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“The story has the comic charm, dramatic tension, and psychological intensity of a fairy tale, but it’s full of specific wisdom as well. . . . A sweetly exotic tale for young and old alike.”

— *Publishers Weekly*

“Beneath this novel’s compelling story and the shimmering elegance with which it’s told lies a bedrock of wisdom about following one’s heart.”

— *Booklist*

“As memorable and meaningful as Saint-Exupéry’s *The Little Prince*. ”

— *Austin American-Statesman*

“A touching, inspiring fable.”

— *Indianapolis Star*

“A little poke in the ribs from on high.”

— *Detroit Free Press*

“*The Alchemist* is a fabulous success.”

— *Der Spiegel* (Germany)

“A remarkable tale about the most magical of all journeys: the quest to fulfill one’s destiny. I recommend *The Alchemist* to anyone who is passionately committed to claiming the life of their dreams—today.”

—Anthony Robbins, author of *Awaken the Giant Within*

“An entrepreneurial tale of universal wisdom we can apply to the business of our own lives.”

—Spencer Johnson, M.D., author of *Who Moved My Cheese*

“An adventure story full of magic and wisdom.”

—Rudolfo Anaya, author of *Bless Me, Ultima*

“*The Alchemist* is a beautiful book about magic, dreams, and the treasures we seek elsewhere and then find at our doorstep.”

—Madonna in *Sonntag Aktuell* (Germany)

“*The Alchemist* is an unabashed delight and inspirational wonder. This fable is a roseate amalgam of spiritual quest, existential puzzle, lovely sensitivity, and deep strength.”

—Malcolm Boyd, author of *Are You Running with Me, Jesus?*

“Paulo Coelho knows the secret of literary alchemy.”

—Kenzaburo Oé, winner of the Nobel Prize in Literature

“A most tender and gentle story. It is a rare gem of a book, and will most certainly touch the very core of every heart earnestly seeking its own destiny on the journey of life.”

—Gerald G. Jampolsky, M.D., coauthor of *Change Your Mind, Change Your Life* and *Love Is Letting Go of Fear*

“Rarely do I come across a story with the directness and simplicity of Coelho’s *The Alchemist*. It lifts the reader out of time and focuses through a believably unlikely story on a young dreamer looking for himself. A beautiful story with a pointed message for every reader.”

—Joseph Girzone, author of *Joshua*

“This is the type of book that makes you understand more about yourself and about life. It has philosophy and is spiced with colors, flavors, and subjects, like a fairy tale. A lovely book.”

— *Yedi’ot Aharonot* (Israel)

“A boy named Santiago joins the ranks of Candide and Pinocchio by taking us on a very excellent adventure.”

—Paul Zindel, author of the Pulitzer Prize–winning play *The Effect of Gamma Rays on Man-in-the-Moon Marigolds*

“The mystic quality in the odd adventures of the boy, Santiago, may bring not only him but others who read this fine book closer to recognizing and reaching their own inner destinies.”

—Charlotte Zolotow, author of *If You Listen*

“Paulo Coelho gives you the inspiration to follow your own dreams by seeing the world through your own eyes and not someone else’s.”

—Lynn Andrews, author of the Medicine Woman series

“Nothing is impossible, such is Coelho’s message, as long as you wish it with all your heart. No other book bears so much hope; small wonder its author became a guru among all those in search of the meaning of life.”

— *Focus* (Germany)

“*The Alchemist* is a truly poetic book.”

— *Welt am Sonntag* (Germany)

“Dotted throughout the story and illuminated in a poetic style are metaphors and deep insights that stir our imagination and transport the reader on a fantastic journey of the soul.”

— *Yomiuri Shimbun* (Japan)

“*The Alchemist* brings to mind *The Little Prince* by Saint-Exupéry and *The Prophet* by Khalil Gibran, as well as biblical parables.”

— *Gazeta Wyborcza* (Poland)

“*The Alchemist* is a beautiful and heartwarming story with an exotic flavor.

. . . You may or may not agree with Paulo Coelho’s philosophy, but it’s nonetheless a tale that comforts our hearts as much as our souls.”

— *Bergensavisen* (Norway)

“*The Alchemist* is like a modern-day *The Little Prince*. A supreme and simple book.”

