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# The Brethren (John Grisham)



## Synopsis

Read by Michael BeckFive CDs, 6 hoursTrumble, a minimum security federal prison, is home to the usual assortment of criminals- drug dealers, bank robbers, swindlers, embezzlers, tax evaders, two Wall Street crooks, one doctor, and at least four lawyers.Trumble is also home to three former judges who call themselves The Brethren: one from Texas, one from California, and one from Mississippi. They meet each day in the law library, their turf at Trumble, where they write briefs, handle cases for other inmates, practice law without a license, occasionally dispense jailhouse justice, and spend hours hatching schemes to make money. Then one of their scams goes awry. It ensnares the wrong victim, an innocent on the outside, a man with dangerous friends, and The Brethren's days of quietly marking time are over.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

John Grisham's novels have all been so systematically successful that it is easy to forget he is just one man toiling away silently with a pen, experimenting and improving with each book. While not as gifted a prose stylist as Scott Turow, Grisham is among the best plotters in the thriller business, and he infuses his books with a moral valence and creative vision that set them apart from their peers. The Brethren is in many respects his most daring book yet. The novel grows from two separate subplots. In the first, three imprisoned ex-judges (the "brethren" in the title), frustrated by their loss of power and influence, concoct an elaborate blackmail scheme that preys on wealthy, closeted gay men. The second story traces the rise of presidential candidate Aaron Lake, a puppet essentially

created by CIA director Teddy Maynard to fulfill Maynard's plans for restoring the power of his beleaguered agency. Grisham's tight control of the two meandering threads leaves the reader guessing through most of the opening chapters how and when these two worlds will collide. Also impressive is Grisham's careful portraiture. Justice Hatlee Beech in particular is a fascinating, tragic anti-hero: a millionaire judge with an appointment for life who was rendered divorced, bankrupt, and friendless after his conviction for a drunk-driving homicide. The book's cynical view of presidential politics and criminal justice casts a somewhat gloomy shadow over the tale. CIA director Teddy Maynard is an all-powerful demon with absolute knowledge and control of the public will and public funds. Even his candidate, Congressman Lake, is a pawn in Maynard's egomaniacal game of ad campaigns, illicit contributions, and international intrigue. In the end, *The Brethren* marks a transition in Grisham's career toward a more thoughtful narrative style with less interest in the big-payoff blockbuster ending. But that's not to say that the last 50 pages won't keep your reading light turned on late. --Patrick O'Kelley --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Only a few megaselling authors of popular fiction deviate dramatically from formula--most notably Stephen King but recently Grisham, too. He's serializing a literary novel, *A Painted House*, in the *Oxford American*; his last thriller (*The Testament*) emphasized spirituality as intensely as suspense; and his deeply absorbing new novel dispenses with a staple not only of his own work but of most commercial fiction: the hero. The novel does feature three antiheroes of a sort, the brethren of the title, judges serving time in a federal prison in Florida for white-collar offenses. They're a hard bunch to root for, though, as their main activity behind bars is running a blackmail scheme in which they bait, hook and squeeze wealthy, closeted gay men through a magazine ad supposedly placed by "Ricky," a young incarcerated gay looking for companionship. Then there's the two-bit alcoholic attorney who's abetting them by running their mail and depositing their dirty profits in an overseas bank. Scarcely more appealing is the big fish the trio snare, Congressman Anthony Lake, who meanwhile is busy selling his lifelong integrity when the director of the CIA offers to lever him into the White House in exchange for a doubling of federal defense spending upon Lake's inauguration. The expertly orchestrated and very complex plot follows these evildoers through their illicit enterprises, devoting considerable attention to the CIA's staging of Lake's presidential campaign and even more to that agency's potentially lethal pursuit of the brethren once it learns that the three are threatening to out candidate Lake. Every personage in this novel lies, cheats, steals and/or kills, and while Grisham's fans may miss the stalwart lawyer-heroes and David vs. Goliath slant of his earlier work, all will be captivated by this clever thriller that presents as crisp a cast as he's yet

devised, and as gripingly sardonic yet biting moral a scenario as he's ever imagined. Agent, David Gernert. 2.8 million first printing. (Feb. 1) Copyright 2000 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

The Brethren was a decent Grisham book. I enjoyed the story line and thought it interesting however the book was not as intriguing as previous Grisham books and while it had a legal basis for the story it did have as much legal mystery to the it.

