



The Psychological Process of Grief Experienced by Otto in *A Man Called Otto*

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Abstract

Grief is a complex psychological experience that occurs as a response to significant loss and can influence an individual's emotions, behaviors, and perception of life. This study aims to examine the psychological process of grief experienced by Otto Anderson, the main character in the film *A Man Called Otto* (2022), directed by Marc Forster. This research applies a descriptive qualitative method with a psychological approach, using Elisabeth Kübler-Ross's Five Stages of Grief theory as the main analytical framework. The data were collected from dialogues, scenes, and visual representations in the film that reflect Otto's emotional responses and behavioral changes throughout his grieving process. The findings reveal that Otto's grief develops through five stages: denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance. The denial stage is shown through Otto's difficulty accepting his wife's death, while anger appears through his rigid and hostile behavior toward others. Bargaining is represented through memories of his relationship with his wife, Sonya, particularly during his suicide attempts. Depression is reflected through his isolation, hopelessness, and loss of purpose in life. Finally, acceptance emerges as Otto gradually reconnects with others and discovers new meaning in life. This study concludes that grief is a gradual psychological process in which social interaction and emotional support play an important role in helping individuals recover from loss.

Keywords: grief, psychological process, Five Stages of Grief, Kübler-Ross theory, film analysis, *A Man Called Otto*

INTRODUCTION

Grief is a psychological response experienced by individuals as a result of loss. Psychologically, grief is not merely a feeling of sadness, but rather a profound and complex experience of loss. Grief can be understood as an emotional expression directed toward someone who has passed away, involving various feelings, thoughts, and behaviors as a natural response to losing someone who holds significant meaning in one's life.

Understanding the process of grief is essential in a person's life. Grieving is an active process that requires time and energy so that individuals who experience loss are able to go through it in a healthy manner and receive appropriate support. Grief is an unavoidable experience, as every individual will ultimately face various forms of loss throughout their life. Loss does not only refer to the death of a loved one, but can also be triggered by separation, job loss, or major life changes. Furthermore, there is no definitive time limit for a person to move through the grieving phase, as each individual will experience the process in their own way.

Although the grieving process is inherently individual, there are theoretical frameworks that are commonly used to understand this experience. One of them is the five stages of grief model developed by psychiatrist Elisabeth Kübler-Ross. This model was originally developed to explain the emotional responses of patients facing terminal illness, but has since been widely applied to various types of loss, such as the death of a loved one, divorce, or significant life changes. The model is frequently used as a framework for understanding a person's

psychological response to loss. In order to extend this understanding to the general public, film has been utilized as a medium to help audiences recognize that the grieving process is a complex and real experience.

Film is an effective medium for representing the process of grief, as it is capable of combining narrative, visuals, and emotional expression to portray complex psychological experiences. Film does not solely serve as entertainment, but also carries a social function in addressing life issues that resonate with many people. Through film, emotions that are difficult to express in words can be visualized in a tangible way. Therefore, the power of film in representing emotion makes it a relevant medium for understanding the grieving process, as explicitly depicted in the film *A Man Called Otto*.

One film that profoundly represents the complexity of the grief process is *A Man Called Otto* (2022), directed by Marc Forster. The film is an adaptation of the novel *A Man Called Ove* by Fredrik Backman, which follows the life of an elderly man named Otto Anderson. Otto is portrayed as an individual who is deeply trapped in grief following the death of his wife.

Through the character of Otto, audiences are shown how despair and the loss of meaning in life become manifestations of grief that have not been properly addressed. This makes Otto a relevant subject for further analysis through a psychological framework, given that his portrayal reflects a complex and realistic dynamic of grief.

This study is important to conduct given that grief remains a mental health issue that is often overlooked, particularly when considering the significant role of social support in the recovery process of individuals experiencing loss. Despite growing interest in this topic, existing analyzes tend to rely on a single theoretical framework, which often fails to capture the full complexity of the grieving experience.

