, who live across the hall. Despite his best attempts to keep his distance, he finds himself wholeheartedly embraced by other people for the first time. So it is with this seemingly unremarkable family that Travis begins to understand what it means to be truly alive --- and what might be irrevocably lost in death.

Written with radiant warmth, wisdom and compassion, EVERYTHING WAS BEAUTIFUL AND NOTHING HURT is a timeless story about appreciating life, accepting its end, and finding our place in the universe --- especially when it feels most impossible --- that will resonate with anyone who has ever loved and lost or worried at time?s passing.

Discussion Guide

1. Brainstorm some adjectives to describe Travis, Dalia, Layla, Solomon and Nick, and then think about how they would describe one another. How are they different? How are they similar? Which characters resonate most strongly with you?

2. In what ways does the British small-town setting contribute to the mood of EVERYTHING WAS BEAUTIFUL AND

NOTHING HURT? How would this book feel if it took place in London, or in another country entirely?

3. What effect does the structure and style of EVERYTHING WAS BEAUTIFUL AND NOTHING HURT have on your reading experience? For example, how would your reading experience change if Ben Reeves solely focused on the human elements of life, or if the entire book was told from Travis? first-person point of view?

4. Does it resonate with you that Death might manifest as a man like Travis? If you were to conceive your own embodiment of Death, what or how would it look, act and sound like?

5. What are some turning points in Travis? relationship to the living? What is it about Dalia and her daughters that has such a strong effect on him?

6. How did your feelings toward Dalia evolve over the course of the novel? Can you think of characters in other books or media who face similar profound grief?

7. Of the minor characters Travis mentions throughout the book --- some in longer devoted sections, some in less than a sentence --- who stood out to you? Why?

8. Why did Reeves choose the mayfly as a recurring symbol? What does it represent?

9. Using the book as evidence, how do you think Reeves conceives of the relationship between life and death? Did EVERYTHING WAS BEAUTIFUL AND NOTHING HURT inform your own thoughts about this dynamic?

10. How did learning the identity of the very old woman affect your understanding of the book? Were you surprised by the twist?

11. What were your favorite lines or moments from the novel? Did any of them move or inspire you? What feelings did EVERYTHING WAS BEAUTIFUL AND NOTHING HURT leave you with?

12. What would you do with your 20-minute gift?

Author Bio

Ben Reeves lives in Peterborough, UK, with his wife and two children. An early draft of EVERYTHING WAS BEAUTIFUL AND NOTHING HURT won the international 2024 Bath Novel Award. When he?s not writing, he paints, makes music, and works as a web designer for a book printing company.

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