



Apples and Oranges: My Brother and Me, Lost and Found

Marie Brenner

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To be sure, some brothers and sisters have relationships that are easy. But oh, some relationships can be fraught. Confusing, too: How can two people share the same parents and turn out to be entirely different?

Marie Brenner's brother, Carl—yin to her yang, red state to her blue state—lived in Texas and in the apple country of Washington state, cultivating his orchards, polishing his guns, and (no doubt causing their grandfather Isidor to turn in his grave) attending church, while Marie, a world-class journalist and bestselling author, led a sophisticated life among the "New York libs" her brother loathed.

From their earliest days there was a gulf between them, well documented in testy letters and telling photos: "I am a textbook younger child . . . training as *bête noir* to my brother," Brenner writes. "He's barely six years old and has already developed the Carl Look. It's the expression that the rabbit gets in *Watership Down* when it goes *tharn*, freezes in the light."

After many years apart, a medical crisis pushed them back into each other's lives. Marie temporarily abandoned her job at *Vanity Fair* magazine, her friends, and her husband to try to help her brother. Except that Carl fought her every step of the way. "I told you to stay away from the apple country," he barked when she showed up. And, "Don't tell anyone out here you're from New York City. They'll get the wrong idea."

As usual, Marie—a reporter who has exposed big Tobacco scandals and Enron—irritated her brother and ignored his orders. She trained her formidable investigative skills on finding treatments to help her brother medically. And she dug into the past of the brilliant and contentious Brenner family, seeking in that complicated story a cure, too, for what ailed her relationship with Carl. If only they could find common ground, she reasoned, all would be well.

Brothers and sisters, *Apples and Oranges*. Marie Brenner has written an extraordinary memoir—one that is heartbreakingly honest, funny and true. It's a book that even her brother could love.

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