In response to this gap, this study aims to explore the psychological process of Otto's grief more thoroughly. This focus stems from the limited discussion regarding the dynamics of grief in the character, the lack of analysis examining the relationship between grief and behavioral change, and the limited attention given to the main character's emotional journey. Therefore, this study is expected to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the psychological process of grief experienced by Otto, formulated into three research questions: (1) How is the psychological process of grief experienced by Otto in the film *A Man Called Otto*? (2) How do grief and loss influence Otto's emotions, behaviors, and daily life throughout the film? (3) How does Otto gradually come to accept his loss by the end of the film *A Man Called Otto*?

This study employs a descriptive qualitative approach, applying Kübler-Ross's (1969) Five Stages of Grief as the primary theoretical framework, with data derived solely from the narrative and visual elements of the film.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a descriptive qualitative approach, specifically applying a psychological approach to examine the main character in the film *A Man Called Otto* (2022). Qualitative research emphasizes human perspectives and meaning, especially in understanding emotional and individual experiences that cannot be measured through numerical data (Hammarberg et al., 2016, as cited in Naza & Murtiningrum, 2025). A psychological approach is applied in this study to identify and examine the psychological aspects represented through the main character's behavior, dialogue, and emotional expressions (Wellek, René; Warren, 1949), focusing on Otto Anderson's grieving process through Kübler-Ross's Five Stages of Grief (1969).

The object of this study is the film *A Man Called Otto* (2022), an American comedy-drama directed by Marc Forster with a screenplay written by David Magee, produced by

Columbia Pictures, Stage 6 Films, SF Studios, Playtone, and 2DUX², and distributed by Sony Pictures Releasing. This film is the second adaptation of Fredrik Backman's 2012 novel *A Man Called Ove*, following the first Swedish-language adaptation directed by Hannes Holm in 2015. The film has a running time of 126 minutes, was theatrically released on December 30, 2022, and is currently available for streaming on Netflix (Forster, 2022). The film follows the story of Otto Anderson, a 63-year-old widower living in suburban Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, United States, portrayed as a grumpy, rigid, and bitter man who has lost his will to live following the death of his beloved wife six months prior (Indriadi et al., 2025). His life gradually changes when a lively young family moves in next door, bringing him unexpected friendship and a renewed sense of purpose.

A Man Called Otto was selected as the research object for three reasons. First, the film earned a worldwide gross of \$113,360,085, with domestic earnings of \$64,267,657 and international earnings of \$49,092,428 (Box Office Mojo, 2023), showing that the film reached a wide international audience across many regions. Second, the film received a positive response from audiences, earning a rating of 7.5 out of 10 on IMDb, with 76% of viewers expressing a favorable response, suggesting that the film's portrayal of grief and human connection resonated well with audiences worldwide. Third, the film is relevant to this study because it portrays the psychological process of grief in a realistic and relatable way, and the main character's emotional journey provides rich material for analysis using Kübler-Ross's Five Stages of Grief (1969), making it a suitable object for psychological literary research (Anish & Priya, 2023).

This study focuses on the characterization of the main character, Otto Anderson, as the primary aspect analyzed. The data are drawn from dialogues and scenes in the film that reflect his psychological response to grief, analyzed using Kübler-Ross's Five Stages of Grief (1969) as the theoretical framework to identify and interpret Otto's emotional transformation throughout the film (Anish & Priya, 2023).

This study uses two types of data sources: primary and secondary data. According to Saryono (as cited in Indriadi et al., 2025), primary data refers to data obtained directly by the researcher from the original source, while secondary data refers to data obtained through other sources or third parties. The primary data are the dialogues and scenes from the film that reflect Otto's psychological process of grief, collected through repeated viewing of selected scenes and capturing relevant dialogues and scenes through screenshots of the subtitles in March 2026. The collected data were then stored as image files for further analysis. The secondary data consist of books and journals supporting the analysis, including theories related to the psychological approach (Wellek, René; Warren, 1949), grief (Kübler-Ross, 1969; Worden, 2018; James et al., 2024; Hilberdink et al., 2023; Zhumatii, 2022; Peña-vargas & Armaiz-peña, 2021), and the psychological process of grief (Doering et al., 2022; Maciejewski et al., 2023; Savaş, 2024; Frumkin et al., 2022).

