



My Brother Michael

Mary Stewart

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Camilla Haven is on holiday alone, and wishes for some excitement. No sooner has she written to her friend Elizabeth in England, than her life suddenly begins to take off and she finds herself in the midst of an adventure.

A moment's impulse leads Camilla to volunteer to drive a hire car to Delphi. An impulse she quickly comes to regret. For not only are the dusty roads through the olive-clad hills full of pitfalls both literal and metaphorical, but they also lead her into a nightmare of danger and intrigue.

My Brother Michael Details

Date : Published (first published 1959)

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Author : Mary Stewart

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From Reader Review My Brother Michael for online ebook

Autumn Doughton says

So this is the third Mary Stewart novel that I have read in the past six days. I might be obsessed. It's certainly a possibility that I have been considering. At any rate, I feel like I should light up a cigarette (or twenty) and put on a pencil skirt and heels and go running through the mountains or something. Her work is fun and well-written, suspenseful, imaginative. It's also a bit dated, which honestly matters little to me. I sort of like being thrown into what feels like a black and white film starring Grace Kelly or Bogey. In my mind, Mary Stewart is like the Alfred Hitchcock of novel writers and I am thoroughly enjoying devouring everything that she has penned.

The latest that I've read-My Brother Michael-is set in Greece in the late 1950s and while reading I found myself going through my photo albums looking at pictures of a trip to Greece. It's a magical country and makes a romantic yet mysterious setting for this story. I won't go into the details--just read the book jacket--but it was another good one and I am already onto the next. must. remember. to. sleep.

Debbie Zapata says

I'm afraid I never could get completely interested in this book. One of Stewart's early novels, it already had many of the ingredients that sometimes make me feel comfortable and other times make me think "Ah, The MS Formula!".

Young single lady off on her own in a foreign country because a friend/relative who was supposed to go with her couldn't? Check.

Mysterious event that whirls our young single lady into a storm of other mysterious events mostly due to her own curiosity? Check.

Highly detailed descriptions of a lovely setting? Check.

This should have been fun to read. Who hasn't dreamed of traveling through Greece, visiting the ancient shrine at Delphi? But I was annoyed by Camilla, the main character. Too helpless, too inept, too lacking in self-confidence. Of course that is another part of The MS Formula. Stewart heroines nearly all seem to start that way, and mostly I end up liking them by the time we have all survived the adventure Stewart creates for us. But Camilla? She never felt like a living, breathing woman. She was just a character in a book, and never held any fascination for me. Same with the other people of the story. I simply never cared what happened to any of them.

But Greece was beautiful, and I learned a lot about Delphi and its famous Charioteer statue, thanks to Stewart's prompts and Wikipedia. And I liked this comment by Simon (Michael's brother) when Camilla seems almost to be pitching a hissy fit wondering why the country seems so magical. She gets really annoyed by that idea, and I thought her annoyance was a little odd. Did she not want to feel that magic, that aura of the past that lingers in any ancient place? Why did she get so ticked off, I wonder? I feel that type of magic many times here in Mexico; I would be thrilled at the chance to feel it in Greece. I certainly wouldn't be upset about it. I was puzzled by her reaction. Just feel the magic, don't analyze it, Camilla!

Well anyway, Simon says: *"I think the secret is that it belongs to all of us ~~ to us of the West. We've learned to think in its terms, and to live in its laws. It's given us almost everything that our world has that is worth while. Truth, straight thinking, freedom, beauty. It's our second language, our second line of thought, our second country. We all have our own country ~~ and Greece."*

Dorcas says

2 1/2 Stars

This wasn't my favorite Mary Stewart. In fact, if it was my first MS I probably wouldn't pick up another (but I WILL because I know what she can do!)

I won't give a summary because there's plenty of reviewers who have, but I will say that I did enjoy the descriptions of Greece. I could feel the intense heat coming through my sandals and could smell the herby wild flowers and taste the pomegranates. Mary Stewart is very good at setting a time and place.

But I didn't feel the characters so much. To me they seemed rather cookie cutter. The unappreciated heroine, tall dark and handsome englishman, untidy and slightly eccentric artist, resident vamp, and of course the burly greek tough guys. Don't get me wrong, they were ok, I just didn't *feel* much for them or care too much what became of them. Actually, I did care about Nigel the artist. He was interesting and I liked him.

Story line was just ok. Not a reread for me

CONTENT:

SEX: None

VIOLENCE: Moderately strong at end

PROFANITY: Mild, mostly D's

DRUG USE: A LOT of smoking! Like EVERY character is a chain smoker.

MY RATING: PG

Angie says

Originally published here.

