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From the writer of the award-winning *Game of Thrones* series for HBO based on the books of George R. R. Martin.

Monty Brogan starts a seven-year prison sentence for dealing drugs tomorrow. Tonight is his last night of freedom. His father wants him to run. His drug-lord boss, Uncle Blue, wants to know if he squealed. His girlfriend isn't sure what she wants, and his two best friends know one thing for sure; after he goes in, he will never be the same.

25th Hour - film tie-in Details

Date : Published (first published 2000)

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Author : David Benioff

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Liz says

Two stars completely defines how I felt about this book. It was ok. It kind of pains me to say this because his other book, City of Thieves, is a marvelous five-star read!

The good: well-drawn characters that are introduced to us as individuals and then shown in a whole new context when these three friends all come together.

The ok: I couldn't summon much interest for the story or for those well-drawn characters and I found that I didn't much care what happened to any of them. There were a couple revealing moments with Monty (particularly a flashback to childhood and a trip to see his mother in the hospital) but that's about the extent of it.

Don't get me wrong, Benioff can most certainly write. Have I mentioned his other book City of Thieves? I did? Yes, well... it's pretty great.

PS: City of Thieves.

Richard says

"This life came so close to never happening..."

This is the real deal. Taut, engaging writing, themes that aren't shoved down your throat, and great characters that stick with you. Pretty-boy drug dealer Monty gets pinched and is about to get sent upstate for 7 years, so he decides to spend his last free day saying goodbye to his friends and family, including Wall Street hustler Frank, school-teacher Jacob, who fantasizes about his sexy high school student, and Monty's girlfriend Naturelle, whom he thinks just might've been the one that dimed him out. It's not only a story of three young, professional men trying to deal with their own insecurities while forced to say goodbye, but it's also a farewell to New York City. The story moves at a captivating pace all the way up to its soaring, poignant, and memorable ending (one of my favorites in fiction). An awesome first novel by the talented David Benioff, and the basis for one of my favorite movies.

Devon says

Monty Brogan is a handsome guy, he's got a beautiful girlfriend, he owns a gorgeous Corvette and an attractive apartment. He's got two best friends that he's had by his side his entire life and a dog named Doyle that he loves more than anything. But in 24 hours, it'll all be out of his hands and he'll be on a bus to Ottsville Prison. You see, Monty didn't get his Corvette by playing by the rules and paying taxes. For the majority of his life, he's been making his money by selling drugs on the streets. Now it's all about to blow back in his face.

One thing that sets this book apart from really anything I've ever read is the dialogue. Every character has

their different ways of communicating and it makes them feel more real than any description ever could. Benioff just has this ability to make every situation and every character feel so real. It's something that authors all over the world wish they could capture.

Unfortunately, this is a short book, perhaps too short and that is one of the few problems I have with it. I finished it in less than five hours (I am usually a fast reader so it may take others a bit longer.) I just felt like some characters and certain parts of the plot were a bit underdeveloped. This may be due to the fact that Benioff focused so much on developing Monty and his two best friends, and it definitely paid off. They're all so likeable, especially Monty. They feel like very real people with real emotions and flaws. You definitely want Monty to somehow escape the impossible situation Benioff has put him in. Another thing that I think saves Benioff from being criticized about the length is the fact that you're left thinking about it for so long afterward that the book feels a lot longer. It's so emotional, one of the more emotional books I have ever read, it's just impossible not to tear up or at least feel the words pulling on your heart strings as you turn the final pages.

Before you get too excited though, I feel like the ending is the biggest problem I have with the 25th Hour. For a book that is really just constantly building up to what will happen to Monty at the end, it leaves you a bit dissatisfied. Don't get me wrong, it's a good ending, but I just feel like it was a bit too open and that it could've been better.

This is just a fantastic book from beginning to end and it will have you questioning your own life decisions all the way through. I think the greatest books are the ones that you're able to take something from. I learned a thing or two from the 25th Hour and I can safely say that after reading, I valued things more in my life than I did before. For that reason, I simply can't give this book any less than a four.

Adam Floridia says

Pre-reading: This has long been one of my top ten favorite movies. Top ten may not sound like much, but this is coming from someone with a dvd collection topping 600. You see, I used to work in a store that sold used albums (ironic since I don't know shit about music) as well as a few movies and video games. My corporocratic tyrant of a boss typically paid me not in cash, but in movies, and that is the story of how my collection began. (Aside: that entire aside was simply so I could take a jab at Geoff--ah, it's good to be back on GR!)

