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Blindness (Vintage Classics)

Von Jos Saramago
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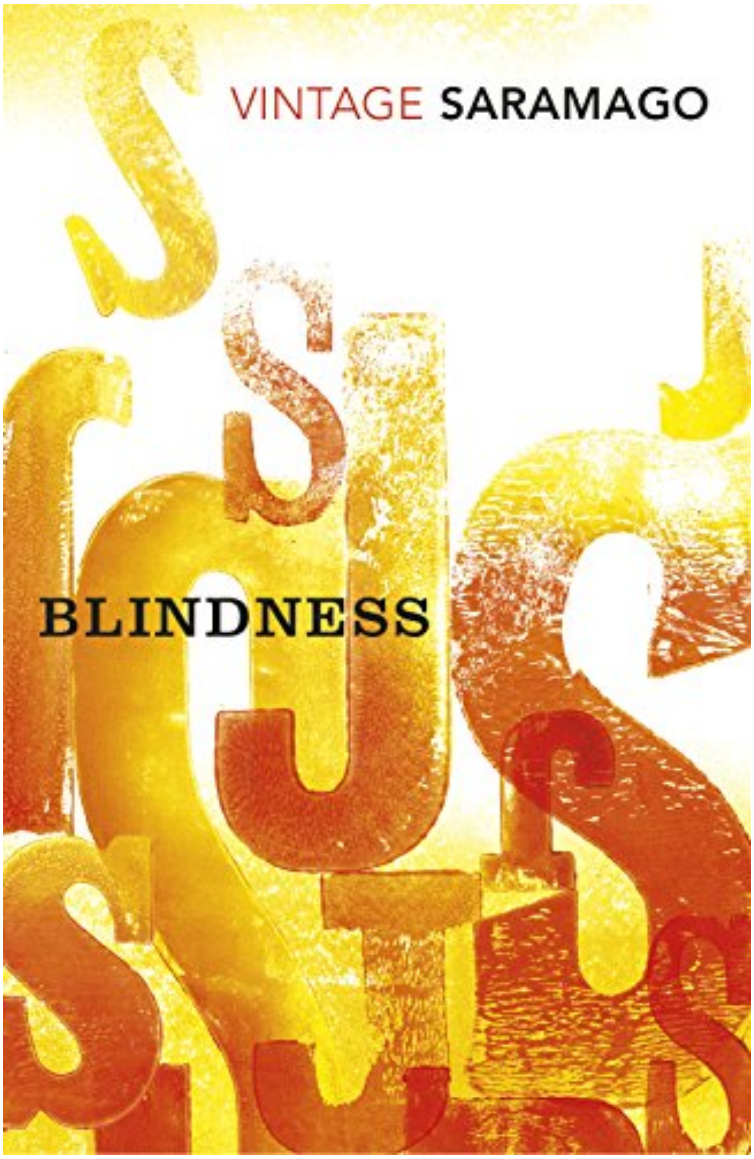

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Von Jos Saramago : Blindness (Vintage Classics) before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Blindness (Vintage Classics):

KundenrezensionenHilfreichste Kundenrezensionen0 von 0 Kunden fanden die folgende Rezension hilfreich. Great start, but . . . .Von DMDI was intrigued at first, but the novel is so relentless in its intensity that I was exhausted after the first 30 pages.Blindness is fascinating, provocative, difficult, and sometimes painful to read--even the manner in which it is written is frustrating. The writing is dense, with few paragraphs and few chapters. There are no quotation

