Brothers: A Novel by Yu Hua

Could'n't Put It Down

A bestseller in China, recently short-listed for the Man Asian Literary Prize, and a winner of France’s Prix Courrier International, Brothers is an epic and wildly unhinged black comedy of modern Chinese society running amok.

Here is China as we’ve never seen it, in a sweeping, Rabelaisian panorama of forty years of rough-and-rumble Chinese history that has already scandalized millions of readers in the author’s homeland. Yu Hua, award-winning author of To Live, gives us a surreal tale of two brothers riding the dizzying roller coaster of life in a newly capitalist world. As comically mismatched teenagers, Baldy Li, a sex-obsessed ne’er-do-well, and Song Gang, his bookish, sensitive stepbrother, vow that they will always be brothers—a bond they will struggle to maintain over the years as they weather the ups and downs of rivalry in love and making and losing millions in the new China. Their tribulations play out across a richly populated backdrop that is every bit as vibrant: the rapidly-changing village of Liu Town, full of such lively characters as the self-important Poet Zhao, the craven dentist Yanker Yu, the virginal town beauty (turned madam) Lin Hong, and the simpering vendor Popsicle Wang.

With sly and biting humor, combined with an insightful and compassionate eye for the lives of ordinary people, Yu Hua shows how the madness of the Cultural Revolution has transformed into the equally rabid madness of extreme materialism. Both tragic and absurd by turns, Brothers is a monumental spectacle and a fascinating vision of an extraordinary place and time.

Features:
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My Personal Review:
I loved every chapter. Had difficulty putting it down. After travelling to China late last year and learning a little about this thing called the Social Revolution, Yu Hua brought the period to life for me as these two brothers lived through something most people could never dream of.

After reading a few reviews and listening to the review on NPR, I thought I would buy it and was expecting a somewhat dirty, comedic novel set in China. After getting through the first few chapters, I was engrossed and quickly realized it was more than just the story of some young pervert. On the one hand, all I could think about was how difficult and different life was in China during this time but also realized the tremendous similarities we all share as people - regardless of our culture or nationality. My favorite novel this year by far.

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