



# The Many Deaths of the Firefly Brothers

*Thomas Mullen*

Download now

Read Online ➞

# The Many Deaths of the Firefly Brothers

Thomas Mullen

## **The Many Deaths of the Firefly Brothers** Thomas Mullen

*Late one night in August 1934, following a yearlong spree of bank robberies across the Midwest, the Firefly Brothers are forced into a police shootout and die . . . for the first time.*

In award-winning author Thomas Mullen's evocative new novel, the highly anticipated follow-up to his acclaimed debut, *The Last Town on Earth*, we follow the Depression-era adventures of Jason and Whit Fireson—bank robbers known as the Firefly Brothers by the press, the authorities, and an adoring public that worships their acts as heroic counterpunches thrown at a broken system.

Now it appears they have at last met their end in a hail of bullets. Jason and Whit's lovers—Darcy, a wealthy socialite, and Veronica, a hardened survivor—struggle between grief and an unyielding belief that the Firesons have survived. While they and the Firesons' stunned mother and straight-arrow third son wade through conflicting police reports and press accounts, wild rumors spread that the bandits are still at large. Through it all, the Firefly Brothers remain as charismatic, unflappable, and as mythical as the American Dream itself, racing to find the women they love and make sense of a world in which all has come unmoored.

Complete with kidnappings and gangsters, heiresses and speakeasies, *The Many Deaths of the Firefly Brothers* is an imaginative and spirited saga about what happens when you are hopelessly outgunned—and a masterly tale of hardship, redemption, and love that transcends death.

## **The Many Deaths of the Firefly Brothers Details**

Date : Published January 26th 2010 by Random House (first published January 1st 2010)

ISBN : 9781400067534

Author : Thomas Mullen

Format : Hardcover 416 pages

Genre : Fiction, Historical, Historical Fiction, Fantasy, Mystery, Thriller

 [Download The Many Deaths of the Firefly Brothers ...pdf](#)

 [Read Online The Many Deaths of the Firefly Brothers ...pdf](#)

**Download and Read Free Online The Many Deaths of the Firefly Brothers Thomas Mullen**

---

# From Reader Review The Many Deaths of the Firefly Brothers for online ebook

## Thomas Todd says

3 1/2 stars. Story is centered around 2 bank robbing brothers from the depression era and their families, parents, 3rd brother, spouses and others. These brothers continue to rob banks in towns mysteriously after they have been shot dead by authorities in another? Author does an excellent job of describing the time frame and what is going on during the great depression that puts the reader right there as it's occurring. This is the second book I've read written by author Mullen (Darktown) and I look forward to reading his original debut novel. Would recommend this book to those that enjoy historical fiction and action with the bootlegging and bank robbing action. I've seen others have this book listed as a science fiction book however if that was the case I never would have finished it as sci-fi is not my thing. The unexplainable reason these brothers are not dying is more fictional thinking than sci-fi.

---

## Catherine says

The premise of this book is gripping: two bank-robbing brothers during the Depression era are repeatedly killed during their illegal exploits, but keep coming back to life. The book opens with the brothers, Jason and Whit, waking up in the police morgue, with no memory of the events leading up to their apparent death. Of course, they escape and the rest of the novel covers their struggle to evade the police and reunite with their girls. It's not much of a spoiler to add that they die a few more times, given the title. Woven through the main narrative are many flashbacks to the events that led them to this life of crime and to that first death, as they slowly remember what happened. Also included is the perspective of a young law school graduate, who finds himself working for the newly formed FBI and trying to track down the brothers who have become Public Enemy #1.

But the pacing was just so darn slow. The first section, in particular, as Mullen establishes the setting and characters, just drags on and on. I almost abandoned the book, but I wanted to find out what happened (after all, the premise is good) and I really enjoyed Mullen's debut novel, *The Last Town on Earth*. So I kept slogging along and the pace did pick up, although it was still slow at times.

The characters didn't really do it for me, either. Jason is the slick, ladies' man, former bootlegger. Whit is the angry, communist-leaning, anarchist trying to stick it to the man. (Sticking it to the man seems to be a major theme for Mullen.) Like *LToE*, Mullen is pretty clear about who we should be rooting for, with a little sympathy allowed for some of the less-evil villain types, but most being portrayed as pure evil, or bumbling idiots. He showed the staggering effects of the Depression on the country as a whole, which felt very timely considering the pickle our country is currently in. But... I still couldn't connect with the protagonists enough to really care what happened to them.