I've been dreaming of Greece. I've never been there myself, much to my continual dismay, and so it remains at the very top of my list when it comes to countries I need to visit next. Lately, I've been doing some research on the country for work. Hence the dreams. And whenever I dream of Greece, I remember my original copy of Edith Hamilton's Mythology that I read cover to cover several times over. And I remember Mary Stewart and the wonderful mysteries she set there. From *The Moon-Spinners* to *This Rough Magic* to *MY BROTHER MICHAEL*, I read them and drift from Crete to Corfu to Delphi in a haze of lemon trees, windswept isles, and footprints of the gods. I've been in love with this place for a long time, and I fervently hope I get to travel there someday. But for now I shall have to be content with my battered copies of Mary Stewart's novels and the adventures her heroines take in this place I long to see. It's so hard for me to choose

which of her three Greek books I prefer. They're all splendid and it most likely depends on my mood at the time. The Moon-Spinners has, perhaps, the best mystery, This Rough Magic the swooniest male lead (and all that Shakespeare), and MY BROTHER MICHAEL my favorite title and lady. And, of course, Delphi. So today, you get Delphi, Michael, and Miss Camilla Haven. Not necessarily in that order.

Camilla Haven is sitting alone in a cafe in Athens, bemoaning the lack of action in her life. Having recently broken off her engagement to larger-than-life Phillip, she goes ahead on holiday to Greece all by her lonesome hoping it will be good for her. All that sun and history and good food. But it turns out it's just lonely, albeit in a spectacular setting. Until a stranger approaches her with a set of car keys and a whispered message of urgency. Someone named Simon is in Delphi in need of the car. It is, the man assures her, a matter of life and death. She must take it to him. Several rounds of language-stilted protests ensue. And before she knows it, Camilla is behind the wheel of the big black car and on the road to Delphi. On her way there, she does, in fact, meet a man named Simon, who is in Delphi trying to decipher the mysterious circumstances surrounding the death of his brother Michael more than a decade earlier during World War II. Armed with Michael's last letter and three gold sovereigns, Camilla and Simon set out for the site of his brother's death. Simon is convinced Michael was on the track of something important, and before long they begin to realize they're not the only ones who are still looking for whatever Michael found.

Lady Stewart is so great at first lines and openings. The first passage of MY BROTHER MICHAEL:

"Nothing ever happens to me."

I wrote the words slowly, looked at them for a moment with a little sigh, then put my ballpoint pen down on the cafe table and rummaged in my handbag for a cigarette.

As I breathed the smoke in I looked about me. It occurred to me, thinking of that last depressed sentence in my letter to Elizabeth, that enough was happening at the moment to satisfy all by the most adventure-hungry. That is the impression Athens gives you. Everyone is moving, talking, gesticulating--but particularly talking. The second one remembers in Athens is not the clamour of pneumatic drill or even the age-old sound of chisels chipping away at the Pentelic marble which is still the cheapest stone for building . . . what one remembers about Athens is the roar of talking. Up to your high hotel window, above the smell of dust and the blare of traffic it comes, surging like the sea below the temple at Sunium--the sound of Athenian voices arguing, laughing, talk-talk-talking, as once they talked the world into shape in the busy colonnades of the Agora, not so very far from where I sat.

Within the space of two paragraphs I not only feel for the main character, but I feel as though I'm sitting there with her. I can hear it and smell it and taste it. I'm in Athens wondering how in the world I got there. This is one of Ms. Stewart's most atmospheric and action-packed novels. From negotiating the hairpin turns to Delphi, to wandering through ancient amphitheaters with handsome Classics teachers, to scrambling through caves, enough happens to Camilla within the space of these 240 pages to last a lifetime, let alone one brief holiday. I love Camilla's audacity. She's always lived in other people's shadows. And yet she goes on the trip to Greece. She takes the car keys. She cares about this Simon she does not know. And speaking of Simon? I'm excessively fond of him. For his part, he never casts Camilla in shadow, his or anything else's. He quotes Euripides and courts death in the name of his brother, and he accepts Camilla's strange story at face value and the two of them are off like a shot in no time. So much about this novel is based on mistaken identities, years of subterfuge, and bad blood. And I eat it up with a spoon every time I re-read it. I am fairly swept away at the richness of it all. And, as I return to it, the romance in this one appeals more and more. Hints of it are established from glance one. But hints is all they are at first. This is a relationship that builds

slowly and surely and to great effect. Truly all of Mary Stewart's strengths, from intrepid women to mouth-watering locales to heart-pounding suspense, come together in this exciting tale. Withe one crazy, climactic ending to top it off. Whenever I return to MY BROTHER MICHAEL, it almost comes as a bit of a shock that I've never actually been to Delphi, that I'm not returning to a place I know so well and people whose hands I've held in mine. A classy, perennial favorite.