Anyway, for some reason I never had any desire to actually read this. That is until I read City of Thieves.

So far, pleased I picked it up.

Post-reading: Yes! This is exactly what I needed--a book that, even though I knew everything that would happen, kept me wanting to pick it up. A book that, despite being busy and on vacation, I read in two days. A book that, despite having a pretty crappy hotel internet connection, I wanted to at least rate and (half-heartedly) review right away.

I really admire Benioff's ability to tell a gripping story. The movie changed nearly nothing--even the dialogue. More praise for the movie: perhaps it's because I saw it before reading the book, but the casting of every character (major and minor) is perfect! Finally, like in the movie, the ending is just phenomenal, very touching, very poignant, very make-you-get-just-a-little-choked-up and all without being anything overly dramatic. One could argue that it's even sort of an open-ending, and that is even more perfect for the book since the last chapter is 24. Get it? The 25th chapter isn't written. Get it? Waaaay better and more meaningful

than the chapter gimmick in this stinker.

Joshua Allen says

I really like this movie so figured I should check out the source material -- turns out it's exactly like the movie..? Or, you know, vice versa. But it almost feels like it was written with a movie in mind, what with its shortness and visual descriptions and whatnot. The fact that the author went on to be a screenwriter surprises me not a whit.

Also can I say the author is WAY too handsome to be a writer? It's SICKENING. But it does lend some authenticity to his descriptions of Monty, the protagonist here, who is also very good looking and, unfortunately, too good looking to go to jail and have it be a pleasant experience. (I mean this author is WAY better looking than Ed Norton, who played Monty in the movie.) He's so good looking -- I don't mean to harp on this, but -- that I had DOUBTS that he actually wrote this book. I seriously had thoughts like: This dialogue is too finely tuned, and this point is too intelligently and creatively made, to have come from the mind of THIS MALE MODEL OVER HERE. But these are my issues and not germane to this "review."

Anyway I liked this. It's a quick read, but Sex God does a lot with a little, choosing just the right words and putting them in just the right spots. It's a simple but strong story concept, and -- esp. considering it's his first (and only?) novel -- it's nice that Dimple Chin doesn't feel compelled to be self-indulgent and crank out 800 pages of bloat but instead constructs a nice, modest, tight, smart thing out of it. God DAMMIT.

Albert says

Monty (Montgomery) has screwed up his life. He is 26 years old, is handsome, has a beautiful girlfriend and a great apartment. Monty had a scholarship to attend a private high school, but messed that up. He started dealing drugs in high school and ended up getting tossed out of school. Monty says he was just six months away from having enough money to quit, but he got caught by the Feds, and in 24 hours he must report for a seven-year sentence. The best he will get is a reduction in his sentence of 82 days for good behavior. Monty spends his last day with his dog, Doyle, his two best friends, Frank Slattery and Jakob Elinsky, and his girl friend, Naturelle.

I was looking forward to this novel because I had so enjoyed David Benioff's City of Thieves. The 25th Hour is actually Benioff's first novel. The structure of the novel is choppy. However, while The 25th Hour in no way compares with City of Thieves, it is an interesting character study that surprised me with depth in some characters that seem initially very superficial.

Asghar Abbas says

One of those hip New York books by a young waspy guy that is supposed to be chic. In this case, it actually

was; very, very, good work with fleshed out and thoughtful characters.

Benioff incidentally is one of the show-runners of Game of Thrones.

Ashley says

I holy-shit-loved David Benioff's second book, *City of Thieves*, back when I read it in 2009, and I've been book-pushing it to friends ever since. (FYI, they've all loved it, too.) But I never got around to reading his first book until now (partly because it's kind of hard to track down—also, I've never seen the film, which is apparently pretty great).

Ultimately, *The 25th Hour* was kind of a let down for me, but I say “kind of” because, a) it was really well-written, and b) really short. So even though I didn't gel with most of the themes or characters, it was still enjoyable enough to stack it in the win column.

The basic premise is that the “main character” Monty (who isn't really the main character) is about to go to jail for seven years. He has twenty-four hours left before he has to board the bus, and he's going to spend it with his family and with his friends and girlfriend. But really, the book is as much about his two best friends and his girlfriend as it is about him. It's definitely a character piece, and it's definitely “lit-fic”, in the sense that there isn't so much of a plot as there is a chance for these characters to use their friend's situation as a prism through which to examine their own lives and choices. But it's not as obvious as that, either. It's more subtle.

