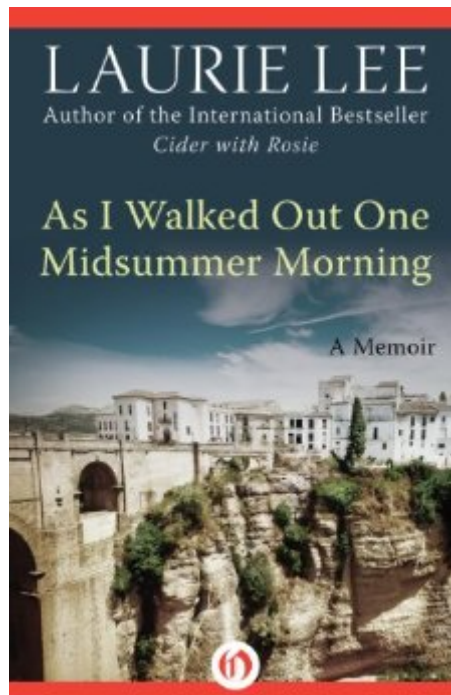


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As I Walked Out One Midsummer Morning: A Memoir (The Autobiographical Trilogy Book 2)



Synopsis

The second volume in Laurie Lee's acclaimed autobiographical trilogy, an unforgettable glimpse of Spain on the eve of its civil war. On a bright Sunday morning in June 1934, Laurie Lee left the village home so lovingly portrayed in his bestselling memoir, *Cider with Rosie*. His plan was to walk the hundred miles from Slad to London, with a detour of an extra hundred miles to see the sea for the first time. He was nineteen years old and brought with him only what he could carry on his back: a tent, a change of clothes, his violin, a tin of biscuits, and some cheese. He spent the first night in a ditch, wide awake and soaking wet. From those unlikely beginnings, Laurie Lee fashioned not just the adventure of a lifetime, but one of the finest travel narratives of the twentieth century. *As I Walked Out One Midsummer Morning*, written more than thirty years after the events it describes, is an elegant and irresistibly charming portrait of life on the road—first in England, where the familiar landscapes and people somehow made Lee feel far from home, and then in Spain, whose utter foreignness afforded a new kind of comfort. In that brief period of peace, a young man was free to go wherever he wanted to in Europe. Lee picked Spain because he knew enough Spanish to ask for a glass of water. What he did not know, and what would become clear only after a year spent tramping across the beautiful and rugged countryside—from the Galician port city of Vigo, over the Sierra de Guadarrama and into Madrid, and along the Costa del Sol—was that the Spanish Republic would soon need idealistic young men like Lee as badly as he needed it.

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Customer Reviews

"As I Walked Out One Midsummer Morning" [1], author Laurie Lee recounted his first sojourn away from home. At age 19, our narrator-biographer, walked out of his village at Stroud, Gloucestershire, and headed toward London. As Lee himself recalled, he was 'still soft at the edges' when he said farewell to his mother (a poignant scene in the opening chapter). All he had with him that Sunday morning in June 1934 was 'a small rolled-up tent, a violin in a blanket, a change of clothes, a tin of treacle biscuits, and some cheese.' After nearly a year of living and working in London as a cement laborer, Lee decided it was time to move on. He bought a one-way ticket and sailed to Spain. He settled for Spain because he had had an introduction to Spanish. All he could speak then, Lee admitted, was only one Spanish phrase: 'Will you please give me a glass of water?' In July 1935, Laurie Lee landed in northwestern Spain. For many months he roamed the exotic and history-filled landscape, living off his music and the kindness of the people he came to love. From Vigo, he wandered southward through the New Castile region (Segovia, Madrid, Toledo). By December, he came to the coastal region of Andalusia (Cordova, Seville, Granada). There, Lee holed up at a Castillo hotel until the outbreak of the civil war in July 1936. This author's second autobiographical sketch could have been subtitled "From Spain With Love." His inimitable poetic description of the Spanish landscape and its inhabitants is sensual as it is lyrical.

His admirers have commented, variously, that Laurie Lee 'writes like an angel', a 'poet, whose prose is quick and bright as a snake'. For another writer such praise might seem lavish but not for Laurie Lee. He writes beautifully, producing books that electrify and enchant, exhilarate and mesmerise. 'As I Walked Out One Midsummer Morning' is the second volume of a marvellous trilogy. Part autobiography, part evocation of all the bewilderment and uncertainty of the 1930's, it is characterized by the lyricism of its poet author. Leaving his home in the Cotswolds, the young Lee walks to London in 'high, sulky Summer' with high hopes of making his fortune. He settles, happily enough, in a London boarding house with an engagingly eccentric Irish Cockney family, and supports himself by labouring on a building site and by playing the violin. In a life of opposites, we are treated to a first-hand account of the ugliness and tension of the disputes between employees and unions. In the dawn of the first, disquieting signs of dissatisfaction - a feeling in the 30's that led

inexorably to the policy of Appeasement, and thus to war - we see through the eyes of a naive adolescent. It is this naivete, coupled with the glorious spontaneity that floods this book, which leads him to Spain. Knowing approximately one Spanish phrase, Lee decides to see Spain and so begins the love affair with a country that was to obsess him for the rest of his life. Never has Spain been so vividly painted. From the scorching heat and vivid, voluptuous women of Vigo, to the false glamour and dilapidation of Madrid, Laurie Lee writes with a passion to match his captivation. An absolutely unforgettable book with a host of sharply drawn characters.

I had heard of Laurie Lee before, but I don't believe that I had ever read anything of his. I would imagine that reading some of his work is essential to say one has lived in Gloucestershire, right? I am glad that I read this book, as the descriptions were some of the most vivid that I have seen - one might say poetic, actually! I did read a few bios of Lee, as I was curious to know how this experience fit into his life. I found that he wrote "Walked out" about 30 years after the events occurred, though they do say that he kept notes of his experiences. I wondered if Lee had written this book close after the events depicted because he describes his mother in the first pages as if she is an old crone. Now, I know that young people tend to view anyone over thirty as hopelessly old, but his mum was only 55 when he left, and I question that description. It does make me wonder if perhaps this book was written more with the eyes and heart of a fifty year old than of a under 30 chap. The descriptions of places and people were second to none. I could envision what Lee saw and heard. He wasn't as successful at conveying his emotions, though. Perhaps he doesn't remember what he felt, and why he did what he did, and that's fair enough. I just find it hard to believe that he would go off to Spain for no particular reason, and then wander about with no particular goal. In fact, he gives himself sunstroke twice by pushing on toward no particular goal. I know that the Y chromosome is a dangerous thing, but this seems excessively stupid. If I had a bit more insight into his character perhaps it would make some sense. Lee seems to intentionally keep his emotions away from the reader.

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