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First came the man: a young wanderer in a fatigue coat and long hair. Then came the legend, as John Rambo sprang from the pages of FIRST BLOOD to take his place in the American cultural landscape. This remarkable novel pits a young Vietnam veteran against a small-town cop who doesn't know whom he's dealing with -- or how far Rambo will take him into a life-and-death struggle through the woods, hills, and caves of rural Kentucky.

Millions saw the Rambo movies, but those who haven't read the book that started it all are in for a surprise -- a critically acclaimed story of character, action, and compassion.

First Blood Details

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From Reader Review First Blood for online ebook

Arun Divakar says

John Rambo is a cultural icon for me like a lot of you out here. You cannot be growing up in the 80's without having Rambo's name mentioned atleast once in your vicinity. Out here in my place, this guy was treated the ultimate warrior when I was a kid. Childhood memories remind me of teenaged guys in the neighborhood with hazy eyes talking to each other about the non-stop action from *First Blood*. It is then extremely ironic that I came to know that the movie's name was not Rambo perhaps only after coming to IMDB. The book however was an extremely exhilarating read and to me was more of a thrill than the movie itself !

The story is now so well known that there needn't be a detailed sketch of it out here. The stage setting of the story was a lot interesting. A disillusioned soldier being harassed by a small town cop was a scenario that sounded so outrageous. You almost feel like shouting at the cop : *No, don't piss him off you idiot !* But William Teasle does piss John Rambo off and it all goes straight to hell. Beyond the stage setting part, it is a chase story and an elaborate manhunt. As a reader, I rarely feel such intense excitement in this book. I was reading Margaret Atwood and picked this up as a diversion. What happened in the end was me devouring this tale late into the night and finishing it in two sittings. Needless to say it is very very engrossing and entertainment of the first rate. When the story gets over, you know that you have eaten junk food ! That is you find it to be extremely tasty but ultimately pointless. The novel is in a good way similar to that for you do not gain anything here but those exciting moments and nothing beyond that.

It should also be said that the tale is intensely bloody. Once the violence begins, bodies start dropping like rain all over the place. This suits the general mood of the tale but once you finish the tale, you cannot but be astounded by the scale of massacres in the tale.

It is a dynamite for a one time read and recommended just for that adrenaline factor.

Joseph Finder says

Forget whatever you think about Sly Stallone and Rambo. This book is a now-classic chase novel, a mano à mano confrontation between a damaged Vietnam vet and a sheriff, and you won't be sure whom to root for.

Lou says

First Blood, a first read 40 years too late in reading for many. The author starts the story with introducing a name, Rambo and having the reader build an image of this character in mind, he successfully paints the portrait partly introducing Rambo, the long hair, the rough looking image, his sleeping carry sack on the road drifting wondering and then loads us with confrontation a police officer that seems to have issues with his hair, his wondering, his smarts and his look of a man that can take care of himself. Imagine you never saw Stallone and the movie and so far we are slowly introduced to Rambo and who he is.

We start to learn some more of Rambo when he reaches a situation involving water in an uncompromising situation and then the memories with water and a hole involving bamboo come flooding back and we now start to build a better understanding of the darkness, the shadows that haunt him. I love the way he slowly introduces us to a scene of confrontation and slowly reels us to learn the ways that John behaves. You feel

for John he is being treated unfairly almost a victim of discrimination in the beginning as a kind racial issue in a way, as if he was someone from another country, a people that the officer hated, maybe a person he once fought against, the officer seems to not like his looks, but he will learn that deep down what he doesn't like is maybe that could be another version of him walking around somebody he may have been or could have been and gone loose in the wilderness taking heads out killing and fighting a war in his own backyard. He could be scared of his own image in this man and wanted to rip and drive him to the ground and that was the biggest upset, Rambo was no vagrant to be meddled with. This was no enemy, a man like himself both fought in wars, he is all American Rambo, he should have been left alone to his own devices but alas our dear author David Morrell chooses to use this bullying officer to bring out his worst but most skilled ability to kill he shows us an unforgettable Rambo, a name, a character who would did take the world by storm and be engraved in every book reader and moviegoers mind across the world.

