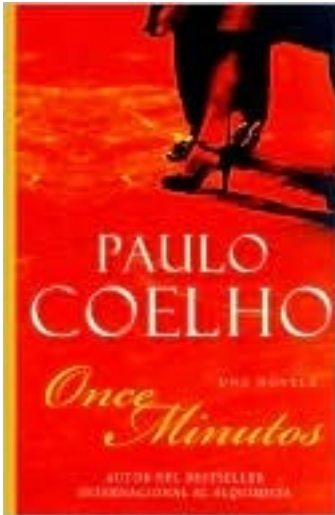

Paulo Coelho

Once minutos



Title: Once minutos

Author: Paulo Coelho

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Description

Eleven Minutes is the story of Maria, a young girl from a Brazilian village, whose first innocent brushes with love leave her heartbroken. At a tender age, she becomes convinced that she will never find true love, instead believing that "love is a terrible thing that will make you suffer. . . ." A chance meeting in Rio takes her to Geneva, where she dreams of finding fame and fortune. Maria's despairing view of love is put to the test when she meets a handsome young painter. In this odyssey of self-discovery, Maria has to choose between pursuing a path of darkness -- sexual pleasure for its own sake -- or risking everything to find her own "inner light" and the possibility of sacred sex, sex in the context of love.

Insightful reviews

Bookshop: I was burnt by his book titled "Veronica decides to die". When I flipped through his bestseller, "The Alchemist", I was not too impressed either. I thought he was too "Celestine Prophecy". When I asked people what "The Alchemist" was all about, they always said it was about searching for something. But they could never be able to explain what that something was and they quickly moved on to rave about how inspirational the book was. How you can say searching for something you don't even know inspirational is beyond me. I'm too dumb for stuffs like that.

Anyway, I picked up this book in Freiburg's train station while waiting for our train to Titisee. I remembered wrongly that this was the book that Cindy raved about. Having read her review, I wanted to give Paulo Coelho a second chance.

The book is about Maria, a young Brazilian girl who comes from a poor family, dreams of fairy tales and ends up as a prostitute in Geneva. Apparently, this is based on a true story. That's the first mistake. The idea is not unique but I suppose variations can be spun into interesting stories. However, he fails to marry his philosophical style with this true story with a fixed ending, which, to do it successfully, I'm sure must be extremely difficult.

The first few chapters outlining the life of little Maria are engaging enough. I couldn't put the book down at this stage. Once she gets to Switzerland, the lecturing, dreamy, philosophical style that I dislike starts. Maria is no ordinary prostitute. She is beautiful as well as smart (Yawn). She first attempts to justify her reasons or anybody's reasons to be a prostitute. Before that is concluded, she moves on to find a rich and young and handsome painter who worships her (Snore). At the same time, she is tempted into masochism by a rich (again) and famous music producer who is disappointed by his wife's infidelity. She must choose between these two! That is essentially the story. In between the story about Maria, the author inserts graphic descriptions of various sexual acts, sex education, which sometimes read like a newspaper's sex column (ejaculation is not the same as sex, please!), and historical information (the history of prostitution complete with years marking civilization. Pah!).

I also note a few exaggerations in this book. One I cannot stand is this. He describes that the loneliest people are the top executives, commanding lots of money and respect and having

great families, when asked to change jobs by head hunters. The reasons? Because this executive cannot talk to his colleagues as they wouldn't let them go (This is misleading. It highly depends on situation) and he can't talk to his family because the wife, who knows nothing about taking risk, wouldn't let him. HELLO?? Despite his attempt to be sophisticated and deep, this is very shallow indeed.

I wrote the review when I was about 3/4 into the story. Toward the end, her struggle between staying in Geneva or going back to Brazil is slow and painfully dotted with unnecessary pretentious and meaningless analysis of love, sex, women, men, the universe, and the rubbish. After reading the ending, I was further disappointed and decided to downgrade the rating by one more star.

The story can be interesting but it has to be done strictly as a biography, as a story-telling.

This book sorts of seals my dislike of his writings. I dislike the content, I dislike the style. I dislike his empty philosophies. I don't know what to learn from his books. Maybe that's because I don't care to interpret. But shouldn't good writings do not require people to interpret their messages but ponder on the contents? Having said that, try and read it especially if you are a fan. You may beg to differ.

Lesley: I'm giving this book five stars because I definitely thought it was amazing. BUT ... like every other Coelho book I've read, it let me down in the end.

How can he articulate so many nuggets of wisdom, often through characters the writing of which expresses the irony and profundity of their insights, and yet packaged in stories with such cliché outcomes?!?! So many of his books explore the ephemerality of love, the moment, the permanence of change, the fleetingness of forever... and yet, his characters always seem to end up living "happily ever after."

This one was about my favorite topic(s): sex, pain and suffering, pleasure, enthrallment, identity; the stories we tell ourselves about ourselves ("trust me, I'm telling you stories"), the rationalization of emotion and spiritualization of the mundane--Hey: the mystery of life.

Maria--a prostitute--is exposed to an evening of sado-masochistic role play with a "special client" and finds freedom from herself and her desires during orgasm, tied up and whipped. Then another lover (another "special client") convinces her to not to go down that path, that freedom can be found testing the limits of desire, not the limits of pain. They have their own little role play--their relationship is based as much on fantasy as the other. After a night of bliss, she leaves him to go back to Brazil, cherishing the memory that can be spoiled by "real life."

But, then he intercepts her in Paris with roses (it was their destiny! ick) and they live happily ever after.

So, to sum up (as E just pointed out): The dirty parts I liked. The ending, not so much.

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