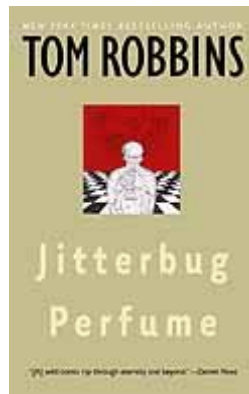


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Jitterbug Perfume



Synopsis

Jitterbug Perfume is an epic. Which is to say, it begins in the forests of ancient Bohemia and doesn't conclude until nine o'clock tonight (Paris time). It is a saga, as well. A saga must have a hero, and the hero of this one is a janitor with a missing bottle. The bottle is blue, very, very old, and embossed with the image of a goat-horned god. If the liquid in the bottle actually is the secret essence of the universe, as some folks seem to think, it had better be discovered soon because it is leaking and there is only a drop or two left. From the Trade Paperback edition.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This is my first Robbins' reading, recommended by a good friend with great taste in books. This book has just about everything I could ever ask for in a read: amazing, memorable characters that are so strange and unique that they feel all too real; dialogue lovingly rendered for each character; a wild ride across the globe, through history, customs, food, clothing, mating rituals, social class, and mythology; an amazingly intricate and creative plot that eventually ties up in the end; and finally, a grand theme that serves as the foundation to this whole wonderful, wild, imaginative, freeing

ride. One gets the feeling that Robbins had a grand time writing this book. I was laughing out loud on one page, underlining passages of exquisite wisdom the next. Everything flows so naturally; the feel of this book is LIGHT, airy, featherweight. Yet like a drone or mantra, its rhythm and texture winds its way into you until you have been relaxed by Robbins' prose into another mindscape: HIS, or perhaps, yours, expanded. Robbins is a master of metaphors. And comedy. And when he combines the two, you WILL be re-reading passages wondering "how did he do that?" Robbins is truly a master and has a strong, unique, comedic, wise, wild, creative voice. Highly recommended. I guess I will soon be reading "Jitterbug Perfume" for a second, third, fourth, etc. time.

Damn, if Tom Robbins' "Jitterbug Perfume" isn't one of the most original, beautifully written books I've ever discovered! It is a novel that manages to be classical, comical, and contemporary at the same time. To say that the plot involves a century-hoping effort to bottle and market the spirit of youth is like saying "Being John Malcovich" is the story of an actor's life. Part of what makes this book irresistible is its clever and lyrical language. Robbins describes a character getting out of a spring this way: "when he surfaced, spewing and sputtering, dead leaves and the addresses of a dozen hibernating frogs strewn throughout his beard...". He describes one character's internal experience this way: "... inside her swelling head... a music was rising, a happiness was rising; her dumpy old heart was rising, made buoyant and girlish again, a lost beach ball blown miles across a levee, illuminated by heat lightening." The book is amazing, really. I'm not sure I've ever seen a more unusual plot handled so deftly, or read a book with as full a canvas of unusual characters and locations. Most of all, the language will keep you hooked from sentence to sentence. There could be no plot at all and you would still keep reading.

If you have not discovered Tom Robbins yet, RUN don't walk to the bookstore or library. I have read every novel this man has put out and I can't wait for the next one. Jitterbug Perfume is by far the best, though. It's about a king who fears growing old, not because of the usual reasons, but because in his kingdom, the rules require the king to be put to death as soon as he starts to show signs of aging. When King Alobar wakes up with a gray hair in his beard, it's time to move on. He fakes his death with the help of his favorite wife and goes off into the pre-Christian world to find the secret of youth. From ancient Rome to modern New Orleans, he meets a cast of incredible characters and finds the love of his life who follows him through the ages. This is a book I've had to buy a few times, since I've loaned it out to people who loved it as much as I did. That's ok. I don't mind contributing to the best author I've seen in a long time.

As Tom Robbins is my favorite author, I may perhaps be a bit biased when writing this review. But I can honestly say that this book changed my life. I am a writer, and never before has someone taken the boundaries of the metaphor and ignored them completely. His writing style, while unconventional, is fabulous and engaging, and he manages to draw the reader into the story in the first couple of sentences. In an age when books are deemed good by people like Oprah, and Danielle Steel is making millions, it's nice to know that there are still some people out there with a complete mastery of language and plot. This book is a treasure, a quick read, and a tribute to anyone who ever believed that maybe they could live forever - if they just wished for it hard enough.

This was my first Tom Robbins book - and I must admit, I see why he has such a passionate and devoted following. The plot is a little complicated to go into detail here - suffice it to say that it involves a Bohemian prince, Alobar, his lover and partner, Kudra, the god Pan, and a mysterious, alluring perfume that several characters in the present are near finding the secret recipe to. While the plot was entertaining, I was also smitten by Robbins' writing style. As another reviewer remarked, it is "cute" in some places, and perhaps some may even think it a bit vulgar. I found it clever and wholly enjoyable. His metaphors (and imagery) were unlike anything I have previously read. Whether it was "forced" or not is a matter of opinion; I liked the word play, which added to the playful, frolic tone of the book. This is clearly not intended to be serious literature, and should not be read as such. Yes, Robbins makes some wry observations about perfume, the month of February and politicians - but the book is fun - and joyful and entertaining. And based on these merits, I strongly recommend it.

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