



Paulo Coelho

Eleven Minutes
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How I came to write *Eleven Minutes*

During my lifetime, I have experienced sex in many different and contradictory ways. I was born into a conservative age, when virginity was the defining characteristic of any decent young woman. I witnessed the emergence of the contraceptive pill and of antibiotics, both indispensable for the sexual revolution that would follow. I plunged enthusiastically into the hippy era, when we went to the other extreme, with free love being practised at rock concerts. I now find myself in an age which is half-conservative, half-liberal, an age haunted by a new disease resistant to all antibiotics.

It is part of a writer's role to reflect on his or her own life, and writing a book about sexuality came to be a priority with me. I tried various approaches, but all failed. It was only when I met the prostitute who would provide the connecting thread for this novel that I realised: in order to write about sublime sex, I had to start with the fear that everything will go wrong.

Eleven Minutes does not set out to be a manual or a treatise about a man and a woman confronted by the unknown world of sexual relationships. It is an analysis of my own trajectory. It took me a long time to learn that the coming together of two bodies is more than a response to certain physical stimuli or to the survival instinct. Sex is a manifestation of a spiritual energy called love.

Sex means, above all, having the courage to experience your own paradoxes, individuality, and willingness to surrender. I wrote *Eleven Minutes*, in order to find out if, at this stage of life, at 55, I had the courage to learn everything that life has tried to teach me on the subject.

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