marks to tell you who is speaking or to whom they are speaking. This can be an interesting device in a novel, but here it is maddening. Now I know that Saramago does this deliberately; he wants the reader to participate, to acknowledge how unbearable it would be to not know where you are, who you are with, what anyone might be doing--but as a reader, 327 pages of this is just too much. Clearly Saramago was attempting to place the reader in an uncomfortable and complicated position--reader as voyeur and judge, but he beats every point into the ground. I didn't feel enlightened, I felt bludgeoned.I also had the feeling that something great might have been lost in translation. There are points in the book, entire passages, which seem uneven, as if the voice and tone had changed. Apparently there were several translators at work on this book, one of who died before its completion. It makes for a frustrating read.Despite moments that are remarkable for their vision and understanding of the human condition, Blindness is not quite worth the journey.1 von 1 Kunden fanden die folgende Rezension hilfreich. A Great High-Wire ActVon Bruce KendallBlindness is my introduction to Saramago. A good friend at suggested this writer to me. Though he'd won a Nobel, I'd never heard of him, which comes as no surprise as I've read only about half the Nobel winners' and am totally in the dark when it comes to about 15 names on the list.What strikes me most stongly about this book is the author's challenges he sets up for himself early on. As more and more characters are introduced, the challenge of keeping track of who is speaking and who is where mounts exponentially. I kept saying to myself "How's he going to do it when the wards fill up?" As noted throughout the reviews, Saramago does not provide us with the usual authorial roadmap.What surprises me is that only one other reviewer (Michael Lima) mentioned that this stylistic maneuvering is a great metaphor for the subject matter. As readers, we are disoriented by the lack of accustomed punctuation, among other things. We have to pause sometimes to get our bearings. "Who said that?" we ask ourselves. It's exactly appropos to the way the blind characters react in the novel. Saramago wants the reader disoriented so that the empathy we feel for his characters becomes more pronounced. We share an awareness of what they are experiencing first-hand. We too have to grope our way in the dark, without the usual guideposts. The characters go unnamed. As one of the chracters thinks to himself,"names are of no importance here." We know them only as "the first blind man" or the "girl with dark glasses" or "the doctor's wife." One reviewer objected to this device, citing "the dog of tears" as an example of Saramago's ineptitude. I would counter that this is another intentional choice on Saramago's part to maintain the purity of his allegory. Characters in true allegory are never specified by common name. Just think of Spenser's "The Fairy Queen" or Bunyan's "Pilgrim's Progress" and you'll see what I mean. Saramago's characters operate as universal types in large part because they are nameless. Often, Saramago provides us with stunning imagery, as in this example when the opthalmologist first discovers he is blind: "He turned to where a mirror was, and this time he did not wonder, What's going on, he did not say, There are a thousand reasons why the human brain should close down, he simply stretched out his hands to touch the glass, he knew that his image was there watching him, his image could see him, he could not see his image." My only criticisms of the work are minor. They usually have to do with suspension of disbelief. I had to wonder why the doctor's wife didn't seize the thug's gun for instance after he was down. Also, when she entered the basement of the store, why didn't she first get a flashlight? Certainly that wouldn't have been an item that would have been hard to find under the circumstances. I also had a bit of difficulty digesting some of Saramago's homilies and folksy philosophizing, as in "her fingers brushed against the dead petals, how fragile life is when it is abandoned," or later: "...but none of us, lamps, dogs or humans, knows at the outset, why we have come into this world." Not exactly the most profound material around.I would also differ with those who maitain that the narrative is detached or distant. Sometimes I found it obtrusive, as in the narrator's description of a statement made by the girl with dark glasses: "...surprisingly, if we consider that we are dealing with a person without much education, the girl with the dark glasses said, Inside us there is something that has no name, that something is what we are." I would hold that this is a pretty condescending remark, intimating that a person with little formal education can come up with anything resembling profundity (which by the way, it doesn't anyway). There may be a hint of sexism creeping in here as well. Please do not, however, let these few quibbles put you off from reading the book. It really does belong in the modern classical cannon along with Kazanzakis, the writer he most reminds me of. I have ordered The Gospel According to Jesus Christ, both on the strength of my response to this book, and because it came even more highly recommended by my friend at . I'm really looking forward to reading it.1 von 1 Kunden fanden die folgende Rezension hilfreich. A profound study of the Human ConditionVon LarsLancejrIn a city without a name and with protagonists who are essentially "nameless" (eg. girl with the dark glasses), Saramango's narrative voice has created a world that is universal or "anywhere" (much like Macondo in One Hundred Years of Solitude) and inhabited by "anyman" which could be you or me. Due to an epidemic of white blindness which infects the entire nation, readers are drawn into a world of loss and disorientation through the eyes of one eyewitness. Here we are spectators to "man" at his/her most horrific self, as s/he faces seemingly unbearable atrocities. In the end, man's spirit triumphs in the face of the most absurd and unjust conditions. This timeless work of fiction is an ingeniously profound study of the human condition.

