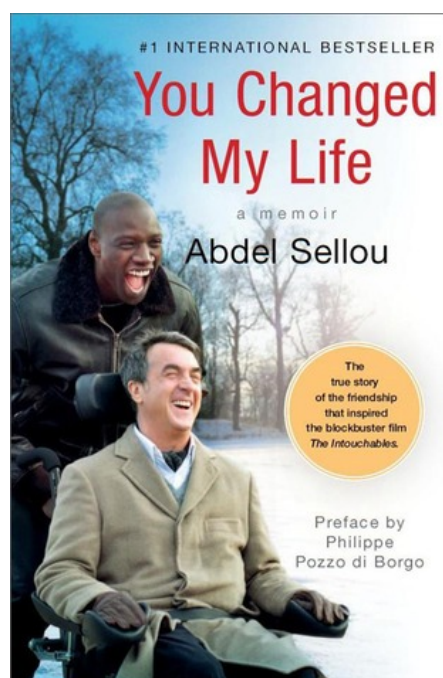




You Changed My Life

Abdel Sellou

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You Changed My Life Abdel Sellou

You Saved My Life tells the extraordinary true story of the charming Algerian con-man whose friendship with a disabled French aristocrat inspired the record-breaking hit film, *The Intouchables* (the American remake starring Kevin Hart and Bryan Cranston coming in 2018).

Sellou's fictional reincarnation, Driss, played to critical acclaim by French comedian Omar Sy in the movie *Les Intouchables*, captured the hearts of millions. Already a bestseller in France and Germany, *You Changed My Life* shows us the real man behind Sy's edgy charm. The book takes us from his childhood spent stealing candy from the local grocery store, to his career as a pickpocket and scam artist, to his unexpected employment as a companion for a quadriplegic. Sellou has never before divulged the details of his past. In many interviews and documentaries, he has evaded or shrugged off the question of his childhood and his stay in prison, until now. He tells his story with a stunning amount of talent, with humor, style, and though he denies that he has any humility. Sellou's idiosyncratic and candidly charming voice is magnificently captured in this memoir, a fact to which his friend Philippe Pozzo di Borgo testifies in his touching preface for the book.

You Changed My Life Details

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Author : Abdel Sellou

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From Reader Review You Changed My Life for online ebook

Marlene says

Originally published at Reading Reality

The original title of this book was *You Changed My Life*, and that's probably a more accurate description of the contents than the new title. The ways of marketing are clearly mysterious to behold.

No matter what the title, this book is kind of a cross between a buddy-movie and a bromance. It's already been a movie, *The Intouchables*, filmed in France where the real story takes place. And it will be again – the American version is titled *The Upside* and seems to have been filmed in 2017, although I'm not sure it was ever in theaters. Considering that the movie was supposed to have come out in October of 2017 as the Harvey Weinstein scandal was breaking, and that the movie was produced by his company and the new edition of the book was supposed to be published by his publishing company, it's not really a surprise that things got a bit, let's call it delayed.

However, the story existed long before either the movie or the scandal. But this true story was originally told by only one of the partners in this bromance. This version, the one that I read, is told by the other. And it isn't quite as fictionalized as the original movie seems to have been.

Not that the author doesn't tell plenty of stories on himself, because he certainly does. And he is not the most reliable narrator, not even of his own life. Perhaps especially of his own life.

In 1993, French businessman (and noble) Philippe Pozzo di Borgo was severely injured in a paragliding accident, becoming a quadriplegic. In 1995 he hired Abdel Sellou, the author of this book, as his "life auxiliary" or caregiver.

Sellou was an Algerian immigrant to France, having been given by his Algerian parents to his aunt and uncle in Paris when he was a child. A child who was young enough to adapt but old enough to remember where he came from. And he was given to people who had never been parents and seem to have no idea of how to be parents. Or perhaps its that Abdel had no idea that rules or limits ever applied to him.

By his own account, Sellou grew up fairly wild on the streets of Paris, becoming a thief and a con artist. He saw himself as the king of his little corner of the world, and felt like nothing could stop him, not even jail. As he was always a completely nonviolent offender, jail mostly seemed like a bit of a vacation. The rules never applied to him.

He met "Pozzo" when he was basically scamming the unemployment office. He came to pretend to apply for that job as Pozzo's life auxiliary. He ended up staying for over ten years in a job he never expected to take, and remained as Pozzo's unpaid caregiver thereafter.

All of Pozzo's rich friends were certain that the conman was there to take Pozzo for a ride, and bilk him out of all the money he could manage to scam. It never happened.

Instead, they formed an unlikely but life altering and life sustaining friendship. This is the story of that friendship from Sellou's point of view (as Pozzo has already told his version of the story in *A Second Wind*)

Reality Rating B: *The Upside*, by whatever title, is a surprisingly quick read. It's also not a very deep one, because the author skims over the surface of his life, and never seems willing to dive deeply into his thoughts

or feelings.

The story that we're left with is still interesting. Sellou seems to have grown up without a care in the world, or perhaps a better way of describing it would be not caring much about the world or anyone else in it.

