



Brothers

William Goldman

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In this belated sequel to Marathon Man Goldman jumps several years into the future of the Levy brothers. Thomas is now a history professor at Columbia, and Scylla, the lethal secret agent left for dead in New York's Lincoln Center, has been restored and reactivated as a top-level killer by his shadowy masters in the U.S. government. In the nether world of Washington policymaking science has become a major weapon in a bizarre struggle between hawks and doves, and Scylla's assigned role is to eliminate two scientists whose invention of new creative killing methods may be more dangerous than the problem they set out to solve. The imaginative, if sometimes bizarre, plot winds its way through seemingly unconnected episodes of considerable violence before reaching an ironic conclusion which pulls all the threads together.

Brothers Details

Date : Published 1986 by Warner Books

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Author : William Goldman

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Genre : Fiction, Thriller, Suspense, Mystery

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From Reader Review Brothers for online ebook

Brandon says

A fun sequel to the great Marathon Man. Lots of killings, attempted killings, and fight scenes. A pretty good twist at the end.

Baldurian says

Fratelli è un action-thriller solido, divertente, pieno di inventiva e capace di accalappiare il lettore. All'ottimo Goldman non perdono però due cose (e questo spiega il limite delle tre stelle):

- 1) va bene giocare con la sospensione dell'incredulità, ma qui si è superato il limite troppo volte (i primi capitoli sono un unico, enorme maccosa).
 - 2) Babe, l'ottimo protagonista de *Il maratona*, viene usato come semplice contorno... uno spreco colossale. In definitiva il seguito discreto di un grande romanzo.
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Jesse says

Brothers - a sequel to Marathon Man - is completely over the top. Goldman may well have written this on an opiate/alcohol bender. It could be one of the most egregious Mary Sue offences ever, but I loved it. It's as if Goldman figured "Edged Weapons" was an unappreciated masterpiece, but suffered from an excess of subtlety.

There will never be a movie. The plot reads like Get Smart delivered with a straight face, but why did I love it?

Perhaps because of Goldman's gift for literary slo-mo, and the audaciousness to fuck Dustin Hoffman's character from Marathon Man so deeply in the ass. As I read the book, I constantly imagined Roy Scheider reprising his role as Scylla, so successfully did he convey the idea of Scylla in his abbreviated role in Schlesinger's adaptation of the first instalment. The death of Scheider - such a loss.

Goldman has a gift for showing the reader something before pulling the rug from under them. One of the best examples of this is from The Color of Light, where, between chapters, a child is apparently saved, yet lost. It's reminiscent of a particular scene in John Irving's The World According to Garp, where the fate of a child is unexplained for a chapter or two, until the awful truth is revealed. In this novel, this concept is used to articulate the twists and turns of the secret agent genre, but also, it signposts a terrible tragedy early in the piece, which later feeds into a tragic, if somewhat chaotic, bitter end.

There's no moral to the story here, but the alias "Elmer Snerd" will forever be a memorable counterpoint to Ian Fleming's cooler than cool "Bond, James Bond" idiom.

MD says

This is certainly not high literature but was a thoroughly enjoyable read. I rarely reread books, but I have reread this one.

Laura says

From BBC Radio 4 - Drama:

William Goldman's dark sequel to Marathon Man, dramatised by Stephen Keyworth.

The western world is gearing up for war until Scylla, an infamous American spy, is brought out of hiding and sent on a brutal mission to keep the peace.

Starring Tom Burke and Jack Lowden.

Directed by Kirsty Williams.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b08yj...>

Jackie Arroyo says

Ridiculously phenomenal. The sequel to Marathon Man and was even better.

Elizabeth says

I read this while I was 18 and in Europe, the storyline has stayed with me. I don't remember realizing it was a sequel, I'm looking forward to reading the first.

Checkman says

I like William Goldman. I've always enjoyed the films that he has written ("All The President's Men", "Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid", "Marathon Man", "Maverick") and I've read a few of his novels over the years which I have also enjoyed.

"Marathon Man" is one of my favorite thrillers and has been for many years. I really wanted to like "Brothers" despite the negative opinions I have heard and read over the years. Sadly I have to say that I found it to be a mess. It's isn't that I was expecting more of the same - I pride myself on being more sophisticated than that. However I was expecting something less.....well I don't even know how to describe this sequel. Perhaps if it was a stand-alone novel I would have given it three stars. It has a vague Frank Miller quality to it and I like Miller's more psychotic works (See "Sin City" and "Electra Assassin").

