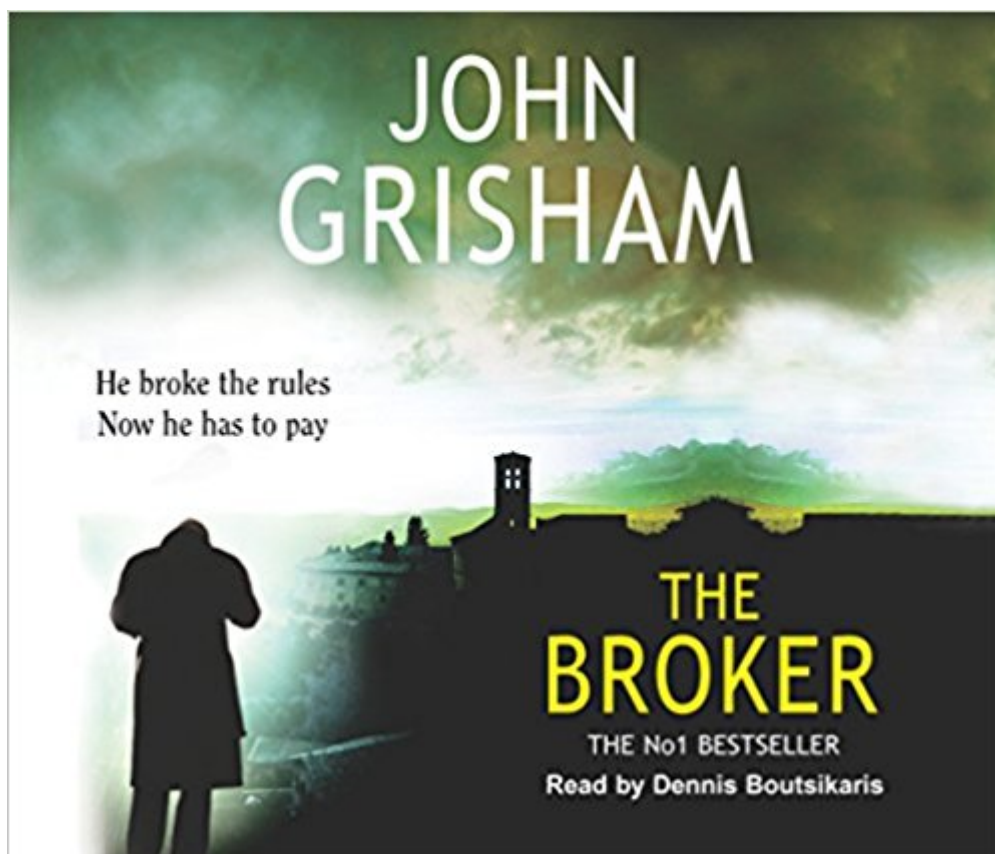


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# The Broker



## Synopsis

When the outgoing President grants a controversial last minute pardon to Joel Backman, a notorious power broker languishing in a federal prison, rumour has it that the CIA is responsible. Apparently, Backman, in his power broker heyday, may have obtained secrets compromising the world's most sophisticated satellite surveillance system. Backman is quietly smuggled out of the country, given a new name, a new identity, and a new home in Italy. But just as he settles into his new life, the CIA leaks his whereabouts to the Israelis, the Russians, the Chinese and the Saudis. The question is not whether Backman will survive - there's no chance of that. The question the CIA needs answered is, who will kill him?

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Before he was sent to federal prison for treason (among other things), Joel Backman was an extremely powerful man. Known as "the broker," Backman was a high roller--a lawyer making \$10 million a year who could "open any door in Washington." That is, until he tried to broker a deal selling access to the world's most powerful satellite surveillance system to the highest bidder. When caught, Backman accepted prison as the one option that would keep him safe and alive, since the interested parties (the Israelis, the Saudis, the Russians, and the Chinese) were all itching to get their hands on his secrets at any cost. Little does he know that his own government has designs on accessing that information--or at least letting it die with him. Now, six years after his incarceration, the director of the CIA convinces a lame duck president to pardon Backman, and the broker

becomes a free man--and an open target. The Broker marries the best of John Grisham's many talents--his ability to immerse himself in the culture of small town life (in this case, Bologna, Italy), and his uncanny mastery of the chase. The first half of the book focuses on Backman's transformation from infamous power broker to helpless victim in his own game. Upon his release from prison, Backman is taken into "protective custody" and whisked off to Italy where he is assigned a new identity, and a tutor to help him blend in. Sure he is on the run, but some readers may feel that Backman's time spent in Bologna is a bit too leisurely--readers join him on an almost cinematic tour through the Italian town, complete with language and history lessons. Impatient readers will be happy to know that the final half of the novel is classic Grisham--a fast-paced, thrilling cat and mouse chase pitting Backman against the numerous agencies that want him dead--as the broker makes a move to take back his life. --Daphne Durham