—Milorad Pavic, author of *Dictionary of the Khazars*

“Among Latin American writers, only Colombia’s Gabriel Garcia Marquez is more widely read than Brazil’s Paulo Coelho.”

— *The Economist*

## Foreword

When *The Alchemist* was first published twenty-five years ago in my native Brazil, no one noticed. A bookseller in the northeast corner of the country told me that only one person purchased a copy the first week of its release. It took another six months for the bookseller to unload a second copy—and that was to the same person who bought the first! And who knows how long it took to sell the third.

By the end of the year, it was clear to everyone that *The Alchemist* wasn’t working. My original publisher decided to cut me loose and cancelled our contract. They wiped their hands of the project and let me

take the book with me. I was forty-one and desperate.

But I never lost faith in the book or ever wavered in my vision. Why?

Because it was me in there, all of me, heart and soul. I was living my own metaphor. A man sets out on a journey, dreaming of a beautiful or magical place, in pursuit of some unknown treasure. At the end of his journey, the man realizes the treasure was with him the entire time. I was following my Personal Legend, and my treasure was my capacity to write. And I wanted to share this treasure with the world.

As I wrote in *The Alchemist*, when you want something, the whole universe conspires to help you. I started knocking on the doors of other publishers. One opened, and the publisher on the other side believed in me and my book and agreed to give *The Alchemist* a second chance. Slowly, through word of mouth, it finally started to sell—three thousand, then six thousand, ten thousand—book by book, gradually throughout the year.

Eight months later, an American visiting Brazil picked up a copy of *The Alchemist* in a local bookstore. He wanted to translate the book and help me find a publisher in the United States. HarperCollins agreed to bring it to an American audience, publishing it with great fanfare: ads in the *New York Times* and influential news magazines, radio and television interviews. But it still took some time to sell, slowly finding its audience in the United



States by word of mouth, just as it did in Brazil. And then one day, Bill Clinton was photographed leaving the White House with a copy. Then Madonna raved about the book to *Vanity Fair*, and people from different walks of life—from Rush Limbaugh and Will Smith to college students and soccer moms—were suddenly talking about it.

*The Alchemist* became a spontaneous—and organic—Phenomenon. The book hit the *New York Times* bestseller list, an important milestone for any author, and stayed there for more than three hundred weeks. It has since been translated into more than eighty different languages, the most translated book by any living author, and is widely considered one of the ten best books of the twentieth century.

People continue to ask me if I knew *The Alchemist* would be such a huge success. The answer is no. I had no idea. How could I? When I sat down to write *The Alchemist*, all I knew is that I wanted to write about my soul. I wanted to write about my quest to find my treasure. I wanted to follow the omens, because I knew even then that the omens are the language of God. Though *The Alchemist* is now celebrating its twenty-fifth anniversary, it is no relic of the past. The book is still very much alive. Like my heart and like my soul, it continues to live every day, because my heart and soul are in it. And my heart and soul is your heart and soul. I am Santiago the shepherd

boy in search of my treasure, just as you are Santiago the shepherd boy in search of your own. The story of one person is the story of everyone, and one man's quest is the quest of all of humanity, which is why I believe *The Alchemist* continues all these years later to resonate with people from different cultures all around the world, touching them emotionally and spiritually, equally, without prejudice.

I re-read *The Alchemist* regularly and every time I do I experience the same sensations I felt when I wrote it. And here is what I feel. I feel happiness, because it is all of me, and all of you simultaneously. I feel happiness, too, because I know I can never be alone. Wherever I go, people understand me. They understand my soul. This continues to give me hope. When I read about clashes around the world—political clashes, economic clashes, cultural clashes—I am reminded that it is within our power to build a bridge to be crossed. Even if my neighbor doesn't understand my religion or understand my politics, he can understand my story. If he can understand my story, then he's never too far from me. It is always within my power to build a bridge. There is always a chance for reconciliation, a chance that one day he and I will sit around a table together and put an end to our history of clashes. And on this day, he will tell me his story and I will tell him mine.

— *Paulo Coelho, 2014*

## Prologue

*Translated by Clifford E. Landers*

The alchemist picked up a book that someone in the caravan had brought.