The ending left me really unsatisfied. Maybe I just didn't connect all the dots, but it was far too ambiguous for my taste.

I feel kind of harsh only giving the book 2 stars, because Mullen is a good writer. But the general information about the Depression and the outlaw culture that developed during that time appealed to me more than the main plot. I'm more interested in reading the non-fiction book he recommended at the end than

I was in his carefully crafted narrative, and I wouldn't recommend this to anyone, so I can't really justify giving a 3-star rating.

---

## **Lawyer says**

Mullen's Public Enemy saga features the Fireson family. Patriarch Pop is a hard working man, the owner of small grocery stores, and a man attempting to improve the lives of his family through real estate investments. Bad business partners and the crash have taken care of those dreams. Although Pop has attempted to instill his three sons with his Horatio Alger values, oldest son Jason has taken to bootlegging to bring in money. He is his father's greatest disappointment. Younger brothers Whit and Weston seem to be following in Pop's foot steps until Pop is charged with the murder of a business partner and convicted. Upon Pop's untimely death in prison, Jason turns to bank robbing, a more lucrative profession than bootlegging. Against his best reasoning, Jason allows Whit to join his gang. The Firesons soon become known as the Firefly Brothers because of their lightning fast robberies and getaways. Younger brother Weston continues to attempt an honest profession. However it is the proceeds of the Firefly Brothers' exploits that support the family.

It is no spoiler to state that Jason and Whit begin their tale by waking from the dead following an incident they cannot remember. Both have been shot. They lie on cooling boards in a morgue in a small Indiana town. As though their earlier exploits were not enough to raise them to mythic status, their continued appearances following the reports of their deaths certainly do.

John Dillinger, Pretty Boy Floyd, Clyde Barrow and Bonnie Parker are all dead. However, the Firefly Brothers continue to capture the imagination of victims of the economic plight of the great depression. Torching mortgages in the banks they rob, giving food to the homeless in Hoovervilles across the country may seem to make them heroes. However, the Firefly Brothers will not hesitate to kill whomever might be a threat to their failure or capture.

During the books brightest moments, the times of the great depression are vividly portrayed. There are episodes reminiscent of Davis Grubb's "Fools' Parade", Horace McCoy's "They Shoot Horses, Don't They?"; and Edward Anderson's 1937 classic, "Thieves Like Us".

Unfortunately, the brighter moments are obscured by the meaningless repeated resurrections of the Firefly Brothers. The brothers make no changes in their lives for better or worse as they ponder their apparent immortality.

Author Thomas Mullen's debut, "The Last Town on Earth" was favorably reviewed by The Washington Post, a Chicago Tribune book of the year in 2006, and USA Today's Debut Novel of the Year. Mullen's second effort is not as notable.

---

## **Josette says**

From the back cover:

Jason and Whit Fireson, the notorious, bank-robbing duo known as the Firefly Brothers, wake to find themselves lying on cooling boards in a police morgue. Riddled with bullet wounds, the reality is

inescapable: They've been killed. But they're alive.

It is August 1934, in the midst of the Great Depression but in the waning months of the great crime wave, during which the newly-created FBI killed such famous outlaws as John Dillinger, Baby Face Nelson, and Pretty Boy Floyd. Across the nation, men are out of work and families are starving, and Americans are stunned and frightened by the collapse of their country's foundations.

The Firesons' lovers Darcy and Veronica struggle between grief and an unyielding belief that Jason and Whit have survived, while their stunned mother and straight-arrow third brother desperately try to support their family and evade police spies. And through it all the Firefly Brothers themselves race to find the women they love, and make sense of a world come unmoored.

Review:

Set in the Depression era of 1930s America, this is the story of Jason and Whit Fireson, two bank-robbing brothers who are killed many times, but just can't seem to get the hang of staying dead. Sounds amusing, but this isn't your average run-of-the-mill gangster lark: America in the '30s was a bleak place for most, and that undercurrent runs through the whole book - it's stark with a capital S.

The blurb above sums this up a whole lot better than I could ever hope to, but I will say that essentially, this is a book about love: Of family loyalties, sibling rivalries and the love between two people that will always prevail, even when faced with death. The prose is beautiful and eloquent, the dialogue snappy, and every character is so well drawn that I felt their plight - and rooted for them - every step of the way. It took me longer than usual to read this, but all that meant is that I savoured every moment of it entirely. A tremendous, thoroughly enjoyable book.

