

The Spy: A novel

By Paulo Coelho

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In his new novel, Paulo Coelho, bestselling author of *The Alchemist* and *Adultery*, brings to life one of history's most enigmatic women: Mata Hari.

HER ONLY CRIME WAS TO BE AN INDEPENDENT WOMAN

When Mata Hari arrived in Paris she was penniless. Within months she was the most celebrated woman in the city.

As a dancer, she shocked and delighted audiences; as a courtesan, she bewitched the era's richest and most powerful men.

But as paranoia consumed a country at war, Mata Hari's lifestyle brought her under suspicion. In 1917, she was arrested in her hotel room on the Champs Elysees, and accused of espionage.

Told in Mata Hari's voice through her final letter, *The Spy* is the unforgettable story of a woman who dared to defy convention and who paid the ultimate price.

The Spy: A novel By Paulo Coelho Bibliography

- Rank: #117334 in Books
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- 208 pages

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Editorial Review

Review

Praise for Paulo Coelho and *The Spy*

“[*The Spy* is a] masterful new novel.” --*Bookpage*

“Coelho, whose books have sold more than 200 million copies worldwide, has taken the Mata Hara story and fashioned it into a short dynamo of a novel.” --*Los Angeles Times*

“A striking novel. . . . By the end, readers will believe they’ve read [Mata Hari’s] actual letters.”
--*Publisher’s Weekly*

“Coelho has created a portrait of an anachronistic woman, who was destroyed by her times and became a legend.” --*Paste Magazine*

“A novelist who writes in a universal language.” --*The New York Times*

“Spiritualists and wanderlusts will eagerly devour . . . [Coelho’s] search for all things meaningful.” --*The Washington Post*

About the Author

PAULO COELHO’s life remains the primary source of inspiration for his books. He has flirted with death, escaped madness, dallied with drugs, withstood torture, experimented with magic and alchemy, studied philosophy and religion, read voraciously, lost and recovered his faith, and experienced the pain and pleasure of love. In searching for his own place in the world, he has discovered answers for the challenges that everyone faces. He believes that, within ourselves, we have the necessary strength to find our own destiny. His most recent novel *Adultery* was a worldwide bestseller. His 1988 novel *The Alchemist* has sold more than 65 million copies and has been cited as an inspiration by people as diverse as Malala Yousafzai and Pharrell Williams. Paulo Coelho has sold more than 200 million books worldwide. His work is published in 81 languages, and he is the most translated living author in the world.

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Part I

Dear Mr. Clunet,

I do not know what will happen at the end of this week. I have always been an optimistic woman, but time has left me bitter, alone, and sad.

If things turn out as I hope, you will never receive this letter. I’ll have been pardoned. After all, I spent my life cultivating influential friends. I will hold on to the letter so that, one day, my only daughter might read it to find out who her mother was.

But if I am wrong, I have little hope that these pages, which have consumed my last week of life on Earth, will be kept. I have always been a realistic woman and I know that, once a case is settled, a lawyer will move on to the next one without a backward glance.

I can imagine what will happen after. You will be a very busy man, having gained notoriety defending a war criminal. You will have many people knocking at your door, begging for your services, for, even defeated, you attracted huge publicity. You will meet journalists interested to hear your version of events, you will dine in the city's most expensive restaurants, and you will be looked upon with respect and envy by your peers. You will know there was never any concrete evidence against me—only documents that had been tampered with—but you will never publicly admit that you allowed an innocent woman to die.

Innocent? Perhaps that is not the right word. I was never innocent, not since I first set foot in this city I love so dearly. I thought I could manipulate those who wanted state secrets. I thought the Germans, French, English, Spanish would never be able to resist me—and yet, in the end, I was the one manipulated. The crimes I did commit, I escaped, the greatest of which was being an emancipated and independent woman in a world ruled by men. I was convicted of espionage even though the only thing concrete I traded was the gossip from high-society salons.

Yes, I turned this gossip into “secrets,” because I wanted money and power. But all those who accuse me now know I never revealed anything new.

It's a shame no one will know this. These envelopes will inevitably find their way to a dusty file cabinet, full of documents from other proceedings. Perhaps they will leave when your successor, or your successor's successor, decides to make room and throw out old cases.

By that time, my name will have been long forgotten. But I am not writing to be remembered. I am attempting to understand things myself. Why? How is it that a woman who for so many years got everything she wanted can be condemned to death for so little?

At this moment, I look back at my life and realize that memory is a river, one that always runs backward.

Memories are full of caprice, where images of things we've experienced are still capable of suffocating us through one small detail or insignificant sound. The smell of baking bread wafts up to my cell and reminds me of the days I walked freely in the cafés. This tears me apart more than my fear of death or the solitude in which I now find myself.

Memories bring with them a devil called melancholy—oh, cruel demon that I cannot escape. Hearing a prisoner singing, receiving a small handful of letters from admirers who were never among those who brought me roses and jasmine flowers, picturing a scene from some city I didn't appreciate at the time. Now it's all I have left of this or that country I visited.

The memories always win, and with them comes a demon that is even more terrifying than melancholy: remorse. It's my only companion in this cell, except when the sisters decide to come and chat. They do not speak about God, or condemn me for what society calls my “sins of the flesh.” Generally, they say one or two words, and the memories spout from my mouth, as if I wanted to go back in time, plunging into this river that runs backward.

One of them asked me:

“If God gave you a second chance, would you do anything differently?”

I said yes, but really, I do not know. All I know is that my current heart is a ghost town, one populated by passions, enthusiasm, loneliness, shame, pride, betrayal, and sadness. I cannot disentangle myself from any

of it, even when I feel sorry for myself and weep in silence.

I am a woman who was born at the wrong time and nothing can be done to fix this. I don't know if the future will remember me, but if it does, may it never see me as a victim, but as someone who moved forward with courage, fearlessly paying the price she had to pay.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Arthur Elsberry:

What do you think about book? It is just for students since they are still students or it for all people in the world, the particular best subject for that? Only you can be answered for that question above. Every person has diverse personality and hobby per other. Don't to be forced someone or something that they don't desire do that. You must know how great and important the book *The Spy: A novel*. All type of book are you able to see on many solutions. You can look for the internet solutions or other social media.

Ellen Jorge:

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Gregory Polster:

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