The problem is that "Marathon Man" is set in our world. A nightmarish quality runs throughout the first story, but it is firmly set in our world. Technology and James Bond gadgets play no part in MM, but with "Brothers" Goldman goes in a totally different direction and I found myself wanting off of the ride. It's as if David Morrell ("First Blood") took over, but he was drunk when he did so. It wasn't fun or even mind bending. It was forced, tiresome and ultimately boring.

Having written such a negative review I still can't bring myself to give "Brothers" one star. Even when firing on only one cylinder Goldman is still better than less talented writers firing on two or three cylinders. But I won't be keeping my copy.

One last observation. "Brothers" is Goldman's most recent novel. In 28 years he has yet to write another one. I can't help but speculate that "Brothers" didn't do all that much for him either.

Martin says

I remember this as so much better. Of course, it was probably 20 years ago I first read it.

Jeff Mayo says

Absolutely horrible sequel to Marathon Man. At the end of that book one of the brothers is stabbed to death. He dies in his brothers arms. But to make a sequel about the two brothers, one now a Columbia professor, the other, a secret agent, had to be resurrected. He was severely injured in the stabbing, but didn't die. From there it gets more preposterous. Skip it.

Sam Ogren says

sequel to Marathon Man

Kathleen says

one of the worst books i've ever read. i usually don't finish books so terrible, but i read the whole thing on my dad's recommendation. it was an absolutely ridiculous story.

there's one fight scene where two guys are such brilliant fighters that almost nothing happens! they're both motionless as the slightest feint would prove his undoing and so, what is supposed to be a fantastic fight scene is nothing but a standstill.

my favourite part though, were the bombs made to look like children. there are bombs that resemble lifelike

little kids. that walk around. and talk. fooling everybody. how is this a thing that got written down and approved and printed. bombs. disguised as children.

i hope goldman was paid well for this book, there's no other excuse for writing it. if you want a good laugh, read this as camp. it's embarrassing to read it as a serious novel. and it definitely isn't a sequel to Marathon Man.

Audrey says

read marathon man do not read this

james says

I couldn't remember whether I had read this book or not until I actually opened it and read a little of it. I remember it being okay, but I get it confused with Marathon Man, to which this is the sequel.

Feliks says

Few thriller-fans today may have ever read the original book which William Goldman wrote in the early 70s --from which, this much-later work I'm now going to describe to you--is the sequel. The earlier book redefined the thriller genre; was adapted into a fine movie (by the author himself, thankfully) with the most famous leading-men of the day acting in it; and even now it remains a book to which any new thriller must be compared to. That genre-benchmark was 'Marathon Man'--and its still as great as it ever was--though the numbers of readers who wend their way to it have of course, dwindled.

In the digital publishing free-for-all occurring today, the only books which attract big sales are those which are currently being advertised and promoted. 'Marathon Man' only has fading word-of-mouth to help attract new fans. Its a shame, because for years, it was considered the single most powerful example of its genre. It is still quietly revered, by a savvy few--and that attests to its impact considering that books today are structured in 'series' or 'franchises'.

For a long time too, it was a book no one (likely not even its author) even considered a sequel for. A sequel was unlooked-for because it ('Marathon Man') was not only too unique; too singular a story--but also so perfectly realized. It was dramatically succinct; complete; whole; fulfilled. It didn't need any tinkering, amending, or expanding. Really, to contemplate 'furthering it' might even harm the integrity and purity of the original concept. A great story usually has a firm, decisive ending. Loose ends (like sequels) are the sign of a sloppy product.

And William Goldman never writes sloppy. He is a consummate craftsman who always writes to a certain high caliber. You can see it in all his concoctions. He has such a reliable smoothness and poise, such

confident grasp of storytelling rhythm. When you flip through one of his page-turners, you always sense that he had a steady goal in mind, some spark which prompted him to labor in the first place. You know there had to be something which intrigued him, some idea to kickstart the process of writing which placed that book currently in your hand. He never writes unless he, himself, is excited about a concept; excited about sharing that concept with readers.

That's what I tried to keep in mind when I encountered this sequel (to 'Marathon Man'). I always remind myself to keep faith with Goldman whenever I'm reading one of his more down-market works. 'Control' is another one. Since it didn't make a splash, you wonder whether he maybe botched it. But as I just explained above: he deserves that we trust him. He's 'earned his keep', too many times to give up on him.

Nevertheless, I was worried as I cautiously made my way through this strange, (perhaps ill-starred?) add-on to his all-time phenomenon, 'Marathon Man'. Could he do it? Could he pen a sequel to stand alongside MM? If anyone could, surely it would be he.