It's also clear that this story couldn't be told until the statute of limitations had run out on his youthful crime spree, which seems to have lasted into his 20s. Mostly Sellou was a thief and even a bit of a shakedown artist. He was also a successful small-time conman. His goal never seems to have been to get rich, just to get enough to last until the next day. He saw the world as free for the taking, and if he got caught, well, jail seems to have been mostly a vacation.

There have to have been darker parts to this part of the story, but the author never dwells on them. He seems to be a character who always looks on the bright side, and does not worry much if at all about tomorrow.

Going to work for Pozzo was a life-altering event for both of them. Sellou's ability to always find a bright side seems to have been just what Pozzo needed to keep him going. It's not that Sellou wasn't all-too-well acquainted with everything that did not work in Pozzo's paralyzed body. It's that Sellou never seems to have let it stop him from pushing whatever boundaries could be pushed so that Pozzo was able to get outside of himself as much as possible, which turned out to often be a surprising amount.

It's also obvious from the story that the two men moved relatively quickly from an employer-employee relationship to a friendship to a partnership – even if most of Pozzo's family and friends never fully come to trust Sellou even after years of being there for Pozzo at every hour of the day and night.

That Sellou seems to feel no bitterness at that lack of distrust is surprising. Or it may be part of his ability to always see the sunnier side of every situation, even the terrible ones.

I find myself wondering how some aspects of the story that seem particularly French are going to translate to American audiences. Perhaps I'll find out if the movie ever shows up on Netflix.

Hot Cup O'Monkey says

The real-life caregiver from "The Intouchables" tells the story of his life, from pickpocket and petty thief, to the "arms and legs" of a French billionaire parapalegic.

Abdel's voice was fresh and real; I got a kick out of his unrelenting "I am the best!" and "Never think about tomorrow" attitude. It was neat to see how he was finally able to admit how he had grown and changed through knowing and helping his employer, who is an amazing man.

I recommend this book to anyone who has seen that fantastic film and wants to know more.

Aly Shevchenko says

I really enjoyed this book. I loved the movie, that's why I decided to read it. In my opinion, the book is not about heroes' friendship, but it is about changing of the author, as for me, it was really big. It is worth to read

about. This book can inspire you, give hope for better and make you think about how lucky you are.

Judy-Sug says

The French film The Intouchables is based on this memoir. The film is phenomenal. However, it is quite different from the memoir. Abdel Sellou is an Algerian living in Paris on the streets. In any effort to get unemployment, he applies for a job helping a tetraplegic. (He can move only his head.) To his surprise, he gets the job and an odd couple relationship develops that changes both of them.

Linda says

This book was narrated by a man using a thick French accent. My only problem with the narration was thinking he was saying "enema" when in fact he was saying "animal".

The story of a young man who had no direction or drive, content to con, steal, or swindle for his livelihood. In order to continue to collect unemployment, he needed to look for work. He was sent for a job as a life companion for a rich man who had become a quadriplegic. He doesn't want the job, just a signature that he showed up for the job interview. Their companionship helped both participants, but Sellou turned his around becoming an honest businessman with a family. Interesting listen.

A movie was made about the two main characters. It is called The Intouchables.

Nadezda Kolokolova says

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Jessi says

A heartwarming memoir about an unlikely friendship and how it has the power to change us. How a chance encounter can ultimately change your attitude and outlook on life. The Upside was open and honest. It didn't shy away from the truth — the good, the bad, or the ugly. I enjoyed reading about the character growth of Abdel as well as the deeper connection between the two characters from before and after their paths crossed. Overall, I found this to be a decent read. I'm not sure what exactly it was I was hoping for, but I wanted more. I enjoyed the story line and message obviously, but I think at times the voice fell flat. I look forward to the adaptation releasing this March! I have a feeling it will be a strong reflection of Abdel's story and one that won't let you quickly forget it.

Siobhan says

Abdel Sellou's *The Upside* is an uplifting story of unexpected friendship, and the power individuals can have upon the life of others. I'll admit this is not my usual kind of read – I'm a sucker for crime fiction with a perchance for romance binge reads – but I was sucked in by this one.

They say real life is stranger than fiction, and this book shows how the unexpected storylines of books and movies are not always as far from the truth as we would think. We often get stuck inside of our own head, we see the world in a certain way, and this one made me look a life differently.

It is more than just a story of friendship. It shows the development of people. It shows the impact we have upon others. It shows how life can treat us in unexpected ways. It is no surprise to know this real-life story has been picked up for the big screen – it sends a wonderful message, and people will be sucked into the lives of the characters.

Without a doubt, this one is worth reading if you want a heart-warming memoir.

Melinda Flaughter says

I was expecting more from the book. Can not wait for the movie to come out. The story is a nice read for an airplane or short train ride.

Fiona says

What an inspirational story.

The French movie, *The Intouchables* (or *The Untouchables* in Britain) is about the author and Philippe Pozzo di Borgo, a tetraplegic (paralyzed from the neck down). Abdel is his life auxiliary (caretaker) but had no intention of being employed as such. He just wanted someone to sign his employment card so that he could get unemployment checks. He stays on the job for 10 years forming a lasting friendship with Philippe.

