

1997

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Recommended Citation

Federman, Raymond. "The Book They Held Together." *The Iowa Review* 27.2 (1997): 134-134. Web.
Available at: <https://doi.org/10.17077/0021-065X.4927>

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Raymond Federman

THE BOOK THEY HELD TOGETHER

To two old friends, sitting by a window, suddenly came a sense of freedom from all commitments, as if that very evening the future (or whatever was left of it for them) had tangibly moved into the street below. Thinking of this place and the many places in the world where they had been, they were filled with tenderness and peace, and felt enveloped by the unheard music of contentment that flowed all about them and into the distance. The book they held together seemed to confirm and encourage their feeling of abandonment.

They were not speaking. They were reading the open page silently. They had not spoken for a long time, when one of the friends (let's call him Friend One for this occasion) looked up from the page and broke the silence: *Have you ever read Doctor Zhivago?*

Friend Two replied: *Yes, I think I have, years ago. And I saw the movie. Why?*

I don't know. It just came to my mind. Perhaps it was the music . . . the beautiful music of the movie . . .

Then the two friends closed the book, without marking the page where they were reading, and one of the friends said (or perhaps they both said it at the same time): *Let's go to bed, it's getting late.*