Data collection was conducted through observation and documentation. This method involved repeated viewing of selected scenes from the film to identify dialogues and scenes that were relevant to the research objectives (Naza & Murtiningrum, 2025). The relevant data were then documented through screenshots of the subtitles and scenes during the viewing process. Scenes and dialogues that were not related to the psychological process of grief experienced by the main character were excluded to maintain the focus and relevance of the data.

Data analysis followed five systematic steps adapted from Ardyandika and Praptawati (2023). The first step was watching the film repeatedly to understand the story and the context of the main character's grief. The second step was identifying the data by selecting dialogues and scenes that reflect the psychological process of grief experienced by Otto Anderson. The

third step was classifying the data by grouping the selected dialogues and scenes based on the five stages of grief proposed by Kübler-Ross (1969), namely denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance. The fourth step was reducing the data by selecting the most relevant data to support the analysis. The fifth step was analyzing the collected data by interpreting each dialogue and scene based on Kübler-Ross's Five Stages of Grief (1969) to answer the research questions.

To ensure trustworthiness, four criteria proposed by Lincoln and Guba (1985, as cited in Ahmed, 2024) were applied, namely credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Credibility was achieved through repeated viewing of selected scenes from the film and the use of direct quotations from dialogues and scenes as evidence in the analysis. This process ensured that the findings accurately reflect the psychological process of grief experienced by Otto Anderson as portrayed in the film. Transferability was achieved by providing a detailed description of the research context, including the research object, theoretical framework, and data sources, allowing the findings to be compared with other literary studies. Dependability was achieved through a systematic and consistent data analysis process, from identifying and classifying the data to reducing and analyzing it based on Kübler-Ross's Five Stages of Grief (1969). Confirmability was achieved by ensuring that all findings are based on textual data from the film and supported by relevant theoretical frameworks, rather than on the researcher's personal judgment.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the psychological analysis of the grieving process conducted by the researcher, the application of Kübler-Ross's five stages of grief theory successfully identifies the gradual behavioral changes of the main character until he ultimately reaches the acceptance stage. It should be noted that although Otto attempts suicide on four separate occasions throughout the film, only the first attempt is discussed under the Depression stage in this section. The remaining three attempts are examined as evidence of grief's influence on Otto's daily life, since their primary function in this study is to illustrate the extent to which unresolved grief disrupted his everyday functioning, rather than to mark a distinct stage within Kübler-Ross's (1969) model.

A. Psychological Process of Grief Experienced by Otto

- Denial

The denial stage is clearly reflected in the scene where Otto purchases rope at a hardware store. When the hardware clerk asks, "Can I help you with that, sir?", Otto responds, "You think I don't know how to cut rope?" (Forster, 2022, 00:02:03–00:02:06).



Figure 1. Otto's Refusal of the Shop Assistant's Help

Here, Otto refuses the clerk's assistance and displays rigid, defensive behavior. This attitude functions as a psychological defense mechanism through which Otto unconsciously avoids confronting the reality of his wife's death. By maintaining control over even a minor

task such as cutting rope, Otto attempts to shield himself from the pain of loss. This is consistent with Kübler-Ross's (1969) assertion that denial functions as a temporary buffer against shocking news, giving the individual time to gradually gather his emotional resources.

This is reinforced when Otto visits Sonya's grave, saying, "I found the flowers you like. Pink. Sorry I didn't come earlier"(Forster, 2022, 00:23:43–00:25:08).



Figure 2. Otto Visits Sonya's Grave

This detail shows that Otto still clearly remembers details related to Sonya, while also functioning as an ego-defense mechanism that allows him to minimize, and temporarily avoid confronting, the permanence of his loss. This is in line with Kübler-Ross's (1969) view of denial as a temporary buffer that allows the individual time to gradually rebuild emotional strength.

