

Brida



Paulo Coelho

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Brida

«HarperCollins»

Coelho P.

Brida / P. Coelho — «HarperCollins»,

The spellbinding novel from one of the world's best-loved authors, Paulo Coelho, now in ebook. This is the story of Brida, a young Irish girl, and her quest for knowledge. She has long been interested in various aspects of magic, and has taken courses in astrology, tarot, and numerology, but is searching for something more. Her search leads her to people of great wisdom, who begin to teach her about the world. Her teachers sense that Brida has a gift, but cannot tell what that is. Meanwhile, Brida pursues her course ever deeper into the mysteries of life, seeking to answer questions about who she is. She meets a wise man who dwells in a forest, and teaches her about overcoming her fears and trusting in the goodness of the world, and a woman who teaches her how to dance to the music of the world, and how to pray to the moon. She seeks her destiny, as she struggles to find a balance between her relationships and her desire to become a witch. This enthralling novel incorporates themes fans of Paulo will love. It is a tale of love, passion, mystery and spirituality.

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Brida

Paulo Coelho

HARPER

Dedication

For N.D.L. who made the miracles happen,
for Christina, who is one of those miracles,
and for Brida

Epigraph

... what woman having ten silver coins, if she loses one of them, does not light a lamp, sweep the house, and search carefully until she finds it? When she has found it, she calls together her friends and neighbours, saying, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found the coin that I had lost.'

Luke 15:8-9

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Warning

In my book *The Diary of a Magus*, I replaced two of the practices of RAM with exercises in perception learned in the days when I worked in drama. Although the results were, strictly speaking, the same, I received a severe reprimand from my Teacher. 'There may well be quicker or easier methods – that doesn't matter; what matters is that the Tradition remains unchanged,' he said.

For this reason, the few rituals described in *Brida* are the same as those practised over the centuries by the Tradition of the Moon – a specific tradition that requires experience and practice. Practising such rituals without guidance is dangerous, inadvisable, unnecessary and can greatly hinder the Spiritual Search.

Paulo Coelho

Prologue

We used to sit until late at night in a café in Lourdes. I was a pilgrim on the sacred Road of Rome and still had many more days to travel in search of my Gift. She was Brida O'Fern and was in charge of a certain stretch of that Road.

On one such night, I asked if she remembered having felt especially moved when she arrived at a particular abbey that forms part of the star-shaped trail followed by Initiates in the Pyrenees.

'I've never been there,' she replied.

I was surprised. She did, after all, have a Gift.

'All roads lead to Rome,' said Brida, using an old proverb to tell me that Gifts could be awoken anywhere. 'I walked my Road to Rome in Ireland.'

During our subsequent meetings, she told me the story of her search. When she finished, I asked if, one day, I could write it down.

She agreed initially, but whenever we met after that, she kept raising obstacles. She asked me to change the names of those involved; she wanted to know what kind of people would read the book and how they would be likely to react.

'I've no idea,' I said. 'But I don't think that's why you're creating all these problems.'

'You're right,' she said. 'It's because it seems to me such a personal story, and I'm not sure anyone else would get much out of it.'

That's a risk we're now going to take together, Brida. An anonymous text from the Tradition says that, in life, each person can take one of two attitudes: to build or to plant. The builders might take years over their tasks, but one day, they finish what they're doing. Then they find they're hemmed in by their own walls. Life loses its meaning when the building stops.

Then there are those who plant. They endure storms and all the many vicissitudes of the seasons, and they rarely rest. But, unlike a building, a garden never stops growing. And while it requires the gardener's constant attention, it also allows life for the gardener to be a great adventure.

Gardeners always recognise each other, because they know that in the history of each plant lies the growth of the whole World.

The Author

Ireland

August 1983–March 1984

Summer and Autumn

'I want to learn about magic,' said the girl. The Magus looked at her. Faded jeans, T-shirt, the challenging look adopted by all shy people precisely when it's least needed. 'I must be twice her age,' he thought. And despite this, he knew that he had met his Soulmate.

'My name's Brida,' she went on. 'Forgive me for not introducing myself. I've waited a long time for this moment and I'm more nervous than I thought I would be.'

'Why do you want to learn about magic?' he asked.

'So that I can find answers to some of the questions I have regarding life, so that I can learn about the occult powers, and, possibly, how to travel back into the past and forwards into the future.'

