



Brotherly Love

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When Peter's father kills the driver of the fatal car and is himself killed in retribution, Peter's uncle, Phillip Flood, moves his family into the house and fills the power vacuum in the union. His son Michael follows in this footsteps, but Peter does not fit in; he is uncomfortable with the violence and greed which drive the rest of his family. Instead he gravitates toward Nick DiMaggio, an honest mechanic, former prizefighter, and owner of a small training gym. Nick, the only decent and honorable adult character in the novel, constitutes its moral center.

In 1972, when his cousin Michael's father is killed, Peter drifts into Michael's sphere of influence, as Michael undertakes to consolidate his power. Peter is in the uneasy position of trying to maintain both his integrity and his place in a corrupt organization; the result is that he remains an outsider, with no place of his own. Corrupted to a degree, he remains under the influence of Nick. Inevitably, the conflict comes to a head: When Nick offends Michael, who by now had been driven mad by his lust for power, Michael orders Peter to kill his old friend. By killing Michael instead, Peter saves Nick and his son, expiates his guilt at the cost of his own life, and brings the novel to a tragic but satisfying end.

In *BROTHERLY LOVE*, Pete Dexter has written a story at once grittily realistic in its picture of corrupt unions life, and thought-provoking in its vision and its moral values.

Sources for Further Study

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