None of the characters except Naturelle (lord, that name) are really likable, but they are all interesting. And there are some really great passages:

“No matter what, it's bye-bye Monty.”

‘What does that mean?’

Slattery raises his thumb. ‘If he runs, he's gone. You'll never see him again.’ He raises his index finger, the top joint crooked from wrestling days. ‘If he pulls the trigger, he's gone. They'll keep the casket closed.’ He raises his middle finger. ‘If they lock him away, he's gone. You'll never see him again.’

‘I'll see him again,’ says Jakob. ‘I'll see him when he gets out.’

The elevator doors open and Slattery steps inside. ‘I wouldn't bet on it. You think you're still going to be friends? You think you'll kick back with a couple of beers and reminisce? Forget it, Jake. It's over after tonight. You getting in?’

And Benioff has a twisted sense of humor:

“When I was twelve I catch soldier raping my mother. I scream, I punch him, try to kick his balls. He takes knife and opens me up. My mother, she is trying to push me back in. My—how do you say, the coils—‘ Kostya twirls his fingers to indicate coils.

‘Intestines?’

‘My intestines come falling out. So she is pushing them back in. Very bad. But see—‘ Kostya beats his chest with his fist. ‘I survive. Big man, now. Later, I find out he was not raping my mother. So, okay, he wasn't such a bad man. He drove me to hospital.’

‘After he cut you up?’

‘Yes, but he felt very bad. I scared him. He comes back from Afghanistan. Things very bad there for Soviet soldiers. So yes, he cuts me up, but then he drives me to hospital and we become friends.’”

I shouldn’t have liked this at all, really. Books about white man identity problems don’t interest me, especially ones where the characters work out their issues through inappropriate sex or aggression. And there is some of that here, though it’s not the focus. But Benioff is just such a good writer. He made me care in spite of myself. And the last couple pages are a real gut punch. Ultimately, this is a book about living with the consequences of your own decisions, and that’s something that I can get behind.

[3.5 stars]

Heather says

Another tough one to rate... 3.5/5, *rounded down*.

I’ve wanted to read a David Benioff book for a while now. I don’t know why it took me this long to do that, but I finally did. While my rating for this book isn’t as high as I expected, I did enjoy several things about it.

I really loved the writing style. **I loved it a lot.** Benioff’s words pack a punch; *he says a lot in so few words.* This book was not as action packed as I suspected it would be, but the prose kept me engaged and interested the entire time. The setting was great, the timeline was nice, he introduced the characters in a consistent way, weaving their individual personalities with their group personas coherently. For that reason, the character development was really nice. Benioff doesn’t drone on about each person on any deep level, but enough that you get an overall sense of the person, and their relationship with Monty.

My disappointment in this book is due to several factors. This book certainly did not redefine the crime novel. The crime isn’t something novice - this kind of stuff happens all the time. (*At least where I’m from it does.*) Nothing about this book surprised me at all. Additionally, I think some of the characters in this book were perhaps unnecessarily placed in there for reasons I don’t understand... There were also a few unanswered questions I had, and I really wanted the answers...

For instance... (*view spoiler*)

I definitely intend to read his other works, City of Thieves and When the Nines Roll Over and Other Stories. While I didn’t enjoy everything about this book, I think for someone who hasn’t read a Benioff book previously, this is a good place to start. If you don’t like the style of writing OR the story [both], it’s safe to assume his other stuff wouldn’t be enjoyable. The story here was okay for me and I loved, loved, loved the writing style, so I’m excited to read another one!

Carol says

Taking place during a 25-hour period, the novel presents the story of Monty Brogan, all-around good-

looking bad boy who's managed to get himself arrested for drug dealing. And he's headed to jail after one more night of celebration. During the course of the story, we're introduced to his girlfriend and his two best friends. In 210 pages, I felt like I knew these characters, truly understood them. This is no small accomplishment for any writer. The characters are all tragically flawed, especially Monty. But as flawed and pathetic as they are, they're likable and they seem more realistic for all those faults.

Benioff is a clever storyteller, a weaver of tight tales that somehow manage to remain ambiguous. The reader is never sure exactly where the author is going with this and, if you're like me, you will not have anticipated the conclusion.