- **Anger**

The anger stage is clearly reflected in Otto's confrontation with the cashier over the length of the rope he purchased: "I don't want your 33 cents! This isn't about 33 cents! This is about the fact that I only got five feet of rope and I shouldn't have to pay for six feet unless I get six feet!" (Forster, 2022, 00:03:41–00:03:54).



Figure 3. Otto's Anger over the 33-Cent Payment Discrepancy

This outburst represents displaced anger: unable to direct his frustration toward the abstract concept of death itself, Otto redirects it toward a trivial matter, the 33-cent discrepancy, reflecting the unresolved grief he carries over Sonya's loss. This corresponds with Kübler-Ross's (1969) explanation that once denial can no longer be sustained, it is replaced by anger, envy, and resentment, during which the individual begins to ask, "Why me?" The misdirected nature of Otto's outburst further illustrates her observation that anger at this stage tends to be projected outward without a clear target, which is what makes this stage especially difficult for those around the bereaved person.

This stage is further evident when Otto relocates a neighbor's carelessly parked bicycle, saying, "The next time, I'm locking it in the lost and found"(Forster, 2022, 00:05:56–00:06:10).



Figure 4. Otto Relocating a Carelessly Parked Bicycle

Although Otto has always been rule-abiding, the loss of his wife has intensified this tendency into a near-pathological need for control. His insistence on enforcing neighborhood rules reflects a projection of his internal frustration over the loss of control in his personal life, as Otto unconsciously displaces his grief onto smaller, more manageable aspects of his immediate surroundings. This aligns with Kübler-Ross's (1969) explanation that anger arising from unresolved grief is often expressed in various directions without a clear target.

This stage is also reflected when Otto confronts pet owners over public cleanliness violations, prompting Barb's remark, "He's a nasty, bitter old man" (Forster, 2022, 00:07:34–00:07:44).



Figure 5 Otto Confronting Pet Owners over Public Cleanliness Violations

Barb's outside perspective shows how Otto's unresolved grief has manifested as interpersonal hostility, turning him into a rigid, unapproachable figure in the eyes of those around him, and serves as social evidence of how significantly the grieving process has altered his personality and the way others perceive him.

- **Bargaining**

Unlike bargaining in its clinical sense, which typically involves explicit verbal negotiation with a higher power or with fate, Otto's bargaining stage is represented symbolically through flashbacks. These flashbacks do not occur as calm, standalone moments of reflection; rather, they surface in direct connection with Otto's suicide attempts, appearing at the exact moments when he prepares to end his life. This pattern suggests that the flashbacks function as an internal negotiation occurring at Otto's point of decision: as he stands at the threshold of ending his life, his mind involuntarily returns to his most cherished memories with Sonya, as though some part of him is still bargaining with reality before fully committing to the act.

This is evident in the flashback of Otto's promise to build Sonya a bookshelf: "Then I'll build you another bookcase" (Forster, 2022, 00:17:45–00:18:03).



Figure 6. Flashback – Otto's Promise to Build a Bookshelf for Sonya

This flashback surfaces as Otto prepares his first suicide attempt, reflecting an attempt to negotiate with reality through the recollection of past devotion. Rather than a peaceful memory, it functions as an intrusive moment in which Otto's mind resists the finality of his decision, if only for a moment, by returning to a promise once made to Sonya.

It is reinforced in the flashback of their first meeting, when Sonya says, "I'm already halfway through - I would hate not knowing how it ends. Here - why don't you join me? I'm Sonya," and Otto replies, "I'm Otto. It was my father's name" (Forster, 2022, 00:28:17–00:28:47).



Figure 7. Flashback – Otto's First Meeting with Sonya

Appearing again in connection with one of Otto's suicide attempts, this flashback of their first meeting represents an involuntary negotiation with the past. By mentally returning to the beginning of their story at the very moment he intends to end his own, Otto's mind briefly resists the completeness of his loss.

