

Kane and Abel (novel)

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Jump to: [navigation](#), [search](#)

Kane and Abel



recent edition cover

Author(s)	Jeffrey Archer
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Kane and Abel is a 1979 [novel](#) by British author [Jeffrey Archer](#). The title and story is a play on the [Biblical](#) brothers, [Cain and Abel](#). Released in the United Kingdom in 1979 and in the United States in February 1980, the book was an international success. It reached No. 1 on the [New York Times bestseller](#) list and in 1985 was made into a [CBS](#) television [miniseries](#) titled *Kane & Abel* starring [Peter Strauss](#) as Rosnovski and [Sam Neill](#) as Kane.

The sequel to *Kane and Abel* is *[The Prodigal Daughter](#)* with *Florentyna Kane* as the protagonist.

[\[edit\]](#) Plot summary

The book tells the stories of two men born worlds apart. They have nothing in common except the same date of birth (18 April 1906) and a zeal to succeed in life. William Lowell Kane is a wealthy and powerful [Boston Brahmin](#) while Abel Rosnovski (originally named Wladek Koskiewicz) is a [Pole](#) was born in a situation of great poverty and eventually emigrated to the United States.

William follows the steps of his father, Richard Kane, to become a successful banker. When William was still a child, Richard dies in the [Titanic](#) disaster, leaving William fatherless and heir to the Kane & Cabot bank. William displays extraordinary discipline and intelligence as a young man at [St. Paul's School](#) and later at [Harvard](#). His mother marries Henry Osborne, who turns out to be interested in gambling and women. William hates Henry from the beginning and spends most of the time at Harvard and at his best friend Mathew Lester's home. William dreams of becoming the chairman of Lester's bank one day. Henry spends every last penny of Kane's mother's money on the pretext of speculation, while she dies in a miscarriage. Kane throws Henry out of home.

Wladek Koskiewicz is born in a forest and raised by a trapper family. When he grows up and is found to have exceptional intelligence, Baron Rosnovski asks him to become a companion to his son Leon so Wladek might prove to be a competition to him. Wladek agrees to go to the Baron's castle on the condition that he can bring along his elder sister Florentyna. Soon afterwards, World War I breaks out. Germans attack Poland and capture the Baron, his staff and son in his castle. Leon dies by the hand of a soldier. Before dying, the Baron hands him his silver band of authority. Wladek realises that the Baron was his father when he finds that, like him, the Baron too had a missing nipple. Florentyna is also raped and killed in front of young Wladek by Russian soldiers.

Wladek was then moved to [Siberia](#) from where he manages to escape to [Turkey](#) after facing many hardships. There, he nearly loses his hand (a common punishment in the Middle East and in the Ottoman empire, predecessor of Turkey, before 20th century) for stealing food but is rescued by two British diplomats. They transfer him to the [Polish](#) consulate from where with their help, he migrates to America and assumes the name Abel Rosnovski.

He starts his life as a waiter in the Hotel Plaza, while taking night classes in business at [Columbia University](#). While Abel is working there, Davis Leroy, owner of the Richmond group of hotels, is impressed by his work and appoints him manager of his flagship hotel. Abel converts the ill-managed hotel to a profit-making one and buys stock in the chain. During the [Great Depression](#), the hotel needs a backer and Davis, unable to find one, commits suicide leaving the remaining shares in the Richmond Group to Abel. Before committing suicide, Davis mentions that Kane & Cabot was the bank that didn't support him. Abel thus plans for revenge and considers Kane his arch rival. The bank gets him an anonymous backer. Abel assumes it to be David Maxton, owner of Stevens' hotel. During this time, Abel befriends George and marries Zaphia, both Polish emigres.

Abel changes the name of the hotel from Richmond to Baron and builds up a successful hotel chain. By collaborating with Henry Osborne, who had by now entered politics, Abel plans to ruin Kane and his bank. Abel begets a daughter, named Florentyna in memory of his dead sister while Kane has a son, Richard. Abel during [World War II](#) would save Kane's life in France, unaware to each other. He divorces Zaphia when he returns home from the war.

Meanwhile Kane's bank and Lester's bank merge and a provision is made that anyone who has a share of 8% can summon board meetings. Abel tries desperately to obtain 8% of the bank's stock but Kane manages to thwart his attempts. They unknowingly meet each other many times throughout the novel.

Florentyna Rosnovski and Richard Kane happen to meet and fall in love without knowing about the rivalry between their fathers. They get married amid vehement protests from their fathers and start a chain of boutique stores named Florentyna's.

Finally, Abel manages to obtain enough shares of the bank and ousts Kane from power. Kane decides to forgive his son and daughter-in-law and expresses his wish to meet them. He dies before he is able to see them and his grandson William. Abel then comes to know that his backer was not David Maxton, but William Kane. Filled with remorse, he reconciles with his daughter and son-in-law. Abel dies soon after, and bequeathes everything to his daughter Florentyna, except his silver band of authority, which he leaves to his grandson, whom Florentyna and Richard have named "William Abel Kane".

[\[hide\]](#)

- [v](#)
- [t](#)
- [e](#)

Jeffrey Archer

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