More proof here that David Benioff is one of the brightest lights in contemporary American fiction. And if you've read "City of Thieves", you should be equally impressed with Benioff's versatility in delivering a distant and unimaginably bleak place in a different time, and a darkly humorous and meaningful story. Put them both on your short list.

Ron says

I picked up The 25th Hour because of my initial interest in Benioff's other book, City of Thieves, but I often prefer to read an author's work in order of release, especially with one I have no experience. I wasn't disappointed in The 25th Hour, but I do believe that City of Thieves will be the better book.

This one is a small book encompassing (like its title hints to) one day in the life of four main characters. Three of these people are friends, the other being the main character's girlfriend. At the end of the 24 hours, she and the other two guys will lose Monty Brogan to prison, and possibly for life because who's to say Monty will make it out alive. If he does, will the others still be around? This is what The 25th Hour explores in its pages and what I liked most about it. Benioff succinctly introduces the reader to each of the four friends within a couple of hundred pages. I walked away feeling I knew each of them, and because of that I really wanted to follow along a little further. The ending left me pondering the future of each character. I'll take that as a good thing.

?Karen says

City of Thieves is one of my all-time favorites so I've had The 25th Hour on my shelf with hopes of getting to it much earlier than now. When I learned that the movie was currently playing on cable, I read the book and then immediately watched the movie. They are almost exactly alike. Not so strange, I guess, considering David Benioff also penned the screenplay. Wasn't thrilled with the choice of Edward Norton playing Monty, the guy counting down the 24 hours until he has to report to prison for a 7 year sentence on drug charges. Monty is way too pretty to survive prison (prettier than Mr. Norton), and that has him worried. He's also worried about his dad, who runs a local bar and whose very being could be endangered should Monty rat out his suppliers; about his girlfriend, who he suspects turned him in to the authorities; and very much worried about who will care for his beloved dog, which he found on the street and rescued from a near-death experience. The night before the 25th hour is spent reminiscing and partying with his two closest friends, Jakob and Frank. These characters along with a student of Jakob's and the Ukrainian/Russian drug cartel make up the entire cast, and the book is not long, all making for a very quick read, although rather

depressing. Some of the “farewell” scenes in the movie moved me to tears. 3.5 stars

Mehmet Dönmez says

It was very recent that I realized that Spike Lee's best film 25th Hour was an adaptation and as I did, simply ordered the book oversea...

Fantastic vivid ballad to friendship, New York and relations, my insufficiency on slang vocabulary did not diminish the pleasure I have tasted.

The only piece of art that make me weep in different disciplines, I thought for the movie version Terrence Blanchard excellent score impressed me as well but having read the book now I understand it is nothing but Monty's story...

I sincerely wish I was a translator, than translating this into my native language would be my lifetime goal...

notgettingenough says

David Benioff is perfect.

I know, I know, he can't be. For a start his books are really popular, so he can't be good, right? I mean not really good, not if he's making a living out of it.

And honestly, his novels: they start at the start and end at the end, they have a story to them and fantastic characters. I mean, how passé can you get?

Hang on a tick. I think this is what I meant to say:

I started this yesterday, began it again at breakfast and couldn't do a thing until it was finished.

Yayyyyyyyyyyyyyy. Yay for a great story full of people who are a joy to read about that makes you feel a bit weepy at the end, not to give anything away.

Lisa Rathbun says

I am amazed that a book with such a simple plot in which very little happens could be so very compelling. The reason is that the author created realistic and interesting characters. It is the last day before Monty goes to federal prison for seven years for drug dealing. You experience his thoughts and the thoughts of his two best friends, Jakob and Frank. The latter two, as well as Jakob's "mentor", an older teacher, seem to illustrate the statement that "most men lead lives of quiet desperation." Monty on the other hand seems to have lived

an almost charmed life; he is attractive and charismatic. A deep childhood loss, however, has marked Monty deeply, the extent of which we don't see until later on in the book. The prologue is very important in letting us see a glimpse of Monty's deepest desire -- to be a hero, to save a life. The recurring theme of his desire to be a firefighter appears several times, each time seeming sadder and sadder as we realize the contrast between his childhood aspirations and his present circumstances. The night closing in and the blizzard burying the city both reinforce the sense of being trapped without any way of escape. Monty, no matter his charm, has no more true options except jail.

His thoughts at the end of the book are so poignant they brought tears to my eyes. I grieved for the lost potential of a criminal. (This book is definitely not for the sensitive as there are many objectionable elements.)