Rambo a veteran back from a brutal war that took probably the best of himself away in another hemisphere and now the person left behind having to assimilate back to society with vivid memories, terrible nightmares, for only a brief experience can bring back all the pain, all traumatic experiences, bring about fear, a rash behavior, unflinching and with no prisoners. Sheer Craftsmanship in telling this very human tale of the evil that men do and see coming home to roost, told in a way that only David could have told it. Getting you off to a good start is the key of great storytelling, introducing parts and a name of the character stuff of great stories, you only have to read Lolita or Moby Dick or Metamorphosis to see great examples of first sentences, then after aperture he has you fully encompassed and captivated to the very end of this train ride going of the rails destined for a explosive climax.

Excerpts

"Sure you'll fight. Sure. What a laugh. Take a look at yourself. Already you know what this place reminds you of. Two days in that cramped cell and you'll be pissing down your pant-legs. 'You've got to understand I can't stay in there.' He could not stop himself. 'The wet. I can't stand being closed in where it's wet.' The hole, he was thinking, his scalp alive. The bamboo grate over the top. Water seeping through the dirt, the walls crumbling, the inches of slimy muck he had to try sleeping on. Tell him, for God's sake. Screw, you mean beg him."

" 'Green beret?' Lester said. The voice was starting to repeat, broke up, never came back again. It started to rain, light drops speckling the dust and dirt, spotting Teasle's pants and soaking in, pelting cool on his bare back. The black clouds shadowed over. Lighting crackled and lit up the cliff like a spotlight, and as fast as the spotlight came on, it went off and the shadows returned, bringing with them shock waves of exploding thunder. 'Medal of Honor?' Lester said to Teasle. 'Is that what you brought us after? A war hero? A f*****g Green Beret?' "

Below is what i asked this author in an interview I hosted, I asked a few questions on this book and the movie adaptation, to read the rest of the interview on writing and his new Victorian London mystery Murder as a Fine Art visit it on my webpage> <http://more2read.com/review/interview-with-david-morrell/>

(Courtesy of Carolco Pictures)

Lou Pendergrast:

What inspired you to write First Blood?

David Morrell:

I was a graduate student at Penn State in the late 1960s. I taught composition classes there, and many of my students were Vietnam veterans. They told me about their difficulty adjusting to peace time—sweats, nightmares, reaction to loud noises, difficulties relying to people. We now call this post-traumatic stress disorder. Back then it was called battle fatigue. I decided to write *First Blood*, about a returned veteran who was trying to adjust to the disturbing knowledge that he was skilled at killing. At the time, the United States was ravaged by hundreds of riots, many of which were against the Vietnam War. It was as if a different kind of war was happening at home. Basically, *First Blood* became an antiwar allegory about a version of the Vietnam war occurring in the U.S.

Lou Pendergrast:

What did the movie adaptation of your novel First Blood do for you creation of Rambo?

David Morrell:

The character in my novel is extremely angry and bitter. The character in the film adaptation is portrayed as a victim. The plot is mostly the same, but the interpretation is different. On some Blu-Ray DVDs of *First Blood*, I provided a full-length audio commentary about the differences between the novel and the film.

Lou Pendergrast:

What was the popularity of your book like after the movie adaptation of your book was out?

David Morrell:

The novel was published 41 years ago, and it's never been out of print. The Rambo films brought attention to the novel, of course, but even before the release of the first film in 1982, *First Blood* was taught in high schools and colleges across the United States.

Eirini Proikaki says

3.5*

Πολύ ωραία περιπέτεια με έντονες σκηνές δράσης, με αρκετές διαφορές από την ταινία που ο

Ρ?μπο ?ταν ο καλ?ς της υπ?θεσης.Εδ? δεν υπ?ρχει καλ?ς και κακ?ς,αλλ? δυο ?ντρες περ?φανοι και ξεροκ?φαλοι, ο καθ?νας με τα ελαττ?ματα του και μια κ?ντρα που φτ?νει στα ?κρα.

Μου ?ρεσε το βιβλ?ο ,μου ?ρεσε που ο συγγραφ?ας εμβαθ?νει και στους δυο βασικο?ς χαρακτη?ρες χωρ?ς να πα?ρνει το μ?ρος κανεν?ς αν και προς το τ?λος νομ?ζω οτι το παρατρ?βηξε ?σον αφορ? το δ?σιμο μεταξυ τους.