It wasn't the first time someone had come to the forest to ask him this. There was a time when he'd been a Teacher who was known and respected by the Tradition. He'd taken on several pupils and believed that the world would change if he could change those around him. But he had made a mistake. And Teachers of the Tradition cannot make mistakes.

'Don't you think you're rather young?'

'I'm twenty-one,' said Brida. 'If I wanted to start learning ballet, I'd be considered too old.'

The Magus made a sign for her to follow him. They set off together through the forest, in silence. 'She's pretty,' he was thinking as the shadows cast by the trees rapidly lengthened and shifted as the sun sank lower on the horizon. 'But I'm twice her age.' This, he knew, meant that he might well suffer.

Brida felt irritated by the silence of the man walking beside her; he hadn't even deigned to respond to her last remark. The forest floor was wet and covered in fallen leaves; she, too, noticed the shadows changing and the rapid approach of night. It would be dark soon and they didn't have a torch with them.

'I have to trust him,' she told herself. 'If I believe that he can teach me magic, then I also have to believe that he can guide me through the forest.'

They continued walking. He appeared to be wandering aimlessly, from one side to the other, changing direction even when there was no obstacle in his path. More than once they walked in a circle, passing the same place three or four times.

'Perhaps he's testing me.' She was determined to see this experience through to the end and tried telling herself that everything that was happening – including those circular walks – was perfectly normal.

She had come a very long way and had hoped for more from this encounter. Dublin was over 90 miles away, and the buses to the village were uncomfortable and left at absurd times. She'd had to get up early, travel for three hours, ask the people in the village where she might find him and explain what she wanted with such a strange man. Finally, someone had told her in which part of the forest he could usually be found during the day, but not without first warning her that he'd already tried to seduce one of the village girls.

'He's an interesting man,' she thought to herself. They were climbing now, and she found herself hoping that the sun would linger a little longer in the sky. She was afraid she might slip on the damp leaves.

'Why do you really want to learn about magic?'

Brida was pleased that the silence had been broken. She gave him the same answer she had given before.

But he wasn't satisfied.

'Perhaps you want to learn about magic because it's mysterious and secret, because it provides answers that few human beings ever manage to find in a whole lifetime, or perhaps because it evokes a romantic past.'

Brida said nothing. She didn't know what to say. Afraid to give an answer the Magus might not like, she rather wished he would lapse back into his earlier silence.

At last, they came to the top of a hill, having crossed the entire forest. The ground there was rocky and bare of vegetation, but at least it was less slippery, and Brida could follow the Magus without difficulty.

He sat down on the highest point and asked Brida to do the same.

'Other people have been here before,' said the Magus. 'They, too, came to ask me to teach them about magic, but I've taught everything I needed to teach. I've given back to humanity what it gave to me. Now I want to be alone, to climb mountains, tend plants and commune with God.'

'That's not true,' replied the girl.

'What isn't true?' he asked, surprised.

'You might want to commune with God, but it isn't true that you want to be alone.'

Brida regretted having spoken. She had spoken on an impulse and now it was too late to correct her mistake. Perhaps there *were* people who wanted to be alone. Perhaps women needed men more than men needed women.

The Magus, however, showed no sign of irritation when he spoke again.

'I'm going to ask you a question,' he said, 'and you must be absolutely honest in your answer. If you tell me the truth, I'll teach you what you ask. If you lie, you must never again return to this forest.'

Brida gave a sigh of relief. He was going to ask her a question. She simply had to tell the truth, that was all. She had always assumed that a Teacher would demand really difficult things of someone before taking them on as a pupil.

'Let's suppose that I do start teaching you what I've learned,' he said, his eyes fixed on hers. 'Let's suppose that I start to show you the parallel universes that surround us, the angels, the wisdom of nature, the mysteries of the Tradition of the Sun and the Tradition of the Moon. Then one day, you go into town to buy some food and, in the middle of the street, you meet the love of your life.'

'I wouldn't know how to recognise him,' she thought, but decided to say nothing. This question was turning out to be more difficult than she'd imagined.

'He feels the same and comes over to you. You fall in love with each other. You continue your studies with me. During the day, I teach you the wisdom of the Cosmos, and at night, he teaches you the wisdom of Love. But there comes a moment when those two things can no longer coexist, and you have to choose.'