KurzbeschreibungA driver waiting at the traffic lights goes blind. An opthamologist tries to diagnose his distinctive

white blindness, but is affected before he can read the textbooks. It becomes a contagion, spreading throughout the city. Trying to stem the epidemic, the authorities herd the afflicted into a mental asylum where the wards are terrorised by blind thugs. And when fire destroys the asylum, the inmates burst forth and the last links with a supposedly civilised society are snapped.No food, no water, no government, no obligation, no order. This is not anarchy, this is blindness..deIn an unnamed city in an unnamed country, a man sitting in his car waiting for a traffic light to change is suddenly struck blind. But instead of being plunged into darkness, this man sees everything white, as if he "were caught in a mist or had fallen into a milky sea." A Good Samaritan offers to drive him home (and later steals his car); his wife takes him by taxi to a nearby eye clinic where they are ushered past other patients into the doctor's office. Within a day the man's wife, the taxi driver, the doctor and his patients, and the car thief have all succumbed to blindness. As the epidemic spreads, the government panics and begins quarantining victims in an abandoned mental asylum--guarded by soldiers with orders to shoot anyone who tries to escape. So begins Portuguese author Jos Saramago's gripping story of humanity under siege, written with a dearth of paragraphs, limited punctuation, and embedded dialogue minus either quotation marks or attribution. At first this may seem challenging, but the style actually contributes to the narrative's building tension, and to the reader's involvement. In this community of blind people there is still one set of functioning eyes: the doctor's wife has affected blindness in order to accompany her husband to the asylum. As the number of victims grows and the asylum becomes overcrowded, systems begin to break down: toilets back up, food deliveries become sporadic; there is no medical treatment for the sick and no proper way to bury the dead. Inevitably, social conventions begin to crumble as well, with one group of blind inmates taking control of the dwindling food supply and using it to exploit the others. Through it all, the doctor's wife does her best to protect her little band of blind charges, eventually leading them out of the hospital and back into the horribly changed landscape of the city. Blindness is in many ways a horrific novel, detailing as it does the total breakdown in society that follows upon this most unnatural disaster. Saramago takes his characters to the very edge of humanity and then pushes them over the precipice. His people learn to live in inexpressible filth, they commit acts of both unspeakable violence and amazing generosity that would have been unimaginable to them before the tragedy. The very structure of society itself alters to suit the circumstances as once-civilized, urban dwellers become ragged nomads traveling by touch from building to building in search of food. The devil is in the details, and Saramago has imagined for us in all its devastation a hell where those who went blind in the streets can never find their homes again, where people are reduced to eating chickens raw and packs of dogs roam the excrement-covered sidewalks scavenging from corpses. And yet in the midst of all this horror Saramago has written passages of unsurpassed beauty. Upon being told she is beautiful by three of her charges, women who have never seen her, "the doctor's wife is reduced to tears because of a personal pronoun, an adverb, a verb, an adjective, mere grammatical categories, mere labels, just like the two women, the others, indefinite pronouns, they too are crying, they embrace the woman of the whole sentence, three graces beneath the falling rain." In this one woman Saramago has created an enduring, fully developed character who serves both as the eyes and ears of the reader and as the conscience of the race. And in Blindness he has written a profound, ultimately transcendent meditation on what it means to be human. --Alix Wilber.co.uk1998's Nobel Prize winner for Literature, Jos Saramoga, has, with his astonishing and superb story Blindness, written one of the finest European novels of the last 20 or 30 years. Portugal's best-known writer--but like many Nobel winners hardly a household name in the UK--Saramoga has created a formidable and beautiful body of work deserving (and receiving) the very highest recognition. From the sublime, humanistic The Gospel According to Jesus Christ to the intelligent, metaphysical The Cave, Saramoga challenges, warns, argues but also entertains and enlivens through the truth of his transcendent and highly cultured fictions. Suddenly, while stopped at a red light in his car, a man goes blind. A "white evil" obliterates his vision plunging him into light as fathomless and impenetrable as the darkest night. A crowd gathers and one man is kind enough to see him home. It is not long, however, before an epidemic of the new blindness causes the government to act in the most authoritarian and fearful of ways, throwing many of the recently disabled into a mental asylum, guarded by scared, trigger-happy soldiers, left to fend for themselves. While Lord of the Flies might seem an immediately similar reference, Saramaga's work has both more craft and more acuity than William Golding's tale. Blindness is a luminous piece and a wonderful starting point for readers seeking a scrupulous and wise guide to these injudicious and myopic times. --Mark Thwaite