Subsequently to the movie, both Philippe & Abdel wrote books. *You Changed My Life* is Abdel's story. It's not exactly the same as the movie; there were some liberties taken in the movie but the essence of the story is the same. Abdel tells more of his background, his years with Philippe, and what has happened to both of them since the movie.

The book jacket is a scene from the movie. The life auxiliary character is a tall, athletic, black African whereas Abdel is a stocky Algerian.

Philippe now lives with his companion Khadija in Essaouira, Morocco. I wish I had known that when I visited there a month ago; maybe I could have tracked them down. My tour guide was a Khadija so maybe I did meet her. yes, I know that Khadija is common Arabic name. Abdel has a chicken farm in Algeria.

Melody says

I loved the movie "The Intouchables" so I hunted down the story and found this account, written by the real-life "Driss" from the movie. I was captivated by the book even more than the movie! Most notable was Sellou's matter-of-fact description of his very rebellious younger self. It was an eye-opening look into the life of a family Parisian immigrants living in poverty and the struggles of transitioning to a new country. Sellou's blunt account of growing up, mostly left to his own devices in Paris, was unlike anything I had ever read before. It was surprising, funny, and moving. His growing friendship with a prosperous paraplegic man is a heartwarming tale about how life and people grow and change as they come to terms with the beauties and heartbreak that life thrusts upon us. This book is a hidden star.

Kathryn says

Review to follow

Helynnne says

This brief, boldly honest memoir did not inspire the French-language film upon which it is based, *Les Intouchables*. Instead, the film about French-Algerian roustabout Abdel Sellou and his years of caring for the wealthy quadriplegic Parisian Philippe Pozzo di Borgo finally inspired Sellou to begin talking about his own life—before, during, and after his service as a full-time caretaker or “life assistant” to Pozzo. (Before the 2012 film came out, Pozzo had written his own memoirs about life with this very unusual choice of caretaker, but Sellou had been very tight-lipped, refusing interviews, and preferring not to reveal anything about his life). This candid look backward on his adventures in Paris and his current life in his native Algeria finally gives those of us who loved the film a more accurate view of this ebullient man who was “given away” by his parents in Algiers to his childless aunt and uncle in Paris, lived years as a juvenile delinquent and petty criminal, spent time in jail, and was finally shown a more promising side of life by a rich, but totally dependent accident victim. Although I found the details of Sellou’s earlier criminal life interesting—lots of thievery, dishonest business dealings, but nothing to do with drugs, guns, or violence—I enjoyed much more reading of his life with Pozzo, who since a hang-gliding accident, needed an employee (and friend) full time to take charge of his daily personal needs such as hygiene, dressing, lifting from bed to chair to car, etc., Sellou’s title *You Changed My Life* is accurate indeed since his association with Pozzo set him on an honest path in life and the development of a better sense of values. However, he certainly changed Pozzo’s life as well through his mischievous sense of adventure. For example, he loved to drive the unsuspecting paralyzed man through Paris way too fast in expensive sports cars he had persuaded his employer to buy, and insisted on taking Pozzo on trips to southern France and Corsica, which always ended up a comedy of errors. Through it all, Pozzo remained serene and philosophical about his limitations, and Sellou remained fearless. Of course, the two ended up close and dear friends. “I really believe I loved this man, as simple as that,” says the author, “and that he returned the affection just as naturally. But I’d rather die in a paragliding accident than admit it” (151). Sellou and Pozzo are played in *Les Intouchables*, respectively, by Omar Sy and François Cluzet. Sellou admits his appearance is nothing like the tall, handsome African-French actor Omar Sy, who plays him in the film. (Sellou is now 40-ish and pudgy. Sy is 30-ish, tall, slender, muscular, and HOT!) The screenwriters changed the Sellou character’s name to Driss and his ethnicity to Sénégalais, but kept the basic background and personality. Sy brings a very accurate interpretation to the role, which in all aspects except physical appearance, Sellou approves.

Clouisejones4 says

The funny thing about this book is that it took me 7 months to read the first 100 pages, and then 24 hours to read the second 100 pages to finish it. There's something about what books you read during certain seasons of life...but the past 24 hours have been so good that I had to give the book 5 stars. A beautiful story, very cleverly written. Abdel Sellou conveys the emotions that he can't find real words for in a way that you understand, though you can't find words for them either.

Virginia says

Saw the movie "The Intouchables" and liked it so much (5 stars) that I wanted to know how closely the movie followed the lives of the two principals and upon Googling the movie discovered that both had written memoirs so I ordered a copy of each. I read "You Changed My Life" first (5 stars); just finished "A Second Wind" (5 stars) and recommend all three and in that order. And now I think I'll see the movie again. Just went to record my reading of "A Second Wind" and it is not listed by ISBN, title or author; nevertheless, it is available at Amazon and the author is Philippe Pozzo di Borgo.