Leafing through the pages, he found a story about Narcissus.

The alchemist knew the legend of Narcissus, a youth who knelt daily beside a lake to contemplate his own beauty. He was so fascinated by himself that, one morning, he fell into the lake and drowned. At the spot where he fell, a flower was born, which was called the narcissus.

But this was not how the author of the book ended the story.

He said that when Narcissus died, the goddesses of the forest appeared and found the lake, which had been fresh water, transformed into a lake of salty tears.

“Why do you weep?” the goddesses asked.

“I weep for Narcissus,” the lake replied.

“Ah, it is no surprise that you weep for Narcissus,” they said, “for though we always pursued him in the forest, you alone could contemplate his beauty close at hand.”

“But . . . was Narcissus beautiful?” the lake asked.

“Who better than you to know that?” the goddesses said in wonder.

“After all, it was by your banks that he knelt each day to contemplate himself!”

The lake was silent for some time. Finally, it said:

“I weep for Narcissus, but I never noticed that Narcissus was beautiful. I weep because, each time he knelt beside my banks, I could see, in the depths of his eyes, my own beauty reflected.”

“What a lovely story,” the alchemist thought.



THE BOY'S NAME WAS SANTIAGO. DUSK was falling as the boy arrived with

his herd at an abandoned church. The roof had fallen in long ago, and an enormous sycamore had grown on the spot where the sacristy had once stood.

He decided to spend the night there. He saw to it that all the sheep entered through the ruined gate, and then laid some planks across it to prevent the flock from wandering away during the night. There were no wolves in the region, but once an animal had strayed during the night, and the boy had had to spend the entire next day searching for it.

He swept the floor with his jacket and lay down, using the book he had just finished reading as a pillow. He told himself that he would have to start reading thicker books: they lasted longer, and made more comfortable pillows.

It was still dark when he awoke, and, looking up, he could see the stars through the half-destroyed roof.

I wanted to sleep a little longer, he thought. He had had the same dream that night as a week ago, and once again he had awakened before it ended.

He arose and, taking up his crook, began to awaken the sheep that still slept. He had noticed that, as soon as he awoke, most of his animals also began to stir. It was as if some mysterious energy bound his life to that of

the sheep, with whom he had spent the past two years, leading them through the countryside in search of food and water. “They are so used to me that they know my schedule,” he muttered. Thinking about that for a moment, he realized that it could be the other way around: that it was he who had become accustomed to *their* schedule.

But there were certain of them who took a bit longer to awaken. The boy prodded them, one by one, with his crook, calling each by name. He had always believed that the sheep were able to understand what he said. So



there were times when he read them parts of his books that had made an impression on him, or when he would tell them of the loneliness or the happiness of a shepherd in the fields. Sometimes he would comment to them on the things he had seen in the villages they passed.

But for the past few days he had spoken to them about only one thing: the girl, the daughter of a merchant who lived in the village they would reach in about four days. He had been to the village only once, the year before. The merchant was the proprietor of a dry goods shop, and he always demanded that the sheep be sheared in his presence, so that he would not be cheated. A friend had told the boy about the shop, and he had taken his sheep there.

“I need to sell some wool,” the boy told the merchant.

The shop was busy, and the man asked the shepherd to wait until the afternoon. So the boy sat on the steps of the shop and took a book from his bag.

“I didn’t know shepherds knew how to read,” said a girl’s voice behind him.

The girl was typical of the region of Andalusia, with flowing black hair, and eyes that vaguely recalled the Moorish conquerors.

“Well, usually I learn more from my sheep than from books,” he answered. During the two hours that they talked, she told him she was the merchant’s daughter, and spoke of life in the village, where each day was like all the others. The shepherd told her of the Andalusian countryside, and



related the news from the other towns where he had stopped. It was a pleasant change from talking to his sheep.

“How did you learn to read?” the girl asked at one point.

“Like everybody learns,” he said. “In school.”

“Well, if you know how to read, why are you just a shepherd?”

