



## 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.