

THE CITY OF  
EARTHLY DESIRE



A NOVEL

FRANCIS  
BERGER

**The City of Earthly Desire**

*Francis Berger*

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## **The City of Earthly Desire** Francis Berger

Alternate cover edition.

After the communists destroy his dreams of becoming a recognized painter, Reinhardt Drixler escapes Hungary and moves to America to further his artistic ambitions and provide a better future for his young family.

Twenty-five years later, his son, Béla falls in love with Suzy Kiss, an ambitious, alluring Hungarian striptease dancer whose interest in Béla can be summarized in two words: green card.

When Suzy is mysteriously deported, a devastated Béla must make a decision – should he stay in New York and continue with the noble artistic ambitions his father instilled in him, or should he follow his heart to Hungary and explore the enticing and risqué opportunities blossoming in Budapest after the collapse of communism?

His decision ultimately plunges him headlong into a world fueled by envy, greed, and lust – a world of self-seeking ambition where only the twin pillars of carnal pleasure and material success are sacrosanct. Will Béla be able reunite with Suzy and maintain his integrity or will he succumb to the temptations of the earthly city?

Set partially in Budapest, Hungary shortly after the collapse of communism, *The City of Earthly Desire* is a sweeping novel of love and lust, beauty and vulgarity, humor and pathos, and art and ethics. The story is peopled by a memorable cast of characters who are as intense, turbulent, and ambivalent as the place and time they occupy. Like the great novels of the 19th century, the narrative is epic in scope – entertaining and humorous, yet profound.

## **The City of Earthly Desire Details**

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Author : Francis Berger

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## **From Reader Review The City of Earthly Desire for online ebook**

### **Vikas Datta says**

An engaging and thoughtful read..

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### **Gregory says**

A provocative tale that spans a generational history of the Drixler family and the various life choices they encounter. In the pursuit of love, creative expression and success our main character is lured toward a dream only to find a complex web of lies hidden by his own naivety and the greed of others. Between love and lust he finds a path of indulgence where true happiness is elusive.

As an artist myself I found the book highly engaging. It has left me contemplating the many messages woven into the fabric of this story.

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### **Darcie says**

The City of Earthly Desire is a novel that grips you from the start. I knew as soon as I read the first sentence, I was hooked. One can not help but to feel a parental love and concern for the main character of Bela. You want to hug him and slap some sense into him all at the same moment. It is not just the characters that draw you into the novel, but also the story line. The twists and turns are not a disappointment. Ultimately, what left the greatest impression on me, was learning about a country I knew little about. The City of Earthly Desire has encouraged me to further my knowledge of Hungary and other former communist countries.

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### **Richard Barnes says**

I generally avoid self-published books, but I noticed this one being promoted for free on Amazon a while back. I downloaded it, then forgot about it, then remembered it, then nearly deleted it when I realized it was over 500 pages long. In the end, I gave it try. I'm glad I did.

In the end, all I can say is this - there are good novels and there are great novels. Even though the novel had some flaws, I would be tempted to place it in the great category. What made it a great read for me was the grandeur of the narrative's scope. Behind its plot and characters, it plunges deep beneath the surface of life and explores eternal themes and the bittersweet tragedy of the human condition. Very few novels do that these days.

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### **Mike says**

I thought Berger told an interesting story. I liked the insight into Post-Communist Hungary. I found the

protagonist to be likable. On the other hand I found many of the characters annoying, the main ethical/aesthetic question, "Where is the divide between figurative fine art and pornography? to be unanswered and despite the almost 600 pages in length he left us with undeveloped characters and shallow motivation. I finished it, but there were times when I came close to putting it down.

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### **Tamas Beres says**

A Must Read ! Great storytelling !

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### **Annette says**

The City of Earthly Desire  
by Francis Berger

Political oppression, intense characters, family struggles, love, moral depravity, and a captivating narrative fill this historical novel. Berger gives us enough material to make a mini-series. We follow the Drixler family, specifically the son, Reinhardt, who we follow from birth to old age then his son, Bella, who we follow from birth to adulthood. We are also given time with Reinhardt's mother to see the stock from which this family came.