The bargaining stage reaches its peak in the flashback of his proposal, "Will you marry me?" (Forster, 2022, 00:55:20–00:55:26).



Figure 8. Flashback – Otto's Proposal to Sonya

This flashback likewise emerges alongside his attempt to end his life. Revisiting the greatest commitment of his life at this critical moment reflects an implicit negotiation with fate, one final unconscious attempt to hold onto the life he built with Sonya before proceeding with his decision.

- **Depression**

The depression stage is visually represented through Otto's home, shown without electricity and shrouded in darkness (Forster, 2022, 00:21:49–00:22:00).



Figure 9. Social Withdrawal – Otto's Self-Isolation in a Dark House

This darkness functions not merely as a literal absence of light but as a visual symbol of the profound despair Otto experiences following Sonya's death, reflecting the complete loss of vitality and meaning in his life without her. This is consistent with Kübler-Ross's (1969) explanation that as the reality of loss becomes harder to deny, a deep sense of preparatory grief emerges, allowing the individual to mentally prepare for the finality of the loss.

Otto's suicide attempt in the living room (Forster, 2022, 00:22:08–00:22:30) represents the peak of the depression stage, indicating a complete loss of hope for the future.

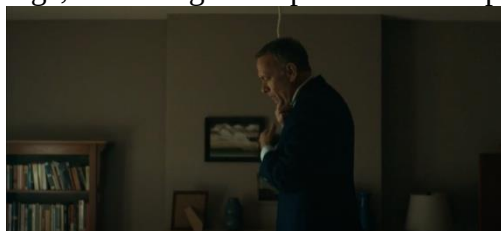


Figure 10. Otto's First Attempt to End His Life in the Living Room

It reflects the culmination of his despair, in which the emotional burden of losing Sonya becomes so overwhelming that death appears to him as the only escape. This aligns with Kübler-Ross's (1969) distinction between reactive depression, which stems from past losses, and preparatory grief, which individuals experience to mentally prepare for the finality of loss; in Otto's case, his despair extends beyond preparatory grief into a state in which life itself no longer holds meaning without Sonya.

- **Acceptance**

Otto's grief process ultimately reaches the acceptance stage, marked by a gradual shift toward social re-engagement. When Otto tells Marisol, "Get your coat. Lesson time. I can't stand watching one idiot trying to teach another how to drive" (Forster, 2022, 01:04:25–01:04:40), he demonstrates an openness to forming new connections, signaling the beginning of his social reintegration.



Figure 11. Otto's Initiative to Teach Marisol Driving

This is consistent with Kübler-Ross's (1969) explanation that acceptance does not mean the individual feels happy, but rather represents a state of emotional stability in which the pain gradually diminishes and the internal struggle comes to an end.

More direct evidence of acceptance appears when Otto tells Marisol at Sonya's favorite café, "Sonya's friends used to say we were night and day. Everything in my world was black and white until I met Sonya. She was the color" (Forster, 2022, 01:09:39–01:10:04).



Figure 12. Otto Speaks About Sonya to Marisol at Sonya's Favorite Café

Unlike the previous data, which show acceptance through prosocial behavior toward Otto's neighbors, this scene provides more direct evidence of acceptance in Kübler-Ross's (1969) original sense: the pain of loss beginning to fade. Otto is able to speak about Sonya openly, warmly, and without being overwhelmed by grief, indicating that his memories of her have been integrated into his present life with a sense of gratitude rather than remaining a source of paralyzing pain.

Overall, Otto's grieving process closely follows Kübler-Ross's (1969) five stages. Denial is reflected through his refusal of help and his habit of visiting Sonya's grave as though she were still alive. Anger emerges through irritable, rigid behavior representing displaced frustration. Bargaining appears through flashbacks that surface at the moments of Otto's suicide attempts, functioning as an unconscious negotiation with his loss. Depression peaks through his dark, lifeless home and his first suicide attempt, signifying profound despair. Finally, Otto reaches acceptance, marked both by his renewed openness to help Marisol and Malcolm and, more directly, by his growing ability to speak of Sonya without being overwhelmed by pain.