Sara says

The absolute joy of Mary Stewart is her ability to take you right out of this world and place you securely in her own. My Brother Michael is one of my favorite mystery/romances, with a stirring plot that moves rapidly and keeps you guessing to the end.

"Nothing ever happens to me" laments Camilla and right away we know the adventure is about to begin. Mary Stewart transformed the fainting heroine into a plucky girl regularly in her novels, but I especially love the way she takes this girl who is feeling less than confident at the outset and allows her to exhibit a very believable courage in a very scary situation.

I have set myself a goal of revisiting all of Mary Stewart's novels and this year I have done a number of them and enjoyed them all. So far, though, My Brother Michael has been my favorite of the mystery/romance genre.

Hannah says

Update:

Better reading experience this time around, due to the fact that I had my own new Chicago Press edition and didn't have to rely on the library's old, musty, tattered copy. No hazmat suits needed, and this copy smells as a book should :D

Oh and yeah, the story is another hit outta the park by Stewart.

Original Review:

Mary Stewart's, My Brother Michael, was a singularly interesting reading experience for me, to say the least.

I received the old, tattered copy from my library sporting a particularly garish aqua and yellow library bound graphic cover and consisting of browned, wavy pages (looking like the book had been dropped into a vat of coffee) and emitting a distinctive....musty....odor. Dog-earned and ripped pages, and the doodles of (surely) a five year old child also graced Dame Stewart's novel of suspense featuring lovely Camilla Haven and Simon Lester as they search the ruins of Delphi to learn what happened to Simon's brother, Michael, 12 years previously.

I tell you all this in advance in an attempt to make you understand the complete allure of Stewart's wonderful writing talent in the face of so many reader obstacles. Despite the cringe-worthy factor of holding this book without the protection of rubber gloves and a face mask, My Brother Michael kept me enthralled from the first coffee-stained page (*oh, please let it be coffee*), to the last tattered page.

As a special unexpected bonus, I read Stewart's beautiful Chapter 7 (in which Camilla and Simon tour the ruins of the temple of Delphi by moonlight) under the faux-moonlight of a street light in a Church parking lot while awaiting my daughter to leave a school function. And how utterly cool to sit in my dimly illuminated car and imagine a hero so suave, so educated, so utterly Stewart-ish that he could stand among the moonlit ruins of a Grecian amphitheater and recite a stanza of Sophocles' Electra (in Greek, no less!) and then in English with a swoon-worthy Brit-accent. Only a Stewart hero could get away with THAT! Be still, my romantic-suspense heart....

Tadiana ☆Night Owl? says

3.5 stars. My fourth time reading this over the years, and it grows on me a little more every time.

"Nothing ever happens to me," writes Camilla Haven to her friend from an Athens restaurant in a bout of lonely self-pity, so of course you know that she'll be proven wrong in very short order. "Beware of what you wish for, for you are liable to get it" might as well be the second line in the book. Camilla is traveling through Greece, wishing to tour the historic area of Delphi but a little short on cash. So when a stranger comes up to her in the restaurant and hands her the keys to a car parked outside, saying "You wanted a car for Delphi, non?" and adding that it was a matter of life and death for "Monsieur Simon" before conveniently disappearing, it seems like fate is taking a hand in Camilla's life. So off she goes, to deliver the car to Simon and see Delphi. She does both -- but events take a far stranger turn than she could have ever imagined.

The ruins of the Temple of Apollo at Delphi

So begins a three-day whirlwind of mistaken identities and resolving a 14 year old mystery, complete with a handsome and mysterious stranger, a struggling artist, a French trollop, long-lost historic treasures, a truly staggering number of cigarettes (this was written in the late 1950s so you just have to think of them as part of the atmosphere...), evil and revenge, in the backcountry part of Greece, with quotes from ancient Greek plays at the start of each chapter adding a foreboding, epic feel to the story.

This book is heavier on the murder and mayhem than a typical Mary Stewart romantic suspense novel, and the romance part here is very subtle, more hinted at than actually experienced. The plot was a bit confusing to me the first time or two I read it. Others may disagree, but I don't consider this one of Mary Stewart's best novels. Still, even an average Mary Stewart book is worth reading. She creates a wonderful sense of atmosphere through her detailed descriptions of exotic places, in a time now past.

Another fun buddy read with the Mary Stewart group (in 2014 and 2016).

Tammie says

3.5 stars.

