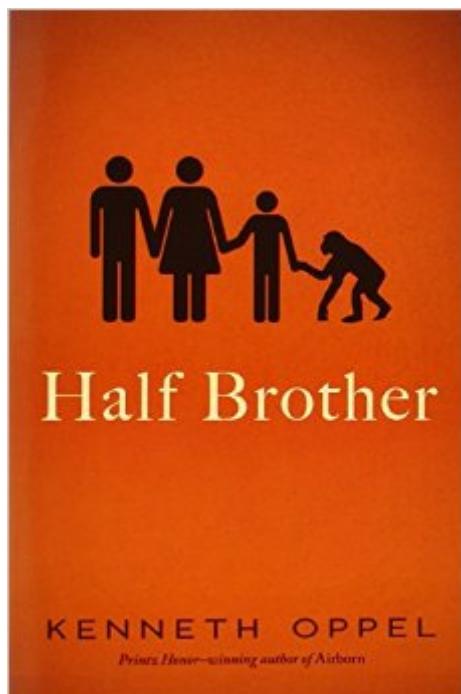


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# Half Brother



## **Synopsis**

From a Printz-Honor-winning author, an absorbing novel about a teen boy whose scientist parents take in a chimpanzee. All happy families are alike. Ben Tomlin's unhappy family is unhappy in a very different way. For thirteen years, Ben Tomlin was an only child. But all that changes when his mother brings home Zan--an eight-day-old chimpanzee. Ben's father, a renowned behavioral scientist, has uprooted the family to pursue his latest research project: a high-profile experiment to determine whether chimps can acquire advanced language skills. Ben's parents tell him to treat Zan like a little brother. Ben reluctantly agrees. At least now he's not the only one his father's going to scrutinize. It isn't long before Ben is Zan's favorite, and Ben starts to see Zan as more than just an experiment. His father disagrees. Soon Ben is forced to make a critical choice between what he is told to believe and what he knows to be true--between obeying his father or protecting his brother from an unimaginable fate.

## **Book Information**

Paperback: 375 pages

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Product Dimensions: 0.8 x 5.2 x 7.8 inches

Shipping Weight: 11.2 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.6 out of 5 starsÂ  See all reviewsÂ  (44 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #50,341 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #5 inÂ  Books > Teens > Literature & Fiction > Social & Family Issues > Family > Adoption #33 inÂ  Books > Children's Books > Growing Up & Facts of Life > Family Life > Adoption #94 inÂ  Books > Children's Books > Animals > Apes & Monkeys

Age Range: 12 and up

Grade Level: 7 and up

## **Customer Reviews**

One of the biggest, most ambitiously conceived, and richly imagined novels ever, *The Half-Brother* has already won the Nordic Council Literature Prize, and it has been nominated for the Independent Foreign Fiction Prize. A haunting story of four generations of a strange Norwegian family, each member of which is "different" in some respect, this is as complete a family saga as you will find.

Every character is fully delineated, and all his/her relationships and relevant past history are brought to life here, filtered through the mind of Barnum Nilsen, the son of a circus worker and grifter. Barnum's unusual but ultimately close relationship with his brother Fred, the product of his mother's rape by a soldier, is at the heart of the novel, with Fred being huge, active, and very physical while Barnum is unusually small, more passive, and cerebral. Two halves of the same coin, neither brother is very successful alone. Four generations of the family live together, and some "absent" characters, who have affected the lives of family members, "live on" through objects that they have left behind with the family. Barnum and Fred often seek a connection to the past by reading the last letter their great-grandfather sent from Greenland before he vanished. Vera's best friend Rakel leaves Vera with a treasured ring, just before she is taken during the Nazi occupation of Norway. Barnum buys a ring for his first girlfriend, and it has meaning for him even when he is middle-aged. "We do not disappear without a trace," Barnum learns. "We leave a wake that never quite disappears, a gash in time.

The Half Brother  
Lars Saabye Christensen  
Arcadia Books Ltd. 2003  
This is a book that cries out to be read. It is, as one reviewer has put it, 'unputdownable.' It is a big book - in the English translation 764 pages. Read it please. Read it please because it is a masterpiece in two of the three essentials of all great literature and art. It creates in the mind a sense of place and a sense of time. Read it please because, like Tolstoy's 'War and Peace' or Margaret Mitchell's 'Gone with the Wind' it will stay with you for the rest of your life. If you have read Dostoevsky - remember Raskolnikov in 'Crime and Punishment.' If you have read Knut Hamsun's 'Hunger' - remember the streets of Oslo. If you have read neither - do so now. Recall if you can the spirit of Lauren Bacall and Bogart's line "I'm not very tall either. Next time I'll come on stilts." It is rare that a translator can capture the spirit of the original. Kenneth Steven has achieved this. In a translators note he writes: 'All translation is a compromise; there are inevitable losses in bringing a richly woven literary text from its native tongue. It is not the thousands of words that pose the difficulty, it is the single words that have been chosen by the author for their resonance, for their resemblance to other words in the language, their interplay with different elements of the text.' A poet, Steven has isolated the words and given them their resonance. The story begins with a rape and ends in an enigma. On page 659 you will read: "Time and place; time seen from the place, and, not least, the place seen through time." Action there is - this is no 'Waiting for Godot.' But when you have read from cover to cover you will be left with the words: "To tell you all this.

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