---

## **Nate Q says**

The only thing worse than a writer with no talent is a writer who squanders talent. Armed with a great concept, first chapter, and even a Cormac McCarthy quote to kick off his novel, Thomas Mullen proceeds to kill off anything remotely resembling an interesting piece of literary fiction. Even the backdrop of J. Edgar Hoover's "public enemies" and The Great Depression were not enough to save it, as the research had clearly gone not one step further than Wikipedia. Poor descriptions, worse choices, and a cast of characters that talked like no human beings from any era littered the pages and left me wondering when the pain was going to subside. Quite honestly, I'm not sure how any self-respecting editor green-lighted this without asking for some simple changes to beef up the story/characters/descriptions/anything or calling for a second draft. Oh, and for those of you wondering if it was truly that bad, I've included some excerpts:

"The place smelled of old ladies' perfume and sorrow."

"Yes, you are rather sorry sometimes." She grinned. "But the rest of the time you're exceptional."

"Life had returned, and she needed sustenance."

"Then he tried to submerge that thought in the amnesia of a long kiss..."

---

## AM says

*The Many Deaths of the Firefly* by Thomas Mullen is an amazing book. It is one of those rare titles where everything works. Starting with the outside, it has a deep red jacket with a fedora clad silhouette walking towards the reader its trench coat flapping slightly. It has an intriguing title that makes you want to pick it up, and it is a hefty in size. The book is about a pair of Dillinger-esque bank robbers called the Firefly Brothers. As you read Mullen's beautiful prose you settle into a non-chronological account of two men caught up in their own story. For this book is very much about story – the stories in the newspapers, the stories they tell each other (and the ones they don't), the history and mythology of the era, and even the stories they can't remember.

“...people need to tell their stories to place themselves somewhere solid in this great swirl...” – Mullen

Jason is the dapper one, as charmed as he is charming. He didn't want any part of his father's store and the two strong men butted heads. So, Jason took off to become a driver for a bootlegging operation. Sure it was illegal, but wasn't Prohibition the real crime, seemed to be the thought process, besides he like the fast cars and the good clothes. Two jail stints and his father's death, which haunts the book, escalated him bootlegger to bank robber. He honestly hadn't wanted to get his brothers involved in what he did, but eventually he saw no choice, especially when it came to Wit.

Wit, the youngest Fireson, is rougher around the edges than his brother and not nearly so vain. He is on the path of anger fueled self destruction and Jason figures if he takes him along then at least he can attempt damage control. Together they have adventures galore and the next big score is always right around the corner. Jason tries not to think of the killing as his fault –self defense or an over zealous conspirator. He tries to reject the newspapers myth making and see himself as level headed.

But, little of this do you find out right away. See, Jason and his brother Wit are introduced to us waking up on cold metal slabs in a police morgue. They'd been killed and have the bullet holes to prove it. They know who they are, but not how they got there. The book bounces around in time telling you stories from various points of view. Some are from past, many are from the present and they all stitch themselves together nicely. Conjuring as if by magic, what it meant to live in that era, why people mythologize some criminals, and how these men found themselves in that life, even if they are not sure why they are alive.

“She wanted to breathe the brothers back into life with their stories.” — Mullen

Books like this one enthrall me. I listened to this one audio (purchased from Audible.com) even though I love the physical book. The audio production is superb. It is read by William Dufris whose voice I remembered from listening to a Richard K. Morgan novel a while back. He really breathes life into all the characters. The author talks about the phoneme of someone's speech or their geographically dialect and Dufris keeps pace with it all. In the end *The Many Deaths of the Firefly Brothers* is a wonderful historical fiction that I'm sure my co-workers will get tired of me raving about. It is the kind of wonderful that makes me afraid that any clumsiness in my review will turn somebody off to it, yet I can't just leave it at, “A Must Read!”

---

## Jessica says

More than anything, this book skewed my views. Characters that should have angered me, that I should have felt righteous indignation towards, were instead viewed as dangerously dashing protagonists who were doing right by themselves, their families and their loved ones. The characters that should have been applauded, who were just doing their jobs to keep the public safe, were instead vilified and set aside as incompetent, bumbling, misguided fools.

Let me start with Thomas Mullen's writing. To say it was "evocative" wouldn't be enough. It went beyond seeing his images in my head. It was more like I was there, driving down the dusty roads with Jason and Whit, staring at the hopelessness of those around Weston, stewing in close-quartered offices of the local police with Delaney. I know a good author is *supposed* to do that with their writing, but there was something more to Mullen's style. It was descriptive, sure, but it was also...well, charming, for lack of a better term. And even that phrase is inadequate.