The Magus paused for a few seconds. Before he actually asked the question, he felt afraid of what the girl's reply might be. Her coming there that evening meant the end of a stage in both their lives. He knew this, because he understood the traditions and intentions of Teachers. He needed her as much as she needed him, but she had to answer the question he put to her truthfully; that was the sole condition.

'Now answer this question with total honesty,' he said at last, screwing up his courage. 'Would you give up everything you had learned until then – all the possibilities and all the mysteries that the world of magic could offer you – in order to stay with the love of your life?'

Brida looked away. Around her lay the mountains and the forests, and down below, the lights in the village were beginning to come on; soon, families would be gathering round the table to have supper. They worked hard and honestly, they feared God, and they tried to help their fellow man. They did all these things because they had known love. Their lives had a reason, they could understand

everything that was going on in the universe without ever having heard of things like the Tradition of the Sun and the Tradition of the Moon.

‘I see no contradiction between my search and my personal happiness,’ she said.

‘Answer my question.’ His eyes were still fixed on hers. ‘Would you give up everything for that man?’

Brida felt a tremendous urge to cry. It wasn’t so much a question, it was a choice, the most difficult choice anyone would have to make in life. It was something she’d already thought about a lot. There had been a time when nothing in the world was as important as herself. She’d had several boyfriends and had always believed that she loved each one, only to see love vanish from one moment to the next. Of all the things she’d experienced until then, love had been the most difficult. Just then, she was in love with someone slightly older than herself; he was studying physics and had a completely different vision of the world from hers. Once again, she was putting her belief in love, trusting her feelings, but she’d been disappointed so often before that she was no longer sure of anything. Nevertheless, this was the great gamble of her life.

She continued to avoid the Magus’s gaze. Her eyes were fixed on the village and its twinkling lights. People had been trying to understand the universe through love ever since the beginning of time.

‘I’d give it all up,’ she said at last.

The man standing before her, she thought, would never understand what went on in people’s hearts. He was a man who knew the power and the mystery of magic, but he didn’t know people. His hair was grizzled, his skin burned by the sun, and he had the physique of someone used to walking in the mountains. He was so very attractive, with eyes that revealed a soul full of answers, and he would once again be disappointed by the feelings of ordinary human beings. She was disappointed with herself too, but she couldn’t lie.

‘Look at me,’ said the Magus.

Brida felt ashamed, but did as he asked.

‘You told the truth. I will be your teacher.’

Darkness fell, and the stars were shining in a moonless sky. It took two hours for Brida to tell the stranger her life story. She tried to look for facts that would explain her interest in magic – childhood visions, premonitions, an inner calling – but could find nothing. She simply felt a need to know, that was all. And because of that, she had taken courses in astrology, tarot and numerology.

‘Those are merely languages,’ said the Magus, ‘and they’re not the only ones. Magic speaks all the languages of the human heart.’

‘So what is magic?’ she asked.

Even in the darkness, Brida could sense that the Magus had turned away from her. He was looking up at the sky, absorbed in thought, perhaps in search of an answer.

‘Magic is a bridge,’ he said at last, ‘a bridge that allows you to walk from the visible world over into the invisible world, and to learn the lessons of both those worlds.’

‘And how can I learn to cross that bridge?’

‘By discovering your own way of crossing it. Everyone has their own way.’

‘That’s what I came here to find out.’

‘There are two forms,’ replied the Magus. ‘The Tradition of the Sun, which teaches the secrets through space and the world that surrounds us, and the Tradition of the Moon, which teaches through time and the things that are imprisoned in time’s memory.’

Brida had understood. The Tradition of the Sun was the night, the trees, the cold gripping her body, the stars in the sky. And the Tradition of the Moon was that man before her now, with the wisdom of the ancestors shining in his eyes.

‘I learned the Tradition of the Moon,’ said the Magus, as if he could read her thoughts, ‘but I was never a Teacher of that Tradition. I am a Teacher of the Tradition of the Sun.’

‘Teach me the Tradition of the Sun, then,’ said Brida, feeling slightly disconcerted, for she had sensed a note of tenderness in the Magus’s voice.

‘I will teach you what I have learned, but the Tradition of the Sun has many roads. One must trust in each person’s ability to teach him or herself.’

Brida was right. There *was* a note of tenderness in the Magus’s voice. Far from reassuring her, this frightened her.

‘I know I’m capable of understanding the Tradition of the Sun,’ she said.