B. The Influences of Grief and Loss on Otto's Emotions, Behaviors, and Daily Life

The psychological grieving process Otto went through significantly affected his emotional state. This was first evident in the scene where Otto visited Sonya's grave and spoke to her as if she were still alive, saying, "I got distracted by the new neighbors. The husband doesn't know his ass from an Allen wrench... Nothing works when you're not home" (Forster, 2022, 00:23:43–00:25:08).



Figure 13. Insert Figure 13: Otto's Conversation at Sonya's Grave

This visit reflected Otto's emotional state: he was still unable to accept the reality of his wife's passing, so he chose to cling to the illusion of Sonya's presence as a form of emotional protection against his pain.

The influence of emotions is clearly demonstrated when Otto strictly prohibits Marisol from touching Sonya's belongings, saying, "No, no – leave those alone!" (Forster, 2022, 00:53:12–00:53:15).



Figure 14. Otto Wouldn't Let Marisol Take Sonya's Coat

For Otto, these physical items represent the last remaining connection to his deceased wife. His aggressive refusal to alter their placement is a defensive emotional response driven by unresolved grief. By fiercely protecting these objects, Otto attempts to maintain a sense of control over his environment, showing how deeply his current actions are still governed by the painful emotion of loss.

The loss of Sonya also had a significant impact on Otto's behavior in his daily interactions. This is evident when Otto confronts a delivery driver who stops in front of his neighbor's house: "Hey! If you don't have a permit, you can't use this road!" (Forster, 2022, 00:10:14–00:10:47).



Figure 15. Otto Was Angry at the Delivery Driver

Otto demonstrates his inability to tolerate even the slightest disruption to the environment he obsessively controls, illustrating his misdirected anger as a form of displacement for the grief he cannot express directly.

Similar behavior is evident when Otto confronts Tommy over a parking permit: "Why the hell is it in your pocket?" (Forster, 2022, 00:13:39–00:13:56).



Figure 16. The Dynamics of Confrontation between Otto's Order and Marisol's Spontaneity

His explosive anger reflects an attempt to redirect his uncontrollable internal frustration toward a trivial matter of rules.

In the scene where Otto chases away the Dye & Merica agents trespassing on the private road, saying, "Hey! HEY! This is a private road!" (Forster, 2022, 00:31:52–00:32:14),



Figure 17. Otto Was Angry at Agent Dye & Merica for Not Following the Rules

his anger reflects a deep hatred for external forces that he perceives as a threat to the stability of the environment he once shared with Sonya.

This is further shown when Otto scolds Beppo over a swapped coin: "This isn't my quarter... Mine is silver, 1964" (Forster, 2022, 00:50:35–00:50:40).



Figure 18. Otto's Fixation on the 1964 Coin

Otto's fixation on the 1964 coin illustrates an extreme need for control over tangible objects as a way to compensate for a loss he cannot control.

This behavioral pattern reaches its peak when Otto threatens another driver while teaching Marisol to drive: "If you honk that goddamn horn again, it will be the last thing you ever do!" (Forster, 2022, 01:06:50–01:07:13).



Figure 19. Otto's Confrontation with Nick While Teaching Marisol to Drive

Otto's overreaction to being honked at, which prompted the driver to mock him as an old man, reflects his deep anxiety about aging and mortality, especially after the loss of Sonya, who had long been his primary source of support.

In his daily life, the most severe impact of Otto's psychological grieving process is evident in his self-imposed isolation in his dark home (Forster, 2022, 00:17:18–00:17:28), reflecting his complete loss of motivation to interact with the outside world, as the meaning of life crumbled without Sonya's presence.