Still. For most of the book I was uneasy. One can't help it. Most Goldman thrillers ...you're just not sure how things will play out. That's his intention. He reserves the 'payoff' until the very last. That's how he writes his thrillers; that's what his knack is. Suspense. So here, my anticipation was two-fronted. First, evaluating the story itself--as a standalone thriller--then, rating how well those thrills might compare to its more famous progenitor (MM).

This novel--this sequel--is called 'Brothers' and to fans of 'Marathon Man' the idea of the famous characters from the first book returning for more adventure is at once exciting and nervous-making; nervous, because we want it to be great. Nervous, because we don't want it to suck.

Goldman of course, is adroit at exploring 'brother' or 'buddy' relationships. 'Marathon Man' gave us one of the best 'sibling' stories ever. So there's little chance that he's going to fumble that aspect of this continuing saga. And he doesn't: what happens to 'Babe' and 'Doc' in this tale is artistically deft and doesn't mar the earlier story when they meet again for further mayhem. But the overarching storyline in which they re-appear..well..that's perhaps where the weakness lies. I can't help but notice that its nowhere close in accomplishment to the earlier story-model found in MM. But maybe nothing ever can be. Lightning can't strike twice.

What we do get though, is the awesomeness of seeing agent Scylla return from the dead; return for more action as only he can deliver. Scylla is every thriller fan's favorite hero. A renaissance butt-kicker. He simply demolishes ass. Sure, its a bit thin as we follow his return..the painful explaining of 'how he didn't really die', the last time we saw him. He was 'whisked away to a private island' and 'held as a hedge (by his agency) against some 'future, unexpected crisis'. Goldman asks a lot from us.

We grudgingly let Goldman proceed ...and its okay. But only because the quality of the writing. The concept of this story would not be convincing enough in the hands of any other author. Its frankly, zany. It makes the story of Dr. Christian Szell look as sober as 'Buddenbrooks'. Its a story straight out of, *'The Man from UNCLE' TV series*. Yes, that goofy. Someone is killing the world's political leaders, how are they doing it? With child assassins. Woah really? Yes. Who's behind it? That's the plot. Groan!

Now the real weirdness of this book--the oddity that other reviews have commented on--is the human freakshow, the various encounters Scylla has along down the fairway of this carnival, as he unravels this bizarre global crisis. He's about to enter a series of perverse adventures more fitting for a Michael Anderson porn film.

But here is where Goldman's professionalism comes to the fore. What he treats his readers to is a kind of a romp through sex, drugs, violence, sadism, science, and perversion of the kind you will probably never see in any other thriller. The most god-damned brutal, berserk encounters populate the middle of this story; stuff so weird you will never get rid of it fully out of your head. Two giddy-in-love teenagers suddenly enter into a suicide pact; a mad scientist has sex with the girlfriend of a homicidal ex-con; a man gets violently kicked in the balls to test his integrity; a sweet older couple have their faces peeled off by a custom-designed switchblade razor; a man dangles from a hotel ledge by his fingertips; and last (but not least) forced interracial sodomy. All sorts of looney! You wonder what the HELL is this author doing??

But he *can* do it. Goldman *can* go out on a limb like this and still squeak by. The same material in the hands of a lesser writer would wind up in a box in the closet next to *'The Story of O'*. But Goldman alone, gets away with this. It all comes together eventually. There is ultimately a reward for polluting your brain with all this nonsense. You really do just have to trust Goldman. Never forget this! Trust Goldman! He always brings the bacon home!

For some reason--maybe he needed money, maybe his last Hollywood expose' had closed doors for him--he turned his mind to the writing of a 'Marathon Man' sequel and this is what we got. Take it or leave it. As crazy as it is, there is still one of the all-time great fight scenes within these pages, as only Goldman can write a fight scene. It's a doozy. It's his other genius, his other trump-card. Goldman never fails to come up with something inventive when describing hand-to-hand combat. Thriller fans can't be remiss about this; you have to read Goldman at minimum, for his fistfight sequences.

The giant Scylla bursts in on 'the Blonde' in a skyrise apartment, just after his enemy has finished a hit. Cue adrenalin. These are two of the world's top assassins fighting hand-to-hand combat. To the death. They start maneuvering in a kind of dance. There's just nothing like Goldman's gift for this kind of scene. He's got such fight scenes in almost every book he's ever written. Read him for this, alone!

So, there you have it. That's my review. At the end of it all, I'm honored to write this little tribute to his oddball throwaway sequel. It wasn't a publishing success. It's successful only in the sense that it became something else of its own; rather than what was intended. It's good, in spite of its creator's finer aims. Remember that later, during this same period, he came up with 'Princess Bride'. Maybe 'Brothers' is a mistake. But William Goldman is the kind of author who can make mistakes ...and still be better than any 80% of what his competitors produce.