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Readers will find an amiable travelogue to Italy and its charms in Grisham's latest. What they won't find are the suspense and inspired plotting that have made the author (The Last Juror, etc.) one of the world's bestselling writers. Yet Grisham remains a smooth storyteller, and few will fail to finish this oddball tale of what happens to ruined D.C. powerbroker Joel Blackman, 52, when he's suddenly released from federal prison after six years. Teddy Maynard, legendary CIA director, has engineered the release in order to put Joel into a variant of the witness protection program and then see who kills him. Many want him dead--the Saudis, the Israelis, especially the Chinese--because of his role in trying to sell a global satellite spy system that would alter the world's balance of power; that was what got Joel imprisoned, and the CIA hopes that whoever kills

him will clue them in to who may have access to the satellites. Joel is relocated to Bologna, and much of the narrative consists of his touring that city, its historic sights and its many restaurants, and learning Italian ways from his male handler, Luigi, and his language tutor, Francesca – a middle-aged woman with whom he falls in love. A major subplot concerns Joel's secret dealings with his stateside son to prepare for escape from Bologna if necessary. Eventually, the CIA leaks Joel's whereabouts to his enemies, who dispatch killing teams. Can Joel broker his way to safety? There's some depth to the troubled relationship between Joel and his tutor, but otherwise the novel reads like a contented afterthought to a memorable Italian vacation, with little action or tension, plastic characters and plot turns that a tricycle could maneuver. Still, anyone wishing to learn how and why Bologna built its famed porticos, why to be wary of most Italian desserts and how to send an encrypted wireless message using a global cell phone will find that information cheerfully given here. (Jan. 11) Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

This story is unique; you end up liking the lead character who is the broker. That isn't the case in the beginning but his character is fully developed and he evolves as a person because of his situation (on the run), realizing several people want to kill him. It gives you an insight to how the CIA and respective organizations like them in other countries operate. It feels very real and you get a travelogue view of Bologna, Italy. It's not about the law or the courtroom but is a story about politics, influence, lobbyists and Washington.

As a longtime Grisham fan, I do not know how I missed reading this earlier; but, I totally enjoyed this book. The plot was absolutely believable meaning that it was timely for the lives we are living now. The workings of our government espionage agencies are always a wonder to me and this novel gave me another view of their work as it unfolds. The idea of a presidential pardon for a prisoner who has settled into his sentence for the long run was the first contemporary idea; but, the way he was smuggled out of the prison and set up with another identity along with new residences, name, experience, and the life was beyond puzzling. The complexity of the undertaking was amazing. Grisham develops his characters to the point that the reader feels that this could be a neighbor is demonstrated again. The human side of the characters demonstrated in their choices of food and drink as well as clothing is most interesting. The fact that our government would undertake such an exhausting endeavor with the intention of having another government take over just blew me away. I came to hate the director of the agency and his having to be bundled in blankets, drinking tea all of

the time! He knew his business alright. But, he was not a favorite of mine. The ending was one I would never have predicted as the plot wore on, but it was most satisfying. Once again, Grisham comes through with a unique story and an issue that deserves our attention.

After spending 6 years of a 20 year federal prison sentence, Joel Backman, a former major player in DC's political circles is granted a sudden, dramatic pardon. He is then quickly and secretly flown to Italy where he is transformed by CIA handlers. Why the sudden pardon, why the handlers, why Italy and why all this intrigue? All this comes to light in this unique, John Grisham page turning thriller. Fast paced, beyond the usual Grisham attorney/client norm, the storyline keeps the reader involved with interesting characters throughout. If you've enjoyed Grisham novels in the past, you'll definitely find "The Broker" an excellent read.

I'll buy a Grisham book on release because of an expected consistency. His writing is crisp, the stories move quickly, and the language is clean. The Broker, however, did not grip me as have some of his earlier works, and I was disappointed in the descriptions of the Italian cities and their tourist attractions - somewhat reminiscent of an eager travel brochure. A book to be picked up and put down, simply enjoyed in passing. I will still look out for the next Grisham, though!

Mr Grisham again shows why is one of the worlds leading authors, his pros are outstanding as usual and the story is a terrific page turner much like a previous novel where the central character seems to be in a hopeless position only to win out at the end of the day through sheer determination and a healthy amount of cunning (and money) Another beauty

Kept my interest all the way through. Enjoyed the setting in an ancient Italian city. The presidential pardon added interest: did the lead character bribe his way out of the penitentiary; was he set up to be assassinated by one of the foreign powers that he had offended in his financial schemes? The protagonist's struggle to learn Italian will resonate with any reader who has tried to master a second language. The Italian language is but one element of establishing an entirely new identity for the lead character. Not merely name change or wardrobe adjustment. Interesting story and a "free trip" to Italy.

I think the reviews of this novel were unfair. I found it interesting. There was good character depiction and development. I don't think it dragged in the middle with the descriptions of Italy. I

suppose if one is a jaded traveler in Italy one would find the descriptions boring. Not having traveled in Italy, I found them interesting. It's good airport reading. It is nice to read a book that has been proofread after all the books I have recently been reading that had a severe lack of adequate proofreading and a miserable understanding the English language by the author.

I read the broker years ago when it first came out, but lately I've been rereading all the Grisham novels. I don't know why this one struck such a chord with me. I think I like the redemption sorry that is at its heart. But it also has tons of intrigue and suspense, humor and heart. It also makes me want to see the beautiful city of Bologna, Italy. The book is practically a sales piece from that city's chamber of commerce. Joel Backman is a former scoundrel who looks back on his life as a power broker with regret. He fights back against those who want to manipulate him and use him as bait to lure out an enemy.

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