



The Witch of Portobello: A Novel (P.S.)

By Paulo Coelho

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That is the central question of international bestselling author Paulo Coelho's profound new work, *The Witch of Portobello*. It is the story of a mysterious woman named Athena, told by the many who knew her well—or hardly at all. Like *The Alchemist*, *The Witch of Portobello* is the kind of story that will transform the way readers think about love, passion, joy, and sacrifice.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Multimillion-seller Coelho (*The Devil and Miss Prym*, etc.) returns with another uncanny fusion of philosophy, religious miracle and moral parable. The Portobello of the title is London's Portobello Road, where Sherine Khalil, aka Athena, finds the worship meeting she's leading—where she becomes an omniscient goddess named Hagia Sophia—disrupted by a Protestant protest. Framed as a set of interviews conducted with those who knew Athena, who is dead as the book opens, the story recounts her birth in Transylvania to a Gypsy mother, her adoption by wealthy Lebanese Christians; her short, early marriage to a man she meets at a London college (one of the interviewees); her son Viorel's birth; and her stint selling real estate in Dubai. Back in London in the book's second half, Athena learns to harness the powers that have been present but inchoate within her, and the story picks up as she acquires a "teacher" (Deidre O'Neill, aka Edda, another interviewee), then disciples (also interviewed), and speeds toward a spectacular end. Coelho veers between his signature criticism of modern life and the hydra-headed alternative that Athena taps into. Athena's earliest years don't end up having much plot, but the second half's intrigue sustains the book. (*May*) Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

From [Booklist](#)

Best-selling fabulist Coelho continues to transform his trademark combination of mysticism and storytelling into spellbinding examinations of the human soul. In this deceptively simple novel, a bereaved lover attempts to chronicle, dissect, and comprehend the often-twisted path followed by Athena, otherwise known as the Witch of Portobello Road. An orphaned Romanian gypsy, adopted as an infant by adoring Lebanese parents, Athena recognized and struggled with the power of her magical gifts at an early age. Spurred on by truths and passions inaccessible to most of her contemporaries, she traipsed around Europe and the Middle East in search of acceptance, enlightenment, and a truer path. Developing a cultlike following, she became the object of a modern-day witch hunt that seemingly culminated in tragedy. Unable to construct a typically straightforward chronicle of her life, her would-be biographer relies on the divergent recollections and reflections of the people who knew—or thought they knew—her best. Narrated from multiple points of view, the portrait of Athena that emerges is as provocative and spiritually complex as one would expect from the author of *The Alchemist* (1993) and *The Devil and Miss Prym* (2006). *Margaret Flanagan*
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Review

Praise for the *Witch of Portobello*: 'Filled with Coelho's recurring themes - spirituality, destiny, freedom - this is a riveting and inspiring read.' *Belfast Telegraph* 'Paulo Coelho successfully defines the undefinable and possesses the skill to handle the abstract without being too confusing or vague.' *Irish Mail on Sunday* Praise for Paulo Coelho: 'An exceptional writer.' *USA Today* 'His books have had a life-enhancing impact on millions of people.' *Times* 'One of the few to deserve the term "Publishing Phenomenon".' *Independent on Sunday* 'Coelho's writing is beautifully poetic but his message is what counts...he gives me hope and puts a smile on my face.' *Daily Express*

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Tom Scott:

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