Camilla Haven is on holiday alone, and wishes for some excitement. She had been sitting quietly in a crowded Athens cafe writing to her friend Elizabeth in England, "Nothing ever happens to me..."

Then, without warning, a stranger approached, thrust a set of car keys at her and pointed to a huge black touring car parked at the curb. "The car for Delphi, mademoiselle... A matter of life and death," he whispered and disappeared.

From that moment Camilla's life suddenly begins to take off when she sets out on a mysterious car journey to Delphi in the company of a charming but quietly determined Englishman named Simon Lester. Simon told Camilla he had come to the ancient Greek ruins to "appease the shade" of his brother Michael, killed some fourteen years earlier on Parnassus. From a curious letter Michael had written, Simon believed his brother had stumbled upon something of great importance hidden in the craggy reaches of the mountainside.

And then Simon and Camilla learned that they were not alone in their search...

This is the 8th book I've read by Mary Stewart and I enjoyed it quite a bit. I was pleased that it was set in Greece like her book *The Moonspinners*, which happens to be my favorite out of all her books so far. Mary Stewart was once again able to capture the essence of a place and make me feel like I was there, which is one of the strong points of her novels; that is when it doesn't interfere too much with the storytelling. Most of this book is set in beautiful Delphi which I would love to visit someday among lots of other places in Greece.

It's always interesting to read books that were written in this time period (1959). I love picturing the cars and the clothing from that time as I read. Can you imagine hiking through the mountains in a dress? Also there were so many cigarettes smoked that I'm certain every one of the characters eventually die from lung disease, but back then it was the thing to do and they didn't yet know the devastating health issues smoking could cause. It did seem like there was more smoking in this book than in most of her other works though.

This book managed to be good once the story really got going, but it did take a bit too long for that to happen, which is why I can't give this one a complete 4 stars. There was mild romance and quite a bit of suspense before the end which was all good, and a murder that takes place on the page instead of just being discovered. I admit I found the way it was done a little disturbing. As for the characters, the protagonist was easy to like and so was the love interest, and Stewart managed to write a character in this book that I found downright irritating, but that's the way she was supposed to be so it was all good.

This book also involved ancient Greek art, namely statues that were very rare because few of them survived the war. One in particular, *The Charioteer*, is featured in this book and it was described so well that I had to look it up to see what it looked like, especially when the eyes are described.

Overall this was a good read, if slow to get going and I would rank it 5th on my list of Mary Stewart books, pretty much even with *Wildfire at Midnight*. I liked the protagonist better in this one, but *Wildfire at Midnight* was more suspenseful.

1. *The Moonspinners*
2. *Nine Coaches Waiting*
3. *Madam Will You Talk?*

4. The Ivy Tree
5. My Brother Michael
6. Wildfire at Midnight
7. Airs Above the Ground
8. The Stormy Petrel

Review also posted at [Writings of a Reader](#)

Nikki says

I don't think there's much new to say about any of these Mary Stewart books that I didn't say about all the others. They're a little bit of a guilty pleasure with me, but hey, female heroines, mostly decent male leads (I think Simon might be my favourite thus far, given his calmness, intelligence, and careful treatment of the protagonist, plus the fact that he's not related to her, doesn't laugh at her, and trusts her), mysteries... Not always quite so cosy, really, since this one involves a surprising body count. Love the descriptions of Greece, especially Delphi; Mary Stewart is no slouch when it comes to depicting the atmosphere of a place.

Not entirely surprising, at any point, and I'm not sure I ever dare to think about these books critically in terms of colonialism and the like. But if you like Mary Stewart's work in general, you'll like this.

Jan W. Mc says

3.5 stars....

Woman goes on vacation in Greece with a skinny budget. One of the places she wants to see is Delphi, location of the famous Oracle of Delphi; however, her penny-pinching means she will have to make it a day trip, missing much in the experience. While pondering her problem in a street cafe, a stranger approaches her and gives her the keys to a car he believes she has rented to be delivered to Simon in Delphi. She rushes away after a confused conversation complicated by language barriers. Left with the keys to a car she doesn't own, but must apparently deliver to a man named Simon in Delphi, what is a girl to do? Why, go to Delphi, of course!!

Man walks around town and notices a fuss occurring in the street. A woman in a large car, which she doesn't know how to drive (ooops!) has caused the commotion. The villagers assure the woman that the man can assist her in finding the Simon she seeks. Coincidence follows coincidence and sets up a mysterious situation involving the suspicious death of Simon's brother during World War II.

I love Mary Stewart's writing, but this book was not as polished as others written by her. It was easy to read, with the exception of a little boredom in places. High excitement doesn't happen until the end. She is vivid in her descriptions of Greece, which was enchanting, but if you lack knowledge of the classics, the book may be lackluster. (Stewart wrote in a different generation, where education was of value!)