So let me move on to the characters. I didn't expect to like Jason or Whit, to be honest. But, Mullen was able to transform my scorn into regard and wonder. The lure of the crime, despite the whole "it's immoral and wrong" argument, dragged me further into the brothers' world.

I fell for Jason. So calm, so smart, so suave and so strong. I felt less inclined towards Whit and Weston, but they do hold special places in my memory. I loved Darcy's spunk, spontaneity, and grit. I became engrossed by their lives. I wanted them to succeed, I wanted them to survive, I wanted them to realize all their dreams, dammit! I was so invested in their story and well-being that by the time I hit "The Second Death of the Firefly Brothers", my insides were screaming, "NOOOOOO!"

The only criticism I have is that there were a few predictable moments. Like from the beginning, you're fairly certain of the identity of the snitch. Then, though Mullen did an excellent job of building up the suspense of just what happened the night of the Fireson's first death, when it came to the "Ah-ha!" moment, it was just all too clear. Maybe it was designed to be that way, though. This reader spent the majority of the book creating, analyzing and dispensing with theories as to who "did 'em in", and yet I never managed to conjure up the truth...at least, not until the exact moment that it was slowly dawning on the brothers. So, maybe I can live with that one.

There were so many thoughts that were in my head throughout the entire story. I loved the small nuggets of history that were thrown in to lend a bit of background and color. I enjoyed the background that Mullen created for each of the three main characters, as well. I fell into those side-stories, willing them to continue, and hoping it'd give insight into what would happen at the end.

I was continually thinking, "These guys are crazy!"; thinking, "They're doomed!"; thinking, "They're AWESOME!" And they really were. All the swagger of being on the wrong side of the law aside, Jason and Whit were truly, spectacularly, awesome.

Despite their flawed brotherly relationship, they managed to stick together, to grieve together. Jason showed he truly cared for Darcy, and Whit sometimes showed his feelings for Veronica. Throw in their feelings for their mother and Weston, and it made them whole.

Oh, and I must applaud the devious ending. I was wondering, as I was reading it, where Mullen was going with the doings of Darcy's mind. In truth, I was frightened by the unhinged Darcy that was creeping out

towards the end. The discussions in my mind went between shock that she was unraveling, to outrage at my shock. I had to remind myself that Darcy's moods weren't so strange, especially after all she'd been through. I reminded myself that she had remained strong through it all, and that she was much stronger and smarter than I could ever hope to be (I'm mean to myself when I have these conversations...)

And then, the ending that wasn't quite closure, but still somehow felt final. I see now what he was doing, that sneaky author, and knowing that he was delivering a sort of "choose your own adventure" ending makes it all the more entertaining. For myself, I chose the only ending that would be worthy of the Fireson brothers, and I'm fairly certain that I picked the best ending.

---

## **Kemper says**

People love to turn certain types of outlaws into folk heroes. Thieves and murderers are portrayed as varying versions of Robin Hood, and when they die, there are often stories about how they faked their deaths somehow. Billy the Kid and John Dillinger were both rumored to be alive long after they met their ends. Jesse James was dug up and DNA testing done a century after he was killed to prove it was really him in the grave. But what if there were famous outlaws who simply couldn't die?

Jason and Whit Fireson are brothers who lead the so-called Firefly gang of bank robbers during the Great Depression. The death of Dillinger has made them the top priority for J. Edgar Hoover's fledgling Bureau of Investigation. The book begins with their deaths. Sort of.

The Fireson brothers wake up in the morgue with fatal bullet wounds. Confused and scared, they quickly escape and try to figure out what happened to them during their last day and how they managed to come back from the dead.

The police think that their bodies were stolen and Jason sees this a great opportunity to vanish forever with no one looking for them. They need money to get away and they plan to pull a couple of bank jobs and then disappear with confusion about their reported deaths keeping a serious man-hunt from being done. But Jason's girlfriend has been kidnapped, and their uncertainty about how they died and returned is haunting them. The title of the book should be a clue that the dying isn't over for the Fireson's yet.

This was a unique idea for a story with an interesting structure. It starts with their 'deaths' and then uses flashbacks to tell the story of the Fireson family along with how Jason and Whit turned to bank robbery.. I liked how the author didn't play along with the usual '30s era bank robber Robin Hood myth. Whit has leftist radical tendencies and tries to think of the robberies as class warfare, but Jason doesn't allow himself such delusions. He knows that they're just criminals.

