

Until Brazil

Bethe Lee Moulton

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Economic theory, forbidden romance, and an international business trip don't seem the most likely recipe for a juicy novel. But author Bethe Lee Moulton combines these ingredients, hoping for a savory treat that blends real sustenance (a savvy business woman and international corporate drama) with the spice of a sultry romance in an exotic locale.

The author explores business consulting practices, the challenges of a global economy, a woman's discontent with her marriage, and the change that foreign experiences (and forbidden romance) can inspire. She suggests that when we break out of our comfort zones to take on new personal challenges, search for beauty in foreign cultures, and allow our worldview to flex, we might discover our true selves.

In *Until Brazil*, Beth Ann Bartlett, an international business consultant, travels to Brazil to help a company adjust to a new economy. Setting aside her fear, she tackles a task that could advance or derail her career and learns to take risks to gain what she truly wants. Along the way, however, she learns as much about herself as the company she assists.

The team that Bartlett works with in Brazil teaches her the benefits of flexibility in life and business. The Brazilian culture unleashes a passion she had never known. And the man who leads the Brazilian team sparks an affair that spotlights her marital discontent and inspires a courage that transforms her life. It's a journey between rigid expectations and risky freedom that asks whether a balance between the two can, or even should, be struck.

Moulton knows international business and the various locales she describes well. A business woman in Brazil and Boston, her intimate knowledge of the Brazilian culture and the challenges of global business shines. She creates moments that sparkle with vivid description, believable characters, and realistic depictions of how foreign travel changes one.

Along the way, however, the business activity sometimes mires the story. While business plans, team meetings, and strategy decisions can be difficult to make compelling, Moulton works hard to draw out the inherent drama, and often succeeds, particularly when she explores corporate politics. And, overall, the personal changes seen in Bartlett keep the story moving and provide plenty of intrigue and heat. In the end, Moulton's book, like many international dishes, may not suit everyone's taste, but for many may prove an unusual treat.

DIANE GARDNER (October 21, 2011)

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