



The Man With Two Arms: A Novel

Billy Lombardo

Overlook Hardcover (Feb 4, 2010)

Unknown \$24.95 (304pp)

978-1-59020-307-1

Danny Granville is the most gifted young baseball player ever to come out of Chicago. His father, Henry, an obsessive fan of the game, can take the credit-and the blame-for igniting Danny's passion. Henry took Danny to Wrigley Field to see the Cubs play when his son was four months old. He bought the boy a baseball glove for his first birthday, gave it to him five months early, and was playing catch with him two weeks later. A high school science teacher, Henry also fostered the key to Danny's excellence: his ambidexterity. Danny can hit or pitch righty or lefty, thanks in part to a "symmetry campaign" run secretly by his father to encourage the adolescent Danny to use either hand, or either foot, whenever possible. But symmetry for Danny has become a profound attribute. He is also an artist; he paints under the tutelage of an older girl who rents the apartment upstairs. Like the Vitruvian Man, da Vinci's man of ideal proportions, Danny seems to have it all-strength, coordination, self-discipline, empathy, and intuition. And this intuitiveness, at times, crosses over into foresight.

While Henry "encourages" Danny so as to prepare him for a Darwinian universe, Danny's mother Lori wants to protect the boy from the slings and arrows of competition. In their separate ways, the parents fear the downside to their son's burden/gift-that they might lose their son and each other to his greatness. Such is the narrative tension of Billy Lombardo's ambitious first novel, *The Man with Two Arms*. It is a Chicago story, a follow-up to Lombardo's book of Chicago stories, *The Logic of a Rose* (2005), which won the G.S. Sharat Chandra Prize for Short Fiction. It is also a baseball story; fans will appreciate the arc of Billy's path to stardom as told by Lombardo, a poet and MFA graduate who writes baseball like a true insider. Lombardo knows the ropes-the practice, preparation, conditioning, and game smarts, from T-ball through Single A to the Chicago Cubs-that go into making the first truly successful "switch-pitcher" in the history of the game.

The Man with Two Arms becomes more than a Chicago baseball story, more than a study of pushy parenting or high-profile superstardom. As Lombardo ratchets up the stakes, greed and betrayal threaten everything Danny has become, and the greatest of his many gifts leads him to a more crucial destiny than mere athletic fame. Lombardo reaches for the stars here, examining the possibilities and pitfalls of a unique kind of superman. (February) Joe Taylor (January / February 2010)

Disclosure: This article is not an endorsement, but a review. The author of this book provided free copies of the book to have their book reviewed by a professional reviewer. No fee was paid by the author for this review. Foreword Reviews only recommends books that we love. Foreword Magazine, Inc. is disclosing this in accordance with the Federal Trade Commission's 16 CFR, Part 255.