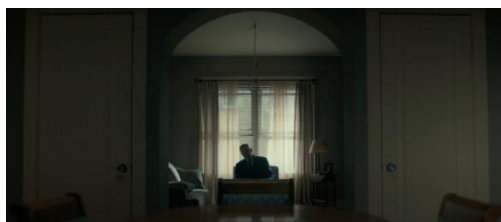


Figure 20. Otto Lives in a Dark House

This situation reached its most critical point with Otto's four suicide attempts. The first took place in the living room (Forster, 2022, 00:22:08–00:22:30), reflecting the height of Otto's despair when he felt he could no longer bear the burden of his loss.

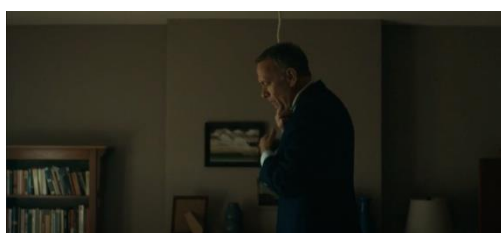


Figure 21. Suicide Attempt in the Living Room

The second suicide attempt occurred in a garage, where Otto inhales vehicle exhaust fumes, but is interrupted by Marisol's unexpected intervention (Forster, 2022, 00:42:00–00:45:41).



Figure 22. Suicide Attempt in the Garage

This scene proves that unplanned social connections can serve as a protective factor against destructive impulses.

The third suicide attempt took place on a train platform, where Otto was once again stopped when his attention shifted to saving an elderly person who had fallen onto the tracks (Forster, 2022, 00:56:17–00:56:59).



Figure 23. Attempted Suicide on the Train Tracks

This demonstrates that Otto's sense of humanity remained intact even when he was in his most fragile psychological state.

The fourth suicide attempt involved a firearm (Forster, 2022, 01:28:59–01:31:21), representing the most extreme manifestation of despair resulting from grief that had completely sapped Otto's will to live.

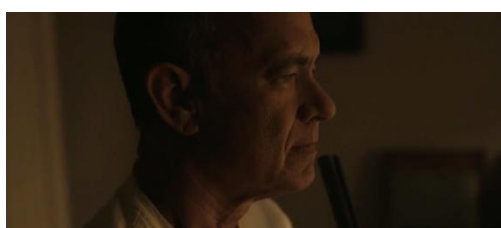


Figure 24. Attempted Suicide Involving a Firearm

Taken together, these four attempts illustrate just how profoundly the loss of Sonya affected Otto's daily life, while also underscoring that external social interactions play a crucial role in breaking that destructive cycle.

Overall, the analysis of Otto's emotional state, behavioral patterns, and daily life demonstrates that the loss of Sonya had a profound impact on every aspect of his existence. The grief Otto experienced not only altered the way he interacted with those around him but also paralyzed his will to continue living. Nevertheless, the presence of unplanned social connections gradually broke the cycle of isolation he had imposed upon himself. This demonstrates that although grief can bring an individual to the darkest point in his life, meaningful engagement with the social environment remains a crucial driving factor in helping the individual rediscover purpose and meaning in life.

C. Otto's Gradual Acceptance of Loss

Otto's acceptance begins with his willingness to immediately help a man in need on the train tracks, without hesitation or concern for his own self-interest (Forster, 2022, 00:56:45–00:56:58).



Figure 25. The Beginning of Acceptance – Otto Helping a Man on the Train Tracks

Such a spontaneous action indicates that, beneath the cold and withdrawn demeanor he has displayed, Otto still retains genuine concern for those around him. This can be interpreted as an early indicator of Otto's emotional shift toward the acceptance stage, in which he begins to open himself up to the world around him again after previously withdrawing due to the loss of Sonya.

The next stage of acceptance was marked by Otto's decision to begin letting go of the self-imposed isolation he had maintained until then, shown through his willingness to teach Marisol how to drive (Forster, 2022, 01:04:25–01:04:40). This was an early sign of Otto's emotional openness to new social relationships, marking the beginning of the process of social reintegration, one of the key characteristics of the acceptance stage in the Kübler-Ross model.

