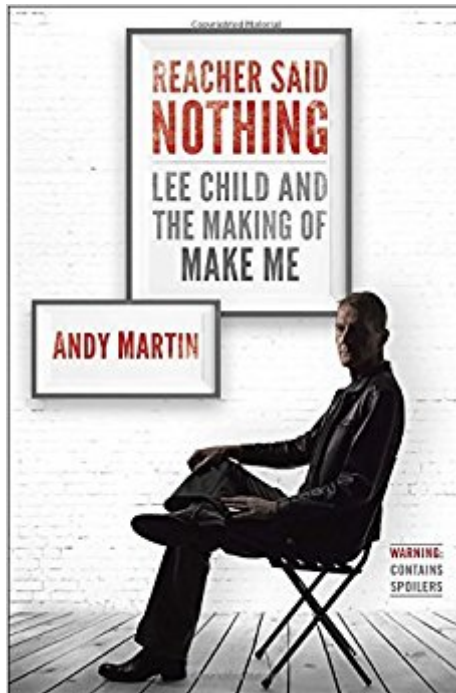




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Reacher Said Nothing: Lee Child And The Making Of Make Me



Synopsis

Fans of Lee Child know well that the muscular star of his bestselling novels, Jack Reacher, is a man of few words and a lot of action. In *Reacher Said Nothing*, Andy Martin shadows Child like a literary private eye in a yearlong investigation of what it takes to make fiction's hottest hero hit the page running. The result is a fascinating, up-close-and-personal look into the world and ways of an expert storyteller's creative process as he undertakes the writing of the much anticipated twentieth Jack Reacher novel, *Make Me*. Fueled by copious mugs of black coffee, Lee Child squares off against the blank page (or, rather, computer screen), eager to follow his wandering imagination in search of a plot worthy of the rough and ready Reacher. While working in fits and starts, fine-tuning sentences, characters, twists and turns, Child plies Martin with anecdotes and insights about the life and times that shaped the man and his methods: from schoolyard scraps and dismal factory jobs to a successful TV production career and the life-changing decision to put pencil to paper. Then there's the chance encounter that transformed aspiring author James Grant into household name Lee Child. And between bouts at the keyboard in an office high above Manhattan, there are jaunts to writers' conventions, book signings, publishing powwows, chat shows, the Prado in Madrid, American diners, and English pubs. "Can the storyteller get away with this?" Lee Child ponders, as he hones and hammers his latest nail-biter into fighting trim. Numerous bestsellers and near worldwide fame say he can. Jack Reacher may be a man of few words, but *Reacher Said Nothing* says it all about a certain tall man with a talent for coming out on top. Praise for *Reacher Said Nothing* "Martin, an unabashed fan of Child's work, conveys his excitement at hanging out with Child." Publishers Weekly "In more than seventy tight vignettes . . . Child, his backstory, and his work come alive. Martin's irrepressible glee about the project is infectious. Recommended for fans of Child's work or aspiring novelists who could benefit from an insider's view of the messy, complicated, and transcendent act of writing." Library Journal "Amazingly enjoyable and genuinely enlightening, largely because Lee Child is as thoughtful and as amusing as you'd think from reading his great thrillers." Sullivan County Democrat "An unusual entry in the annals of literary biography . . . fascinating . . . I could not stop reading." Sarah Weinman, *The Crime Lady* "One-of-a-kind . . . It's funny, serious, a kind of mock-heroic and heroic together. It's quizzical and respectful, sophisticated and self-deprecating." Professor Dame Gillian Beer "Andy Martin is no mere Reacher Creature, as fans of Lee Child's Jack Reacher are

known. He's something of a Reacher Teacher. Martin's book is the perfect accompaniment to all things Reacher. It explores, it explains, and it entertains. Like a detective novel, Reacher Said Nothing takes you down alleys and lanes and streets cast in shadow—but the journey isn't urban, it's in the boulevards and byways between your own ears. Andy's writing is a brainiac's delight. —Sam Fussell, author of Muscle