11811 (Eleven) says

I think this is a must read for fans of the movie. There are as many similarities as there are differences but I enjoyed both equally. I loved the movie when I was 10. I need to watch it again to see how it has held up all these years.

Fantastic read. Goes on the favorites shelf.

Neil Walker says

Most people will come to First Blood having seen the film first, as well as the three sequels. While the book does contain the thriller aspect and some of the action of the film, it is also a kind of dark character study into how a person can be affected by military training and the traumas of war.

In terms of the influence of this novel on me as an author, I would say that the protagonist, John Rambo, has a number of similarities to my own John Kennedy character. These will become even more apparent as The Drug Gang Series continues.

First Blood is both a fascinating and an exciting read, probably more reminiscent of the film The Deer Hunter, in many ways, than the actual Rambo movies.

Matt Garcia says

Solid novel with some great characterization. Rambo is an anti-hero of sorts and I found myself not as sympathetic towards him as I thought I would be. Teasle was a character that I disliked solely because of his arrogance and stubbornness. Different in some spots from the movie but overall a worth while read. Being a fan of the Rambo movies, I'm glad that I took the time to see where it all began. 3.5 stars

Nicoleta says

Rambo I. Un fost soldat de elit? din Vietnam se bate cu o mul?ime de poli?i?ti într-un or??el pentru c? e arestat pentru vagabondaj.

TK421 says

Allow me to introduce John Rambo. He's a little surly since coming home from Vietnam, so please forgive his outbursts. It doesn't help that Sheriff Teasle is constantly trying to throw my friend out of the small, back-wooded town of Madison, Kentucky. You see, the good old sheriff has a problem when someone doesn't take his words to heart. Rambo just happens to be that someone. I tried talking to Rambo, but all he kept saying was "Adrian! Adrian!" I know...I was just as confused. Anyways, Teasle pushed Rambo too far; he wanted Rambo to get a haircut and a shave, thus making my buddy have flashbacks to his days as a POW. Rambo escaped from his tiny cell, killing and maiming a considerable amount of boys that I dare say were merely placed in the setting and situation for a higher body count for the story.

.....STOP READING IF YOU HAVE ONLY WATCHED THE MOVIE.....
.....REAL ENDING GIVEN AWAY.....

So Rambo goes off into the woods, like he's some type of Hansel and fends off National Guardsman and police officers and civilians that are probably so loaded that they don't even really know what end of the rifle is supposed to be pointed away from them. The body count really starts to soar at this point. Oh, I should tell you that my name is Captain Sam Trautman, and I've been hired to hunt Rambo. For the most part, I'm happy watching these yokels get off-ed by one of the best. But there is only so much carnage that I'll allow, so when the sheriff and Rambo exchange some thoughts in the form of lead, hitting each other in the process, I felt I owed it to my employers to kill Rambo myself. Granted, I used a shotgun and shot him in the head, but that's what you're supposed to do when a wild dog is on the loose. I tried to tell the sheriff, but it seems he has an important appointment in Valhalla that he can't be late for.

I guess in one way or another, this story is supposed to be about the denigration of our boys that came home from Vietnam. Perhaps we should have given them a parade or even said "we're proud of you, thank you." I guess Rambo never heard that. Well, pal, sorry for what I had to do; it was never personal. And, one more thing, thanks for all you did for us over there.

VERY HIGHLY RECOMMENDED

Horace Derwent says

Many ladies cried their hearts out for Virginia Wolfe, I could've cried out mine for this, but I didn't

The Jerry Goldsmith and Dan Hill's It's a long road the song, it cried out my heart like hell

Thomas Strömquist says

I read this book when I was 14 and thumbing through it now I seem to remember most of it, so it really must've impressed a lot. The Swedish title, (back translated "The Duel") actually improves upon the book (but had to stand back after the success of the movie, of course). Already then, I was so envious of my friend, who had a very nice earlier hardback without the movie tie-in cover. Superficially small, the differences between book and film actually makes this quite a different story and if you liked (or disliked) the film, I can recommend this read. The returning Vietnam soldier John gets off on the wrong foot with a sheriff of a small

town and their quarrel goes onto the aforementioned duel, which escalates into deadly horror as none of the men are capable of downing even a small helping of pride - or even slowing down. Brutal pace, a manhunt, a war between two sides of which you're not inclined to take either.