The Magus stopped gazing up at the stars and concentrated on the young woman. He knew that she was not quite ready to learn the Tradition of the Sun and yet he must teach it to her. Some pupils choose their Teachers.

‘Before our first lesson, I want to remind you of one thing,’ he said. ‘When you find your path, you must not be afraid. You need to have sufficient courage to make mistakes. Disappointment, defeat and despair are the tools God uses to show us the way.’

‘Strange tools,’ said Brida. ‘They often dissuade people from carrying on.’

The Magus knew the reason for these tools, he had already experienced both in body and soul.

‘Teach me the Tradition of the Sun,’ she insisted.

The Magus asked Brida to lean back against the rock and relax.

‘There’s no need to close your eyes. Look at the world around you and try to see and understand as much as you can. The Tradition of the Sun is constantly revealing eternal knowledge to each individual.’

Brida did as the Magus told her to, but she felt he was moving much too fast.

‘This is the first and most important lesson,’ he said. ‘It was created by a Spanish mystic who understood the meaning of faith. His name was St John of the Cross.’

He looked at the girl’s eager, trusting face. In his heart, he prayed she would understand what he had to teach her. She was, after all, his Soulmate, even if she didn’t yet know it, even if she was still very young and fascinated by the things and the people of this world.

[In the darkness, Brida could](#) just make out the shape of the Magus going back into the forest and disappearing among the trees to her left. She was afraid of being left there alone, but tried to remain relaxed. This was her first lesson, and she must not show that she was nervous.

‘He accepted me as his pupil. I can’t disappoint him.’

She was pleased with herself and, at the same time, surprised at how quickly it had all happened. Not that she had ever doubted her abilities – she was proud of herself and of what had brought her there. She was sure that the Magus was somewhere nearby, watching her reactions, to see if she was capable of learning the first lesson of magic. He had spoken of courage, and so even if she felt afraid – images of the snakes and scorpions that might be living underneath that rock began to rise up from the depths of her imagination – she must be brave. In a while, he would return to teach her the first lesson.

‘I’m a strong, determined woman,’ she repeated to herself under her breath. She was privileged to be there with that man whom other people either loved or feared. She looked back on the evening they had just spent together and recalled the moment when she had sensed a certain tenderness in his voice. ‘Perhaps he found me interesting. Perhaps he even wanted to make love with me.’ It wouldn’t be a bad experience; there was, however, a strange look in his eyes.

‘What an idiotic thing to think.’ There she was, in search of something very real – a path to knowledge – and suddenly she was thinking of herself as a mere woman. She tried not to think about it again, and it was then that she realised how much time had passed since the Magus had left her alone.

She felt the beginnings of panic; she had heard contradictory views about that man. Some said he was the most powerful Teacher they’d ever met, capable of changing the direction of the wind,

of piercing the clouds, purely by the power of thought. And Brida was as fascinated as everyone else by such prodigies.

Other people, though – people on the fringes of the world of magic, who attended the same courses and classes as she did – assured her that he was a black magician and had once used his powers to destroy a man, because he had fallen in love with the man's wife. And this was why, even though he was a Teacher, he had been condemned to wander the lonely forests.

'Perhaps solitude has made his madness worse,' Brida thought, and again felt the first stirrings of panic. She may have been young, but she knew the harm that loneliness could do to people, especially as they got older. She had met people who had lost the glow of being alive because they could no longer fight against loneliness and had ended up becoming addicted to it. They were, for the most part, people who believed the world to be an undignified, inglorious place, and who spent their evenings and nights talking on and on about the mistakes others had made. They were people whom solitude had made into the judges of the world, whose verdicts were scattered to the four winds for whoever cared to listen. Perhaps the Magus had gone mad with loneliness.

A sudden noise nearby made her jump, and her heart raced. All trace of her earlier confidence vanished. She looked around – nothing. A wave of terror seemed to rise up from her belly and spread through her body.

'I must get a grip on myself,' she thought, but it was impossible. Images of snakes and scorpions and childhood ghosts began to appear before her. Brida was too terrified to stay calm. Another image arose: that of a powerful magician who had made a pact with the Devil and was offering her up as a sacrifice.

'Where are you?' she cried. She didn't care now what impression she made on anyone. She simply wanted to get out of there.

No one answered.

'I want to get out of here! Help me!'

