

Paulo Coelho's Readers Get a Treat: 25% of His Next Book Online, for Free

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Sunday, 20 August 2006

International bestselling author, Brazilian Paulo Coelho, has a new book ready to be released. But before *A Bruxa de Portobello* (The Witch of Portobello) hits bookstores on September 27 one quarter of the work will already be published online to be read for free.

The only catch is that you have to know Portuguese. Translations are not being made available mainly because they would depend on an agreement with the foreign translator and publisher. Chapter 7 of the new book was made available Saturday, August 19.

Entitled "Lukás Jessen-Petersen, former-husband," chapter 7 starts with the following paragraph: "When Viorel was born I had just turned 22. I wasn't the student who had just married a former college colleague, but a man responsible for supporting his family, with an enormous pressure over my shoulders. My parents, obviously, who didn't even show up at the wedding, conditioned any financial help on the separation and on the grandson's guardianship (I should say my father commented that, because my mother used to call crying, telling me I was a lunatic, but that she would love to hold her grandchild in her arms). My hope was that, once they were able to understand my love for Athena and my decision to stay with her, this resistance would go away."

Coelho, who has already sold more than 75 million copies of his books in 62 languages all around the world, is giving away quite a big chunk of his latest book on his own website at www.paulocoelho.com.

Nothing new there. The bestselling author has already made available online in the past, for downloading, several of his most popular books including the most famous of all: *The Alchemist*. *The Alchemist* alone has already sold more than 30 million copies worldwide.

O Zahir, Coelho's latest book, released in 2005, wasn't a big hit in Brazil, but overseas, *The Zahir*, a Novel of Obsession, made big waves being the world's third bestselling book in 2005, losing only to the *The Da Vinci Code* and *Angels and Demons*, both by Dan Brown.

The Witch of Portobello is a take on the Catholic Church's abuses during the Inquisition. Coelho, who is a Catholic, brings the action, however, from the Dark Ages to the contemporary world. The book is an indictment against society's fear of changing and its resistance in the face of the new.

In an interview with São Paulo daily *Jornal da Tarde*, Coelho revealed that the idea of publishing part of the book on the Internet before its publication in book form was from his assistant, Paula Bracconot: "She argued that if readers had access to the book beforehand, they would know what they were buying."

In three weeks, the blog in which Brazil's most popular author is publishing the book's excerpts has already been visited by more than 11,000 people. Many of them are old-time readers who left all kinds of encouraging and thankful messages.

Planeta, Coelho's publishing house in Brazil, seems happy with the author's decision to show his work online before publication. Pascoal Soto, the company's director, says he strongly backs the bestselling writer's initiative. "I think this is a way of capturing the reader's interest and reinforcing the differentiated manner Coelho deals with his public."

The Brazilian writer has just signed a new contract with Planeta. His previous book, *O Zahir*, and *O Alquimista* were published in Brazil by Rocco, but other publishing houses like Globo and Vergara & Riba have also published his work. Even though it wasn't disclosed how much he received for the new agreement, it's rumored that he got a US\$ 800,000 advancement for a four-year period.