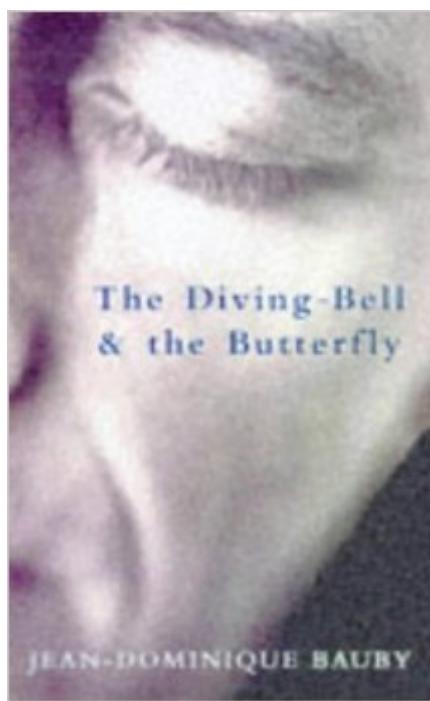


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Diving Bell And The Butterfly



Synopsis

The diary of Jean-Dominique Bauby, written after the author suffered a massive stroke leaving his left eyelid as the only mobile muscle in his body. Three days after the book's publication, Bauby died.

Book Information

Hardcover: 144 pages

Publisher: Fourth Estate Ltd (April 10, 1997)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 1857027795

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Product Dimensions: 8.8 x 0.6 x 5.6 inches

Shipping Weight: 1.6 ounces

Average Customer Review: 4.6 out of 5 stars See all reviews (448 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #1,942,053 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #168 in Books > Health, Fitness & Dieting > Diseases & Physical Ailments > Strokes #622 in Books > Health, Fitness & Dieting > Diseases & Physical Ailments > Physical Impairments #1646 in Books > Biographies & Memoirs > Specific Groups > Special Needs

Customer Reviews

In December of 1995, Jean-Dominique Bauby, 43 year old editor in chief of Elle magazine in France, suffered a stroke which severely damaged his brain stem. After several weeks in a coma, he woke to find that he was one of the rare victims of a condition called "locked-in syndrome" or LIS, which had left his mind functioning but his body almost completely paralyzed. In a perverse sense he actually got fairly lucky because, unlike most victims, he was still able to move one eyelid. This allowed him to work out, with a speech therapist, a system of communication which entailed winking as someone slowly read through the alphabet. By using this code, he could painstakingly spell out words, sentences, paragraphs and, finally, this memoir. The title of the book refers to the metaphors he uses to describe his situation. The physical paralysis leaves him feeling as if he was trapped within a diving bell, as if there is constant pressure pinning his body into immobility. However, at the same time, his mind remains as free as a butterfly and its flights are as random. In fact, he calls the chapters of this book his "bedridden travel notes" and, indeed, they eloquently relate his journey through memory. Although Bauby's situation is obviously unique, this book has universal resonance because his condition is itself an apt metaphor for the human condition. It is the essence of Man's

dilemma that our infinitely perfectible minds are trapped within such weak containers of flesh and blood. For most of us, at most times, this frustrating dichotomy, between that which makes us godlike and that which makes us mortal, lurks in the background; but the author has it thrust rudely into the foreground, where it necessarily dominates his existence.

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