The book also does a nice job of showing the toll that this takes on the non-criminal members of their family like their brother Weston, who has to try and hold onto his job even as the Bureau of Investigation is putting pressure on his employer. There was also a lot of interesting detail about life during the Great Depression.

Good book that put an interesting twist on the legend of the Depression-era bank robbers.

---



## **Lisa says**

More like 3.5 stars. Captivating premise, distinct characters. The framing device felt a little heavy-handed and unnecessary. Towards the end, too much philosophizing from all the characters.

---

## **Kathy says**

A very different kind of story featuring a couple of brothers who rob banks for money during the Depression era when the public vicariously thrill to the news stories of famous robbers succeeding - until they don't.

As you might be able to tell from the book's title, the firefly brothers just can't stay dead.

Not a perfect book, sometimes meandering between stories causing bouts of confusion, but it is fun to read. I will try other books by this author.

This was a library loan.

---

## **Denise says**

Set during the Depression, a time of desperation and bank robberies this is a relatively quick read.

Combination of historical fiction, mystery, crime and murder. The Fireson Brothers are survivors. They are surviving poverty, unemployment, family disputes and murder. The greatest mystery is not the who or the how of the story but the why. Why do they not die?

---

## **Mark says**

In the summer of '34, Jason and Whit Fireson wake up in the morgue. Apparently both have died from gunshot wounds, possibly in a police ambush. A miracle or a second chance? You'll have to take a ride along with the Firefly brothers, to find out. They are a pair of Depression-era bank robbers, modeled after Dillinger and Pretty Boy Floyd, reviled by the law and adored by the public.

This is a well-written and exciting tale, chock full of machine-guns, kidnappings, double-crosses and of course car chases, with the intrepid police always in hot pursuit.

Mullen writes in clean fast prose and he's done his homework too. Highly recommended.

---

## **Debbie Zapata says**

Imagine being a bank robber in the Depression era. Never mind right now what factors in life turned you to crime, you are a bank robber. A famous one: a hero to the poor people who have lost their jobs, a villain to the representatives of law and order. As if there could be very much of *that* in these terrible years!

But then one day you wake up dead. Well, you wake up after being shot dead. You and your brother both. And neither of you remembers how you died. You just know that you have to get out of the police morgue you find yourself in, and you have to try to figure out what happened, because you have no memory of the

actual dying.

This is how we first meet Jason Fireson and his brother Whit. And other than the usual WTF moments they have during their first re-awakening, the most puzzling question they had for each other was: *"What are we going to tell Ma?"*

This was a great story: from the opening scenes to the slow revealing of the family life and circumstances that led to these events, right up to the end where we all finally learn WHY. I stayed up way too late last night to find that out but it was worth it!

I have read three Thomas Mullen titles now and will be eagerly watching for more.

---

## **Thomas Edmund says**

The Many Deaths of the Firefly Brothers is set in the great depression and follows the immortal escapades of the Fireson brothers, Whit and Jason.

The tone of Firefly Brothers is fairly light, almost comical, and while the action is often gruesome and many of the events are heavy the overall feeling of the novel is kinda fluffy. While the story is a good blend of the familiar clichés with a touch of originality one does feel like the story needs something more.

Part-one 'the first death of the Firefly brothers' is mired in backstory and flashback, which is somewhat interesting but much of the history we are exposed to is too mundane and slows the pace of the story, considering we start off with the fascinating resurrection of the brothers but hardly address the issue until many many pages later.

And while the mystery of why the brothers are immortal is enough to propel the book forwards there is an extreme lack of good storyline beyond this. Essentially the brothers continually get themselves into deadly situations until eventually lost memories surface that explain their predicament. Memories which I ultimately found disappointing, while the supernatural explanation was sufficient the attempt at shocking backstory revelation, while logical and fitting, to be anticlimactic.

Attempts to spice up the story with a love interest kidnap might have been more interesting if it was tied in with the brothers better, however it just felt like page filler while we wondered about the brother's immortality.

In the end The Many Deaths of the Firefly Brothers is a good book, and perhaps would have made (or make) a great movie, but doesn't quite reach the upper echelons of highly recommended.

---

## **Katie says**

I thoroughly enjoyed "The Many Deaths of the Firefly Brothers." Now I confess that I'm biased because a) I adore historical fiction b) You can't keep me away from a good caper and c) the author is an Oberlin Alum and a friend. All that being said, the characters are interesting and believable and the story moves along quickly and is never predictable. Several times when my alarm went off in the morning I picked up this book instead of hitting snooze.

---