The boy mumbled an answer that allowed him to avoid responding to her question. He was sure the girl would never understand. He went on telling stories about his travels, and her bright, Moorish eyes went wide with fear and surprise. As the time passed, the boy found himself wishing that the day would never end, that her father would stay busy and keep him waiting for three days. He recognized that he was feeling something he had never experienced before: the desire to live in one place forever. With the girl with the raven hair, his days would never be the same again.

But finally the merchant appeared, and asked the boy to shear four sheep. He paid for the wool and asked the shepherd to come back the following year.

And now it was only four days before he would be back in that same village. He was excited, and at the same time uneasy: maybe the girl had already forgotten him. Lots of shepherds passed through, selling their wool.

“It doesn’t matter,” he said to his sheep. “I know other girls in other



places.”

But in his heart he knew that it did matter. And he knew that shepherds, like seamen and like traveling salesmen, always found a town where there was someone who could make them forget the joys of carefree wandering. The day was dawning, and the shepherd urged his sheep in the direction of the sun. They never have to make any decisions, he thought. Maybe that’s why they always stay close to me.

The only things that concerned the sheep were food and water. As long as the boy knew how to find the best pastures in Andalusia, they would be his friends. Yes, their days were all the same, with the seemingly endless hours between sunrise and dusk; and they had never read a book in their young lives, and didn’t understand when the boy told them about the sights of the cities. They were content with just food and water, and, in exchange,



they generously gave of their wool, their company, and—once in a while—their meat.

If I became a monster today, and decided to kill them, one by one, they would become aware only after most of the flock had been slaughtered, thought the boy. They trust me, and they’ve forgotten how to rely on their own instincts, because I lead them to nourishment.

The boy was surprised at his thoughts. Maybe the church, with the sycamore growing from within, had been haunted. It had caused him to have the same dream for a second time, and it was causing him to feel anger toward his faithful companions. He drank a bit from the wine that remained from his dinner of the night before, and he gathered his jacket closer to his body. He knew that a few hours from now, with the sun at its zenith, the heat would be so great that he would not be able to lead his flock across the fields. It was the time of day when all of Spain slept during the summer. The heat lasted until nightfall, and all that time he had to carry his jacket. But when he thought to complain about the burden of its weight, he remembered that, because he had the jacket, he had withstood the cold of the dawn.

We have to be prepared for change, he thought, and he was grateful for the jacket's weight and warmth.

The jacket had a purpose, and so did the boy. His purpose in life was to travel, and, after two years of walking the Andalusian terrain, he knew all the cities of the region. He was planning, on this visit, to explain to the girl how it was that a simple shepherd knew how to read. That he had attended a seminary until he was sixteen. His parents had wanted him to become a priest, and thereby a source of pride for a simple farm family. They worked

hard just to have food and water, like the sheep. He had studied Latin, Spanish, and theology. But ever since he had been a child, he had wanted to know the world, and this was much more important to him than knowing God and learning about man's sins. One afternoon, on a visit to his family, he had summoned up the courage to tell his father that he didn't want to become a priest. That he wanted to travel.

"People from all over the world have passed through this village, son," said his father. "They come in search of new things, but when they leave they



are basically the same people they were when they arrived. They climb the mountain to see the castle, and they wind up thinking that the past was better than what we have now. They have blond hair, or dark skin, but basically they're the same as the people who live right here."

"But I'd like to see the castles in the towns where they live," the boy explained.

“Those people, when they see our land, say that they would like to live here forever,” his father continued.

“Well, I’d like to see their land, and see how they live,” said his son.

“The people who come here have a lot of money to spend, so they can afford to travel,” his father said. “Amongst us, the only ones who travel are the shepherds.”

“Well, then I’ll be a shepherd!”

His father said no more. The next day, he gave his son a pouch that held three ancient Spanish gold coins.

“I found these one day in the fields. I wanted them to be a part of your inheritance. But use them to buy your flock. Take to the fields, and someday you’ll learn that our countryside is the best, and our women are the most beautiful.”

And he gave the boy his blessing. The boy could see in his father’s gaze a desire to be able, himself, to travel the world—a desire that was still alive, despite his father’s having had to bury it, over dozens of years, under the burden of struggling for water to drink, food to eat, and the same place to sleep every night of his life.

The horizon was tinged with red, and suddenly the sun appeared. The boy thought back to that conversation with his father, and felt happy; he had