Great writing...one of Grisham's best. Storyline is interesting and stimulating with lots of twists. Highly recommend it.

Grisham never disappoints. Always a fast paced, page turner. You want to know the conclusion, but also don't want the book to end

One of the main characters in the book, Teddy Maynard, is a wheelchair-bound CIA director. If any readers see the association to Teddy Roosevelt and Franklin D. Roosevelt (who was also in a wheelchair), you'll understand why Grisham picked this name. T. Roosevelt was often quoted as saying, "Speak softly and carry a big stick. . . .", which also appears to be the invocation of Teddy Maynard, whose profound belief the world-is-incorrigible-but-I-am-not is the driving force behind the puppetry he has mastered over the many decades. I think calling him Franklin Maynard would have been too obvious for most people. As a matter of historical perspective, Theodore Roosevelt, whom FDR greatly admired, was also his fifth cousin. Why do I mention this? Because FDR was credited with bringing this country out of the 1930's depression, much the way Teddy Maynard is portrayed as believing he can bring this country (present day) out of its great complacency. So with a galloping plot about our lack of military, a rigged presidential election via money, and three judges who are all inmates at the same federal prison wreaking havoc on the lives of closeted gay men, Grisham is off and running. And believe me, he pulls out every cliché about political solipsism and doesn't stop there. While it is a good read, and not necessarily a good story, I was disappointed that the "bad" guys didn't get their comeuppance in the end as most do in a Grisham novel. Maybe wrecking, exhorting from, and blackmailing gay men just doesn't rank up there with Grisham as something "wrong." In fact, at the end of the novel, the three judges not only get away with all their chicanery, but they get rewarded as well. The only person who gets a shot to the head is the slimy lawyer Trevor, who's biggest crime was being stupid and an alcoholic. I think we can see where Grisham's

priorities are when it comes to what's right and wrong (read: gay). And the topper? President Teddy Maynard, excuse me, I mean CIA Director Teddy Maynard, forces our poor closeted presidential hopeful Aaron Lake into a sham marriage, less Teddy reveal Lake's secret homosexual lifestyle! He's just as bad as the three judges he spent most of the book trying to take down. And that's how it ends. Lake gets married, the judges are pardoned with \$2 million each, and Teddy retires with all his pain pills to the countryside. Isn't the world of Grisham nice and tidy?

Last and certainly least! This is the weakest of all Grishams books. It took me about 80 pages before I was not forcing myself to continue reading. I usually grab the main character and root for him/her in Grisham's work. Not this time. They were all boring and none were clever. No character development and the plot was poor. Grisham never ends a book well. It is almost like he gets tired and wraps it up to get rid of the project but the ending did not detract from this. It was bad from beginning to end. I am only glad that I read it, so I can say I read it, when everyone that reads Grisham talks about it. Its an easy read. Try it. You may like it and think I am crazy.

Mostly found it boring and not one redeeming character in the book to root for, of course it was about lawyers

I love JG novels., specially the legal thrillersHe has a fantastic imagination and his writting style is very pleasant and easy to read, also he does not lack of good humor.I read him with great pleasure and I always know that he will surprise me.

Not your typical suspenseful Grisham. This book was entertaining nonetheless. The story is almost funny; the parts about the judges in the federal prison are so far from believable that you have no choice but to laugh. You can just picture Trevor can't you? The description of a "no security" federal prison with judges gone bad housing with international drug lords is a stretch. You certainly don't think the parts about the CIA are believable but hey who knows what they can do?Grisham seems to be leaning away from the lawyerly dramas that we love and going for full on unbelievable entertainment only fiction.

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