Tweety says

A Solid 3

What I found hard with this book was that all 400 pages happened in **Three Days** . After the beginning car mix up nothing happened till chapter what, 15?

And in all honesty, I didn't care overly much about the characters. I liked them, yes I really did. But that's where it ended. Camilla was, welllll... a bit, weak. If I had been her I'd have run, no matter what. I didn't find myself liking Simon much, I know I was supposed to, but I didn't. Grey eyes or no. His gray eyes never entrapped me.

I detested Danielle, her tongue flicking between her teeth, showing bright pink against glittering white teeth with pale pink lips, tormenting poor Nigel and her nasty, burly sidekicks. Then there was Nigel, I cared about him most.

I think, that if you cut out the bit about Michael, the story wouldn't really change. You'd just lose your excuse for Simon to be in Greece. I can't really bring myself to say I liked this book, but I am glad to have read it as a group read because now I have others to gripe with and show me the good points that I failed to notice.

I guess I missed Mary Stewart's usual beautiful atmosphere and you-can-see-em-an-feel-em animals and children. Not that the descriptions weren't beautiful, I guess it just wasn't quite what I was used to. But as other reviewers have said, you can really feel the sultry sun beating down on your head

This book was surprisingly similar to The Valley of Adventure, I know it's a kid's book but, they were written around the same time, set around the same time and have a similar "finding".

PG to PG-13 because of violence and a bigillion+1 Cigarettes. How'd they Breathe??! Let alone think. The big question, would I reread this? No. Sorry all, this one didn't hit the spot.

Terry (Ter05 TwiMoms/ MundieMoms) says

I'll be honest, this may not be a five star book. But it holds a memory for me that has stayed with me for over 30 years so there is something special about it. I first read it when my sons were little, I was home alone and there was a huge thunderstorm going on. This book scared me so badly that I spent the night sitting behind a chair with a rifle on my lap...seriously. I still have a vivid memory of how I felt that night and always remembered the name of this book.

So this year I found a used copy in a bookstore and decided to see if it really was as scary as I remembered. It is not. It still gets pretty tense, and I was right in my memory that the scary part was in a cave. It is a really good story told in the first person by Camilla who is on vacation in Athens. To her surprise, in a few hours she is in Delphi in the company of an Englishman she met quite by accident. She is plunged into an adventure to find out the meaning of a last letter from Simon's brother Michael before his death on the slopes of Parnassus. Great writing as usual that brings alive the area and the characters. I think now I could read it in a thunderstorm and be okay! I hadn't read Dean Koontz back then!

Cphe says

Adore Mary Stewart's romantic suspense novels and the fact that this one is set in Greece just adds to the overall enjoyment. Enough has already been said about the plot, so no point in going over the same ground.

Mary Stewart to this day remains such a bankable author. You know that you will find interesting characters, a gentler romance, and an excellent mystery/suspense component. "Vintage" but it just adds to the overall charm of the novels.

Misfit says

"Nothing ever happens to me..." As Camilla Haven sits in a cafe in Athens and writes those very words in a letter to her sister, she has no idea the twists and turns her life is soon going to take. A strange man comes and gives her the keys to a rental car, telling her she must take it to Monsieur Simon in Delphi right away - a matter of life and death. Since she had wanted to go to Delphi and no one comes to claim the car Camilla decides on a lark to take the car and go and she soon finds herself mixed up in a mystery involving Simon Lester. Simon has come to visit the scene where his brother was murdered during WWII, and to discover the secret behind his death that has laid buried under the rubble of an earthquake.

And that is all I'm going to tell you. In true Stewart fashion, Camilla and Simon's story take many twists and turns along with the prerequisite nail biting life and death conclusion. While plot wise I didn't enjoy this quite as much as *The Moon Spinners* (things got a bit slow in the middle), I very much enjoyed Stewart's magical descriptions of the Greek countryside, and most especially the ruins at Delphi. Wow, just wow, I was all over the net looking for pictures and seriously considered booking a trip to see for myself. Nobody but nobody in this genre does it better, it's like being there.

Diane Lynn says

Group read with the Mary Stewart group.

I still give this 4.5 stars. I enjoyed this reread just as much the second time around, despite all the tossed cigarette butts.

I liked how Camilla was just coming out of her shell after 6 years of living in someone else's shadow. Of course Mary Stewart's description of Delphi and the surrounding area is wonderful. There is some serious suspense and danger in this one and some really **bad** guys. I also liked that Simon was on a quest to find out what happened to his older brother. (view spoiler)

Reread March 2014
