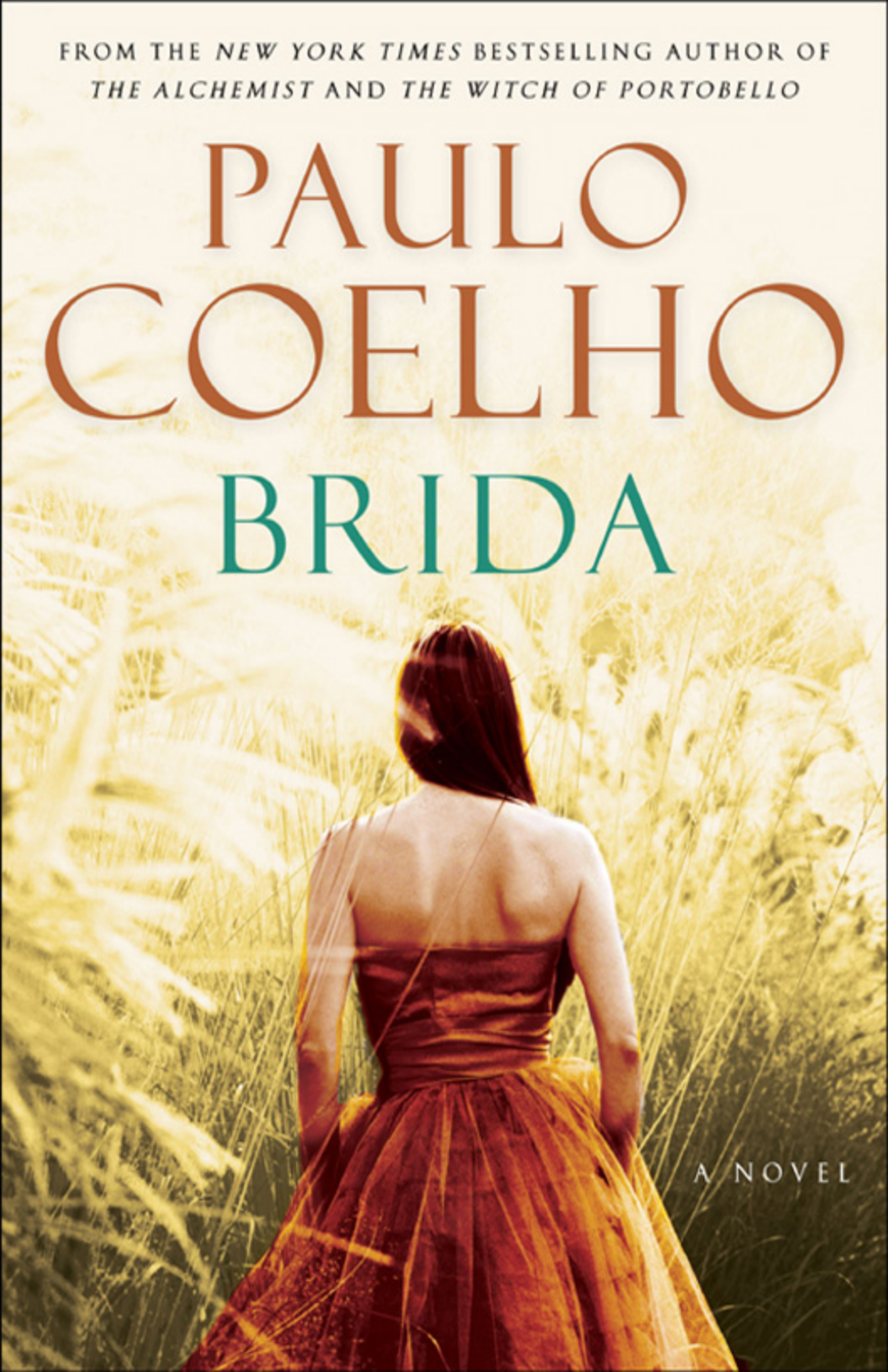


FROM THE *NEW YORK TIMES* BESTSELLING AUTHOR OF
THE ALCHEMIST AND *THE WITCH OF PORTOBELLO*

PAULO
COELHO
BRIDA

A NOVEL

A woman with long dark hair, seen from behind, stands in a field of tall, golden-brown grass. She is wearing a strapless, floor-length red dress with a fitted bodice and a full, flowing skirt. The background is a soft-focus field of similar grasses, creating a warm, ethereal atmosphere. The lighting is bright and natural, suggesting a sunny day.

BRIDA



PAULO
COELHO

TRANSLATED
FROM THE PORTUGUESE
BY MARGARET JULL COSTA

 HarperCollins e-books

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

. . . 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 neighbors, 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 Pilgrimage*, I replaced two of the practices of IRAM 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 practiced over the centuries by the Tradition of the Moon—a specific tradition that requires experience and practice. Practicing 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 recognize one another, because they know that in the history of each plant lies the growth of the whole World.

The Author