Algernon says

His name was Rambo, and he was just some nothing kid for all anybody knew, standing by the pump of a gas station at the outskirts of Madison, Kentucky. He had a long heavy beard, and his hair was hanging down over his ears to his neck, and he had his hand out trying to thumb a ride from a car that was stopped at the pump. To see him there, leaning on one hip, a Coke bottle in his hand and a rolled-up sleeping bag near his boots on the tar pavement, you could never have guessed that on Tuesday, a day later, most of the police in Basalt County would be hunting him down.

I'm not a big fan of Sylvester Stallone, in fact I believe he's a hack, but "First Blood" is arguably the best he ever did on the silver screen. I only saw the film version once, back in the late eighties when the videoplayers and small colour TV's were sprouting like mushrooms all over the country to fill in the gap left by increasing censure in official cinema houses. Yet I remember the story, 30 years later, and that made me wonder where this enduring appeal comes from. Turns out it is mostly the merit of the original story, penned by David Morell at the tail end of the sixties, a time when the American nation was torn apart by an unjust and inhumane war. Watching the news on TV this debut author had a stroke of inspiration that turned into a cultural icon:

... made me decide to write a novel in which the Vietnam War literally came home to America. There hadn't been a war on American soil since the end of the Civil War in 1865. With America splitting apart because of Vietnam, maybe it was time for a novel that dramatized the philosophical division in our society, that shoved the brutality of the war right under our noses.

The major difference between the book and the movie is this very attitude towards violence. Most viewers, my own twenty-something self included, saw only the underdog Rambo fighting the system and kicking a\$\$ in a spectacular way. Yes, this is part of the story, but the themes run much deeper in the novel and Morell finds a way to paint in between the black & white, right & wrong, good guys & bad guys easy assumptions. Both Rambo and Sheriff Teasle have more depth and more nuance than the movie I remember.

Rambo is clearly dealing with a split personality and post-traumatic shock (this being one of the first novels to explore the condition in detail). He has his pride and his anger, yet he is not a blind killing machine and would have liked to be able to fit in, if only the 'squares back home could look beyond his hippie appearance and engage him in a respectful manner.

Teasle is the product of an older generation and of a precious war (Korea), one war when the Americans still could pretend to be the knights in white saving the world from anarchy and terror. Teasle feels threatened by the new world order and by the younger generation with their protests, their drugs, long hair and free love. He takes refuge in a conservative, paternalistic worldview that will ultimately set him on a collision course with the drifter Rambo.

"And let him do this to somebody else? Screw. He has to be stopped.

"What? That's not why you're doing this? Admit you wanted all this to happen. You 'asked' for it – so you could show him what you knew, surprise him when he found you were the wrong guy to try and handle. You 'like' this"

"I didn't ask for anything. But damn right I like it. That bastard is going to pay."

I found the level of explicit violence in the novel surpasses the movie version but it is not gratuitous : it serves the declared purpose of making the horrors of war on distant shores real for the sheltered people back home. A lesson that is sadly already forgotten in this third millenium when new warhawks seem only to eager to start new conflicts in Syria, Korea or Iran.

—«»—«»—«»—

Checkman says

A classic. I first read this novel in 1982. It was very exciting at the time.I was fourteen.

It's been (probably) a couple decades since I last read *First Blood*. It's showing it's age a little more now. Still not a bad read, but it's really nothing more than a glorified chase story. A product of it's time. Make no mistake about it there were many folks in the early seventies who were nervous about the returning veterans. Many truly believed that we were going to have warfare erupt ,on a large scale, within the United States and the vets were going to be at the forefront. I suppose it seemed inevitable. The country was already experiencing social upheaval and violence thanks to the anti-war movement and the civil rights movement.Now the vets were returning home and they weren't being treated very well. Americans knew this and they were worried.It's almost as if they thought that John Rambo and his fictional counterparts were the retribution that they deserved. Of course I'm probably being melodramatic.

First Blood wasn't even the first of the genre when it was published. Already there had been at least two movies *Welcome Home*, *Soldier Boys* (1971) and *Targets*(1968) in which veterans were shown as being dangerous and very deadly.But this book has survived and gone on to become a modern classic.

