

ONE-PAGE SYNOPSIS

From Chocolate to Philosopher

Literary Memoir — approximately 93,000 words.

Roger Kuperways has lived several lives: Paris apprentice, New York fashion designer, and university professor. A Paris street boy becomes a New York designer, loses the successful world he built, and ultimately finds his true vocation not in fashion—but in philosophy.

Born in postwar Paris in 1944, Roger Kuperways grows up in a city still marked by the aftermath of occupation—bullet-scarred walls standing beside glittering couture windows.

At fourteen he becomes an apprentice in legendary fashion ateliers, including two years in the workrooms of Coco Chanel, where discipline, precision, and craftsmanship shape his understanding of identity and ambition.

The pastry bench of his youth teaches pleasure; the atelier teaches mastery and discipline.

Together they form the foundation of a lifelong pursuit of reinvention.

At seventeen, Roger leaves Paris and immigrates alone to the United States with twelve dollars in his pocket and two handmade suits a wealthy uncle no longer wanted. Unable to speak English and earning \$1.45 an hour in Chinatown garment factories—often called sweatshops—he quickly learns that ambition in America demands resilience. On November 21, 1963, he opens his first American business. On the afternoon of November 22, the world stopped: President John F. Kennedy was assassinated. He had been an American entrepreneur for exactly one day. Within a decade, Roger builds a successful fashion label in New York's Garment District. Major department stores—including Bergdorf Goodman and Saks Fifth Avenue—carry his collections and his designs appear in their Fifth Avenue windows. His garments are sold nationwide in stores such as Neiman Marcus, I. Magnin, and Marshall Field's. Among the women he dresses is

Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis, who arrives at his showroom one Saturday morning accompanied by Secret Service agents. In a private fitting that forms the emotional center of the memoir, the former First Lady said something I have carried ever since—words I have reconstructed from memory, but whose meaning I have never doubted: « *Vous ne m'avez pas seulement habillée. Vous m'avez rappelé qui je suis.* » (You didn't just dress me. You reminded me who I am.)

The rise does not last. As overseas imports dismantle the American garment industry, Roger closes his factories and confronts financial loss and an identity crisis. Stripped of the world he built, he faces a question that has followed him since Paris: Who are you when everything familiar disappears?

He reinvents himself again—this time in academia—teaching entrepreneurship and philosophy at New York University. Drawing on lived experience rather than formal credentials, he guides students through risk, failure, and reinvention. Along the way, Argentine tango, photography, bridge, and mentoring deepen his evolving philosophy of presence and resilience.

In his eighties, a life-threatening medical crisis forces a final reckoning. Survival reframes ambition into attention. Now Professor Emeritus, he continues to mentor, teach, and write. Achievement gives way to presence.

From Chocolate to Philosopher is a memoir of immigration, artistry, collapse, and reinvention—a life stitched, cut, and reshaped across decades.