



PICASSO'S SKETCH

It Only Takes a Minute
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INTRODUCTION

As the story goes, Pablo Picasso was approached by a fellow diner at a small restaurant. The woman's gold necklace and diamond brooch marked her as a woman of substantial wealth. "Pardon me, but aren't you Pablo Picasso, the great artist?" Picasso gave a quick acknowledgement. "I have a request of you, Mr. Picasso. I would like you to make a sketch for me on this napkin. And, let me assure you, I will pay whatever you ask – I'm a woman of some means."

Picasso nodded assent and pulled a fountain pen from the inner pocket of his black jacket. With a few bold strokes, he sketched the café scene, capturing its ambience, a bit of the sidewalk beyond the window, and even a partial profile of the woman. Its economy of line was classic Picasso. He pushed the napkin across the

table toward the woman, whose eyes widened with delight. "This is just perfect," she exclaimed. "I am so grateful." Pulling out her billfold, she asked, "How much do I owe you for the this?" Picasso answered without blinking, "100,000 francs." The woman gasped and repeated the number out loud. She challenged him, "But the sketch took you less than a minute to create." Picasso, smiling now, corrected her. "No, Madame. This sketch did not take me less than a minute. In fact, it took me my whole life."

The point of this story isn't the monetary value of a Picasso sketch. Rather, it is the fact that when we spend many years developing a skill, the simple execution of that skill belies the time that went into its development. This is true for the general surgeon dealing with an intra-abdominal bleed, the psychiatrist talking to a patient intent on self-harm, and the palliative care specialist assisting a family through the grieving process. It is also a truth about every minute for every human being up to and including the last one. Our entire life has always been, and will always be, a preparation for the next moment. We are always in training for how to be human. We say, "It all comes down to this." And it does. **SDP**



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IT ONLY TAKES A MINUTE

No matter what the moment brings
It's you to whom it's brought
Created or delivered
Whimsical or fraught
The sweet perfume of lovingness
The acrid wind of strife
It only takes a minute
Yet it takes you your whole life

The riddle of behavior
How do long-term patterns change?
Abandoning the pills and drink
Why now? It seems so strange.
Years hence she'll quote a phrase you spoke
That kept her faith alive
It only took a minute
Yet it took you your whole life

When time is of the essence
And every action counts
When blood pressure is waning
And controversy mounts
It's how you place your sutures
And how you wield the knife
It only takes a minute
Yet it took you your whole life.

You sit down with a family
To explain the day's report
You review the string of failures
The treatments that fell short
To be completely present
When loss and blame are rife
It only takes a minute
Yet it took you your whole life

Contemplating suicide
Standing on the ledge
Accompanied by hopelessness
Balanced on the edge
Your expert intervention
Allowed him to survive
It only took a minute
Yet it took you your whole life

When I'm lying on my deathbed
Reviewing past vignettes
I hope to eke out one last prayer
Of thank yous and regrets
Will I hear a chorus of angels
Or the whistle of a fife?
It will only take a minute
Yet it will take me my whole life.