A few difference between the literary Rambo and the cinematic Rambo. This Rambo isn't necessarily a nice man. There isn't really anything heroic about him. After all you don't look at a rifle and think that it's admirable do you? You might admire the skill that went into it's design and manufacturing and you might appreciate it's accuracy, but ultimately it's just a tool. That's how Rambo comes across to me. He's dangerous and very effective, but not heroic.He's no great loss. The cops are assholes and get what they deserve as well. So there are no tears shed for them either.

When it comes right down to it I found myself wondering what I was supposed to think about the characters and the plot. Am I supposed to feel that the whole situation is just one giant screw up and throw my hands up in disgust? A thinly veiled analogy about the waste of war in general and the stupidity of the Vietnam War specifically?

Well.....perhaps.

It's a pretty fair chase story with some skillfully written action sequences. A good strong debut novel by a young writer. Morrell would go on to to write stronger novels, but John Rambo is his creation and this is the book where Rambo first appeared. Even at the age of forty-two it's a good beach read. Helps to be a little older though. I believe many readers under thirty might find it boring and/or unoriginal. It definitely helps to be old enough to at least remember the aftermath of Vietnam.

I'll leave the rest of the deeper meaning "stuff" for you, the reader ,to figure out.

Mike (the Paladin) says

Not baddly written I was torn between the 3 or 4 and finally went with 3, but it may be some better than that. Sad in its own way...seen the movie but not read the book? Read the book.

Jim says

I could have sworn I'd at least added this to my books here on GR, if not read & reviewed sometime in the past decade. Apparently not. A friend recently read & reviewed it, but it wasn't in my books! Don't know why. This is an old favorite, the first of Morrell's that I ever read. It's one reason why I've kept reading his books for over 40 years. He's never quite managed another quite as good, but he's come close.

Last Reveille is mighty close. There is some similarity between the two. While Morrell wrote this as pure fiction & LR as historical fiction, both capture the personal issues of the times exceedingly well. While most will read this book now as just an action thriller, the attitudes and motivations were perfectly done. Having long hair was a perceived crime & many Vietnam vets were treated like shit. At the time, it wasn't a war & didn't have the 'respectability' (not really the word I'm looking for) of WWII or even the Korean War, which was so similar that a hit TV show spoofed on it for a dozen years.

So two men, who could have been father & son, made a mountain out of a mole hill & then blew it up. Wow! It's a perfectly orchestrated train wreck of a story. As a kid, I rooted for Rambo all the way. The last time I read this (I KNOW it wasn't that many years ago!) I could really understand Teasle's attitude. I can't say I rooted for him, but I felt a lot more empathy.

I read this before I saw the movie. This was better, although the movie was great, but the different endings make all the difference in the world. It's as big a change as the last chapter of A Clockwork Orange. The movie needed to change it since 2 more followed that completely changed the character & story line of the original. Morrell sold out & cashed in. More power to him. I would have, too. That had to be a dream come true. (Goodbye starving artist, hello Hollywood money!) The novelizations of Rambo II & III were fun, but you'll notice that I didn't shelve this book as part of a series. That's not an oversight. It's a statement.

Shelby *trains flying monkeys* says

I'm ashamed to admit that I didn't know that the movie "First Blood" was based on this book. So when my friend 11811 (Eleven) reviewed this book I put in a request for it immediately.

Rambo shows up in a small town in Kentucky. The local sheriff doesn't like "his kind" being in his town so he takes him and dumps him out at the end of town. Rambo comes back. Then sheriff Teasle does it again. A couple of times. Rambo takes offense to being told that he can't be in town. He also takes offense to Sheriff Teasle wanting to shave his beard and cut his hair.

So Rambo goes a bit bat-shit crazy on the town. He ends up in the mountains of the area.

That pisses off the sheriff so he and his men go after Rambo.

That does not end very well. For the sheriff's men.

So then let's call in the state police, national guard and everybody else.

"He's an expert in guerrilla fighting, he knows how to live off the land, so he doesn't have the problem that you do of bringing up food and supplies for your men. He's learned patience, so he can hide somewhere and wait out this fight all year if he has to. He's just one man, so he's hard to spot. He's on his own, doesn't have to follow orders, doesn't have to synchronize himself with other units, so he can move fast, shoot and get out and hide some place else, then do the same all over again."

That doesn't end so well either.

I remember watching this movie when I was in about the seventh grade. My household was super religious so we didn't get to watch movies like this at home. One of my teachers at school actually brought in his copy for us to watch one day. I was glued to my seat. Rambo was the shiznit.