There was only the forest and its strange noises. Brida felt so dizzy with fear she thought she might faint. But she mustn't. Now that she was quite sure he was nowhere around, fainting certainly wouldn't help matters. She must stay in control.

This thought made her aware that there was some part of her struggling to maintain control. 'I mustn't call out,' she said to herself. Her shouts could attract other men who lived in that forest and men who live in forests can be more dangerous than any wild animal.

'I have faith,' she started to say softly. 'I have faith in God, faith in my Guardian Angel, who brought me here, and who remains here with me. I can't explain what he's like, but I know he is near. I will not dash my foot against a stone.'

These last words were from a psalm she had learned as a child, and which she hadn't thought about for years. She had been taught the psalm by her grandmother, who had died quite recently. As soon as she wished her grandmother could be there, she immediately felt a friendly presence.

She was beginning to understand that there was a big difference between danger and fear.

'He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High ...' that was how the Psalm began. She realised that it was all coming back to her word for word, exactly as if her grandmother were reciting it to her now. She kept reciting for some time, without stopping, and despite her fear, she felt calmer. She had no choice: either she believed in God, in her Guardian Angel, or she despaired.

She felt a protective presence. 'I need to believe in this presence. I don't know how to explain it, but it exists. And it will stay with me all night, because I don't know how to find my way out of here alone.'

When she was a child, she would sometimes wake up in the middle of night, feeling terrified. Her father would carry her to the window and show her the town where they lived. He would talk to her about the nightwatchmen, about the milkman who would already be out delivering the milk, about the baker making their daily bread. Her father was trying to drive out the monsters with which

she'd filled the night and replace them with the people who kept watch over the darkness. 'The night is just a part of the day,' he would say.

The night is just a part of the day. Therefore she could feel as safe in the dark as she did in the light. It was the dark that had made her invoke that protective presence. She must trust it. And that trust was called Faith. No one could ever understand Faith, but Faith was what she was experiencing now, an inexplicable immersion in blackest night. It only existed because she believed in it. Miracles couldn't be explained either, but they existed for those who believed in them.

'He did say something about the first lesson,' she thought, suddenly realising what was going on. The protective presence was there because she believed in it. Brida began to feel the fatigue of so many hours under tension. She began to relax again and, with each moment that passed, she felt more protected.

She had faith. And faith wouldn't allow the forest to be peopled again with scorpions and snakes. Faith would keep her Guardian Angel awake and watching.

She leaned back against the rock again and, all unknowing, fell asleep.

It was light when she woke, and a beautiful sun was gilding everything around her. She felt a little cold, her clothes were grubby, but her soul was rejoicing. She had spent the whole night alone in a forest.

She looked everywhere for the Magus, knowing that she would not find him. He must be walking in the forest somewhere trying 'to commune with God', and perhaps wondering if the girl who'd come to see him the previous night had sufficient courage to learn the first lesson of the Tradition of the Sun.

'I learned about the Dark Night,' she said to the now silent forest. 'I learned that the search for God is a Dark Night, that Faith is a Dark Night. And that's hardly a surprise really, because for us each day is a dark night. None of us knows what might happen even the next minute, and yet still we go forwards. Because we trust. Because we have Faith.'

Or, who knows, perhaps because we just don't see the mystery contained in the next second. Not that it mattered. What mattered was knowing that she had understood.

That every moment in life is an act of faith.

That you could choose to fill it with snakes and scorpions or with a strong protecting force.

That Faith cannot be explained. It was simply a Dark Night. And all she had to do was to accept it or not.

Brida looked at her watch and saw that it was getting late. She had to catch a bus, travel for three hours and think up some convincing excuse to give her boyfriend; he would never believe she had spent the whole night alone in a forest.

'It's a very difficult thing, the Tradition of the Sun!' she shouted to the forest. 'I have to be my own Teacher, and that isn't what I was expecting!'

She looked at the village down below, mentally traced her path back through the woods and set off. First, though, she turned to the rock again. In a loud, joyous voice, she cried:

'There's one other thing. You're a very interesting man.'

Leaning against the trunk of an old tree, the Magus watched the girl vanish into the woods. He had listened to her fears and heard her cries during the night. At one point, he had even been tempted to go over and embrace her, to shield her from her terror, saying that she didn't need this kind of challenge.

Now he was pleased that he hadn't, and he felt proud that the girl, in all her youthful confusion, was his Soulmate.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

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