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Customer Reviews

“[Andy] Martin, an unabashed fan of [Lee] Child's work, conveys his excitement at hanging out with Child. Publishers Weekly “In more than seventy tight vignettes . . . Child, his backstory, and his work come alive. Martin's irrepressible glee about the project is infectious. Recommended for fans of Child's work or aspiring novelists who could benefit from an insider's view of the messy, complicated, and transcendent act of writing. —Library Journal “Amazingly enjoyable and genuinely enlightening, largely because Lee Child is as thoughtful and as amusing as you'd think from reading his great thrillers. —Sullivan County Democrat “An unusual entry in the annals of literary biography . . . fascinating . . . I could not stop reading. —Sarah Weinman, The Crime Lady “One-of-a-kind . . . It's funny, serious, a kind of mock-heroic and heroic together. It's quizzical and respectful, sophisticated and self-deprecating. —Professor Dame Gillian Beer “

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Andy Martin is a former fellow of the Cullman Center for Scholars and Writers at the New York Public Library. A native of Britain, he lectures at the University of Cambridge for the Department of French. He is the author of *Waiting for Bardot*, *The Boxer and the Goalkeeper*, *Walking on Water*, *The Knowledge of Ignorance*, *Stealing the Wave*, and *Napoleon the Novelist*.

Initially quite interesting but the digressions grew more frequent as the book went on, occasionally verging on silly when simple concepts were mapped to philosophical and linguistical constructs. Doing an analysis deconstructing particular sentences and then ascribing deeper meanings Child was probably not aware of seems more an exercise of displaying the knowledge of this book’s author. This goes on more and more as the book progresses. The first part of the book is fun, entertaining, and enlightening. As Child progresses in his work. “Reacher Said Nothing” loses much of its tight focus and is almost a random collection of academic assertions. Do these really apply? Should they really apply? I suppose it is up to the reader. The book certainly has much to offer, but the reading of it is somewhat hit or miss. Reading it will give you a sense of Child’s writing process, but not too much of it. You’ll get his opinions on small facets of the book and what it takes for him to write one. I couldn’t help but feel as though I was getting the outside of the puzzle and while the frame might grow more and more complete, the middle never comes clearly into focus. The book is probably better if you are a complete Reacher-holic and think the books can do no wrong. As a general detailing of the creative process going into a contemporary bestseller, it is probably the best thing we have, probably by a lot. But it still lags a bit with some of the more obscure academia references, too many invocations of Beckett, and it was a bit annoying digging out the symbolism that didn’t seem to be put in on purpose. One can take piece already written and deconstruct it far past the point of anything that had been in the author’s mind. All in all, a fine book whose earlier promise gets lost in the academic musings of the author. Though they always return us to Child, Reacher and the book that he is writing, a good many of them break the spell over and over. If you

have an interest, by all means read the book. It's not for a casual trip into the mind and process of Lee Child, but it may be the best we ever get. If you can get past the author's self-indulgences, it's not a bad thing at all.

A thinking person's thoughts, and feelings, of another at work. I don't know Martin's exact relationship to Child, nor should I, but it certainly is not, as some other reviewers here have assumed, simply that of a reporter to an author he doesn't really know beforehand, or have much dealing with after. Not possible, as I don't think that Child would grant this kind of precious opportunity to someone he didn't trust both with his private life, yes, but also with his words, which to a swordsmith, are more important than, well, everything. Certainly, Martin is no tyro nor should he have to pretend to be. His is an intimate yet also scholarly tour de force that takes no prisoners and makes no apologies, and yes, the author is very articulate and well-read (it is his profession, after all) and is not trying to please the reader or anybody other than himself, to get this done as right as he can do it, in the way only he can do it. He is by no means pandering to the crowd or, horror of horrors, dumb-ifying his text to accommodate the paperback Instagram Tweeters, which is his choice and ultimately my breath of fresh air, push come to shove. This is not a Reacher book, it's a Child book, and Martin does a great job of blending in with the wallpaper when needed, but also of bringing himself firmly into the equation when needs, or subject matter, must. So yes, this is an intensely personal, and yes, at times seemingly whimsical work, but it actually contains the pretty much bang-on-the-money commentary that must by definition stand aside, take a smoke break, ruminate with a seeming stranger and then arrive at the heart and soul of it all, that moves this piece from mere reportage "give me Reacher!" to something both more lyrical and also far more profound. Bravo, and hoy paloy be darned, RSN delivers the goods.

There's something everyone who has read a good book has said, how did they do that? This book answers that question for Lee Child in a rather shallow, pompous, and enjoyable way. A good read that at times takes itself too seriously, as all writing should.

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