Now, I do get forced to watch it every time it comes on TV by my fanboy husband but usually I ignore it while I read.

The movie is a tad different as Rambo is a poor misunderstood hero. I thought in the book he was just a tad nutso and was tired of anyone pushing him around and he pushed back. Hard.

He is not very like-able in the book. The sheriff isn't either though. So I didn't mind that they just wanted to shoot the hell out of each other.

Jarek "the Mistborn" D?browski says

Rambo....What else do you need?:D

The book is quite different then the movie in my opinion. We get to see a Rambo and Teasle in a different perspective with different motives for their actions which is pretty interesting. The writing style is not the best ive seen but the narrative managed to keep me interested enough. The change of pov from chapter to chapter keeps the pacing going well and lets you analyze and compare both rambo and teasles characters.

Overall a pretty good read and Id recommend it to others to see a different take on the story. 4 stars from me:)

Kathy says

This is definitely not my usual genre of book. I never even had any desire to see the movie, Rambo. All, I know about Rambo is this picture I have in my head of Sylvester Stallone wearing a headband and carrying a gun. I'm not even sure if that is from a movie poster or a scene from the movie possibly. I had no desire to either see the movie or read the book, but a friend a work, who I recommend books back and forth with MADE me read this. He insisted it was his favorite book and I agreed to read it.

The book is told both from the perspective of John Rambo, recently home from the Vietnam War and a small-town Sheriff. Due to this, you understand that each of the men honestly believe in their actions. There

is no bad guy here, almost a sadness that 2 men, very much alike, can be at such odds.

I would never have picked up this book, if it weren't for my friend, but I'm glad I did. I enjoyed it very much.

Thomas Flowers says

I'm ashamed to say that I had no idea First Blood was a book before it was a movie. Glad to have this error corrected and was equally glad to have gotten the chance to read this amazing book. Now, there were some drastic changes from film to print or print to film more like. And that's okay. I never expect the movie to be just like the film. There have to be differences, so long as the essence remains intact. And for the most part, the essence of First Blood, be it Sylvester Stallone or just the imaginative projection from hearing how David Morrell describes John Rambo, is beautifully captured, more so I would say in the book because we are given the characters internal thoughts. The director and Stallone for his part did a great job conveying through action and struggle Rambo's internal conflicts, but in the book, it becomes, even more, clearer. Did you know that when Rambo arrived in that pinewoods mountain town, he had been kicked out, or "pushed," as he calls it, at least a dozen times? That is where the "pushed" thing comes from during the movie that doesn't make much sense, but in the book it does.

No spoilers here, but the end is veerrryyy different, and I'm not sure which one I like the most. I feel for Rambo in both scenarios, and I love that end scene monolog he was with his old unit commander in the movie. But in the book...dang...it's just... I've said enough.

As far as veteran issues go, both film and book appealed to me and wrung the gauntlet of emotions. Perhaps more so in the movie than here, despite the benefit of reading Rambo's internal thoughts. In the book, I did enjoy the added polar conflicts between the sheriff, a Korean War veteran, and Rambo, a Vietnam veteran, and how each of them refuses to surrender to the other, more so than in the movie. In the movie, the sheriff is more of a chump and doesn't know what he's walking into, and just seems to be a dick for no reason. In the book, he is more clearly defined. Especially with what happens during the first hunting party. DAMN! is all I can say about that!

Overall, if you're a fan of the movie, you may want to check out the book. I have few doubts you'll be disappointed.

Bon Tom says

I've read this long time ago, as a kid in seventh grade.

As all my friends, I wanted to be Rambo too. Didn't have muscles, but hair was there, lots of it. With enough Coke, I also could have swallowed even worst hamburgers, with or without onions.

Years later, muscles are here, hair is on its last legs but still holding, and I'm picky about my hamburgers far more than about my women. I could eat any woman nowadays. Comes with the territory of middle age I guess.

And I'm reading far more than shooting. Oh well. Pen is mightier than the sword and so on.

Test of time? Not only does it stand, it's better than I remember. Of course it is. It's surprisingly complex

book. It's a study of human mind of sorts, in specific situation after having gone through specific ordeals. And it's very well written. The fact it's a debut book of the author makes it even more impressive.