We begin with a history lesson in the cost of communism. They are stripped of what has been earned by hard work. Left in poverty and often without a means to secure food and basic needs for themselves. In some ways worse was the taking of their dreams. Few were able to escape to freedom. One who was able to was Reinhardt. We spend much of our time with him and his family in New York as he is passionate about building a better future for his family. We also see his passion for art and the way he chooses to teach his son.

Berger gives a novel filled with contrast and comparison as we see Reinhardt's life filled with love, commitment, and purity only to be heartbroken as these lessons are lost on the next generation. When Bella begins his downward spiral it is almost more than Reinhardt can stand and this life choice seems to have stolen Bella's soul. We see lust fulfilled, disregard for human life, and the depravity of man at its worse. We see deception, perversion and manipulation and self glorification.

The descriptive nature of the strip clubs, pornographic photo shoots, film making and relationships among those involved is difficult reading. It fills so many chapters and it shows the escalation of lust sickening to the soul.

We are eventually out of this time period and Berger does an exceptional work in the last portion of our story. I will not be specific as to avoid spoilers.

Berger's style of writing is remarkable; fine and clear enough for the reader to follow and yet complex enough to allow reader to think and ponder. He challenges the intellect without alienating the simple.

The intensity with which he develops his characters demands we know them. They range the entire spectrum of passions lust, jealousy, hate, love and forgiveness. We see inside their very heart and many times we either love or hate them. Because he has written covering so many years of our character's lives it is especially gratifying to see the way he develops them as they grow older. He again gives us contrast and comparison. Not all who grow older mature. We see some who learn to forgive, to embrace change, and to forsake poor choices. We see others determined to stay the course they have set.

I enjoyed the historical aspects of this book, Berger's writing style and his characters.

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**Anita Rozinka says**

It's an amazing book, read half of it in one afternoon couldn't put it down, waiting for the next one:)))

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**Roan says**

**I just won an ARC of this on Goodreads giveaway!!! wahoo!**

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**Looking forward for this!**

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**Donna says**

Having read a lot of historical fiction set in England I was really excited to read about a different country and culture – I wasn't disappointed. The book has a great story line moving through different generations of the same family with inter-woven plots. I also learned a lot about Hungary, a country I previously had no real knowledge about. This is a relatively long novel at 540 pages and can be quite intense at times – probably not one for the beach, but it is a great read and by the time you finish you feel like you have a real relationship with the Drixler family.

This review is based on a complimentary copy of the book from the author.

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**Susan says**

Francis pens "The City of Earthly Desire" in a original plot filled with historical content, love, lust and a bit of humor. His characters were strong and well developed making this book a page turner. Highly recommended for all readers.

This review is based on a complimentary copy from the author which was provided for an honest review.

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**Yvonne says**

**Great story!**

This is a long book but it has a lot of really great characters and a very interesting storyline. Great job!

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## **Korab Uka says**

The thing I loved most about this book, besides the plot, are the characters in it. The story follows the two main characters, Reinhardt and Bela and the struggles they overcome. The City of Earthly Desire is a story of people becoming who they want to be, never forgetting who they are and where they come from. The story contains symbolism such as art, animals and communism propaganda to illustrate the Drixler's family self independence and knowledge of who they want to become and why they can never be like the communists and it is done in a great and powerful way, Art is the symbolism that drives the whole story as Reinhardts immediate family are all into art. The book's supporting characters are all intriguing and offer a lot to the story, they serve a purpose. Most of the supporting characters shape and influence the way the two main characters think and view life. They shape them into who they will become or even who they don't become.

It's a very interesting read with a great dialogue and characters, if you're a fan of literature, I recommend this book highly, you won't regret it. I was hooked from the very first sentence

A wonderful story about finding yourself and learning how to cope with hardships.

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