Otto's acceptance is further demonstrated by his ability to remember Sonya and talk about her to others without becoming overwhelmed by his grief, as shown when he speaks to Marisol at Sonya's favorite café (Forster, 2022, 01:09:39–01:10:04). This indicates that his memories of Sonya have been integrated into his new life with a sense of gratitude, rather than remaining a source of paralyzing pain.

Otto's act of helping Malcolm fix his bike chain, saying, "You treat it right, it will treat you right" (Forster, 2022, 01:18:45–01:18:55),



Figure 26. Otto Helped Malcolm Fix His Bike Chain

was also a tangible expression of the acceptance he had achieved. This altruistic act marked the discovery of a new purpose in life for Otto, in which he was no longer trapped in his grief but chose to play an active role in contributing to the lives of those around him. Otto's emotional maturity is further demonstrated by his calm and strategic demeanor when dealing with the agents from Dye & Merica, responding simply, "I'm not going to do a thing" (Forster, 2022, 01:42:00–01:42:13).



Figure 27. Otto's Defiance against Dye & Merica

This proves that Otto has reached a stage of true acceptance, where his energy is no longer channeled through destructive, impulsive actions but is instead directed toward protecting and caring for his community.

At the end of Otto's grieving journey, he successfully released his past and created a more meaningful life following the loss of his wife, shown through his decision to bequeath his assets to Marisol's family: "The house and everything in it is yours, so long as you promise never to sell it to those real estate bastards" (Forster, 2022, 01:56:52–01:57:47).



Figure 28. The Graves of Otto and Sonya

This act represents the highest form of inner peace he has attained, proving that Otto has fully come to terms with his loss and chooses to leave a meaningful legacy for those he cares about before he truly departs.

Overall, Otto's journey toward the acceptance stage represents a gradual and non-linear process. Through a series of unplanned social interactions, Otto slowly rediscovers the meaning of life that had been lost following Sonya's departure. The acceptance Otto reaches does not mean that he has forgotten Sonya, but rather that he has been able to carry her memory with sincerity while continuing to embrace the life that lies ahead of him. This demonstrates that the grieving process, despite being painful, can become a transformative experience that encourages an individual to grow into a wiser, more empathetic, and more meaningful presence within his social environment.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings and discussion presented above, this study concludes that Otto's psychological process of grief in *A Man Called Otto* closely follows Kübler-Ross's five stages of grief, namely denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance. Denial is shown through Otto's refusal to accept help from others and his habit of speaking to Sonya at her grave as though she were still alive. Anger emerges through Otto's disproportionate reactions to trivial matters, reflecting displaced frustration that he is unable to direct toward the loss itself. Bargaining takes the form of flashbacks that surface at the exact moments Otto attempts to end his life, functioning as an unconscious negotiation with his loss rather than a peaceful act of remembrance. Depression reaches its peak through Otto's self-imposed isolation and his first suicide attempt, representing the depth of his despair. Finally, Otto arrives at acceptance, first marked by his renewed willingness to teach Marisol how to drive, and more directly confirmed by his growing ability to speak about Sonya without being overwhelmed by pain.

The findings further indicate that grief and loss exert a significant influence on Otto's emotions, behavior, and daily life. Emotionally, Otto continues to treat Sonya as though she were still present, refusing to let go of her belongings or the illusion of her company. Behaviorally, his grief manifests as rigid, rule-driven hostility toward those around him, escalating from minor irritation to physical confrontation as his unresolved pain intensifies. In his daily life, grief drives Otto toward social withdrawal and repeated suicide attempts, illustrating the extent to which unresolved loss can erode an individual's will to live.

Finally, this study concludes that Otto's acceptance of his loss develops gradually rather than as a sudden transformation. His acceptance begins with small, unplanned acts of empathy, develops through his willingness to reconnect socially with his neighbors, and is most clearly demonstrated through his ability to speak openly about Sonya without emotional collapse. This process culminates in Otto's decision to leave his legacy to his neighbors, symbolizing that he has come to terms with his loss while continuing to honor Sonya's memory, proving that grief can lead to psychological growth.

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