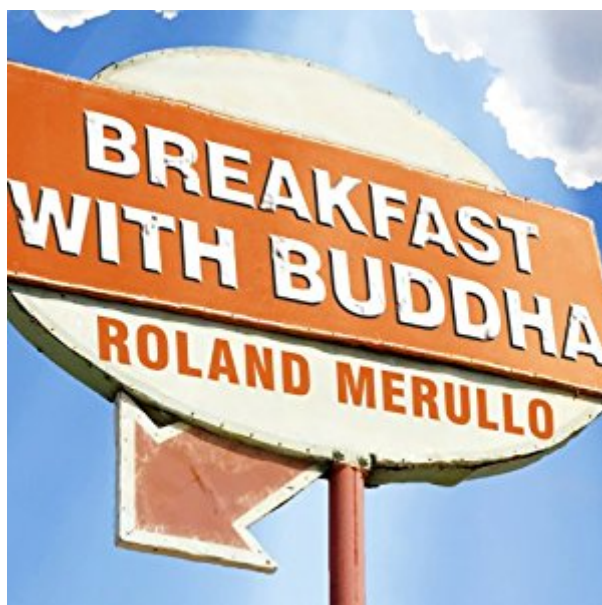


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Breakfast With Buddha: A Novel



Synopsis

When his sister tricks him into taking her guru on a trip to their childhood home, Otto Ringling, a confirmed skeptic, is not amused. Six days on the road with an enigmatic holy man who answers every question with a riddle is not what he'd planned. But in an effort to westernize his passenger---and amuse himself---he decides to show the monk some "American fun" along the way. From a chocolate factory in Hershey to a bowling alley in South Bend, from a Cubs game at Wrigley field to his family farm near Bismarck, Otto is given the remarkable opportunity to see his world---and more important, his life---through someone else's eyes. Gradually, skepticism yields to amazement as he realizes that his companion might just be the real thing. In Roland Merullo's masterful hands, Otto tells his story with all the wonder, bemusement, and wry humor of a man who unwittingly finds what he's missing in the most unexpected place.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I don't mean the ending of the book made me mad (no spoilers! Fear not!) The end just instantly negated everything I had fallen in love with in the book. I call that ruining my love for this book, which love had risen to immense size till that completely stupid ending. But what nearly killed me, due to the intensity I had felt, of love, thru the book, was like seeing Angelina Jolie peel off her skin and there stands Chastity Bono covered in mud. What caused this apocalyptic destruction of my TRUSTING near-worship of this book was the author's choice to immediately tell you after the closing paragraph (possible spoiler) that he made all of it up including the deep sayings of

Rinpoche. I. Was. So. Pissed. I mean, okay I know it is a novel but couldn't he just let me savor the pleasure of my reading experience without leaping into my face with: It was all fake! If you enjoyed it, you can stop now 'cause I was just faking you out. Imagine attending a play and between every act and at the end some yahoo runs out and reminds you the whole thing is fake. Of course it's fake! It's a novel but why put alllllll that crap about how fake it is RIGHT when I'm deepest in my choice to pretend it is true. I could weep: I was soooo happy then THAT appeared. If you wanna read a monumentally brilliant novel, read this and throw it away after you read the last gorgeous words of THE STORY. Then it will be a 10-star novel that will change your life.

I liked the honesty of Otto, the logic of Otto as he questioned the veracity of Rinpoche, and the everyday selections and events as they traversed America. The characters were well developed in their individual roles. Very entertaining and thought provoking. In the end I like Cecilia's proposal for division of land and her future there on old farm with Rinpoche. I did not like Otto's bowing to Rinpoche because his own wisdom and philosophical mind, in my thinking, made him an intellectual equal to Rinpoche. I could see him believing in some of Rinpoche's ideas but not bowing on worship to another human being. Some of Rinpoche's answers to life's deep questions seemed confusing, unrealistic, and simplistic. Overall, I really liked the book.

I learned about this book when I saw it in an Audible Daily Deal. I was intrigued right away when I read the blurb. I bought the Kindle and Audible (Whispersync) package and dived right in. I started my meditation practice about 9 months before I learned of this book. When I read about it I recognized patterns that played out similarly in my life as in the book. For example I was very sceptical of meditation having all kinds of mental barriers. Let's call it by its name: ignorance. I underwent a similar journey as Otto in the book in getting to know meditation. Not in the sense that I was on a road trip with a guru. But in the sense that I just tried it out at one point after after knowing for many years that "this was not for me". So I was just curious how Otto's story would play out and if I could see any parallels to my life. I wanted to see how Roland Merullo introduced the concept to a wide audience. I'm very impressed how the author managed to tell a story that relates the ideas of mindfulness so well and in an enjoyable and at many times funny way. If you heard about meditation or mindfulness and are curious I heartily recommend Breakfast with Buddha.

I ordered Breakfast with Buddha on the recommendation of a friend, not to learn more about the Four Noble Truths or the Eightfold Path, but to read a "feel good" book and be

reminded of some important basics. Love is important. So are inner peace, compassion, a sense of humor, humility, and stillness. In the novel, Otto Ringling, a food book editor, takes a cross-country drive from New York to North Dakota with Volva Rinpoche, an affable monk who's been foisted upon him by his sister Cecelia. Ringling and Cecelia's parents have been killed in an automobile accident, and the two of them were to travel to their family home, a farm in North Dakota, to settle the estate. Cecelia, a beautiful, free spirited person, has become attached to Rinpoche and desires to leave her part of the estate to him to establish a holy center. She convinces her brother to make the road trip with the monk and promises to join them at the farm later. Annoyed with his sister, yet determined to make the best of the situation, Otto and the monk spend several days crossing the country, making stops along the way for the Rinpoche to speak at various engagements. The two men influence each other along the way, and Otto gradually softens up and begins to see his busy, worldly life through a different lens. He's determined to show the spiritual guru some of what makes America great, including baseball games, gambling, putt putt golf, and fine dining. The reader (at least this one) doesn't know whether Otto gets through to Rinpoche, but she does know that the monk influences Otto who, at times, meditates, does yoga, and fasts from a couple of meals. Breakfast with Buddha is a fun read, light and serious at the same time. While not a preachy book, the novel forces the reader to take a look at her or his spiritual side.

This book was a composite of many of the questions about life and its meaning that I've asked. It's also a summary of many of the spiritual inquiries I've made. Some in depth, others just scratching the surface to see what might resonate. Interestingly, I had just embarked on another attempt to meditate a few weeks before reading this book. I've always been drawn to the practice; have struggled with the "right" way to do it; yet I've never been real clear on what the desired outcome "should" be. The conversations between Otto and Rinpoche provided much to ponder and I now have some glimmer of what may be, for me, the motivation to continue.

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