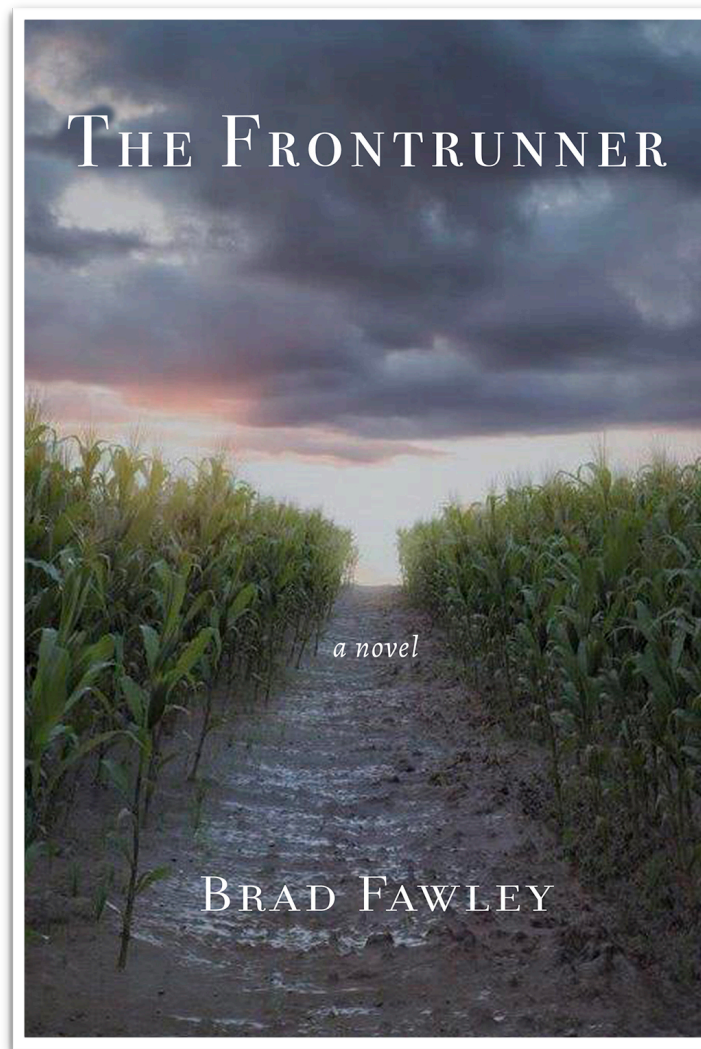


Coming April 9, 2024

THE FRONTRUNNER

A NOVEL BY BRAD FAWLEY



416 pages; 6 x 9 / Hardcover / \$26.95 for Print (CA \$35.95)

ISBN: 979-8-9876631-6-5 / Publication Date: April 9, 2024

Distributor: IPG in Chicago, available on bookshop.org, Ingram & Gazelle (in the UK), European Rights sold: All rights available. Rights Contact: Dede Cummings, dede@greenwriterspress.com

THE FRONTRUNNER

"Even if you've never laced up a pair of running shoes, you'll fall in love with *The Frontrunner* – a modern-day *Breaking Away*."

–Hawk Ostby, writer of the Oscar-nominated screenplay for *Children of Men*

Russ Clayton is a young man who keeps losing the important people in his life. Each time someone disappears, he finds himself left adrift. The Universe stacked against him. He only finds peace running alone on the roads of his small town in Kansas.

Russ finally believes that everyone in his life is gone. Feeling abandoned, reckless, and liberated, he gives himself up wholly to the running by setting an impossible goal. But, he needs help.

Long ago, Brad Coy was the fastest marathoner on the planet, but a man who also lost everything he valued to a cheating Russian runner named Yuri Grimlov. Finding a kinship, Coy and Russ team together, retreat to the desert, and undertake a quest to shatter the brain's protective hold on the body that prevents us from reaching our physical limits of speed and endurance.

On the other side of the world, Grimlov has been charged with restoring Russia's tarnished reputation for doping its distance runners. He takes two young twin boys from their family and subjects them to his special mixture of psychological manipulation, doping, and scientific training. The boys, however, come to him already strongly shaped by their fraternal rivalries leavened with a heavy dose of their mother's demanding ethics and branded by their father's superstitions.

Inevitably, through their proteges, Coy and Grimlov face off again. From that competition, Russ discovers whether he really ever was alone in the world and the Twins confront the limits of their love for each other.

ADVANCE PRAISE

"*The Frontrunner* is refreshingly different from most 'quest of running' type books. Fawley writes about the beautiful and sometimes dangerous aspects of professional running and of young athletes discovering they can do it with insight and grace. Though it's touched upon by the media in the Olympic Games, the international competition story is rarely written about, and the mental aspects of training are underexplored. I am telling my running buddies about this book."

–**Bill Rodgers**, Olympian and former American record holder in the marathon; four-time winner of Boston and New York City marathons

"Brad Fawley's first novel aims high. A well-crafted, realistic story of overcoming loss through running morphs into the ultimate Olympic golden fantasy... this is *Once a Runner* on steroids."

–**Roger Robinson**, award-winning author of *Running in Literature* and dozens of other books and articles about running, Boston & New York Marathon masters record-breaker

"A book that rivals the cult classic, John Parker's *Once a Runner*. Fawley captures everything runners face—from the challenges of training and racing at all levels to life and love. . . . Brad's writing cannot be beaten."

–**Larry Coy**, Six-Time All American Distance Runner

"Even if you've never laced up a pair of running shoes, you'll fall in love with *The Frontrunner*—a modern-day '*Breaking Away*.' Fawley's startling first novel immediately gets you behind his underdog hero, Russ Clayton. Alone, with everything stacked against him, he chases an *impossible dream*, only to find the elixir he seeks has been right before his eyes all along. Like the best stories, it is a celebration of human resilience, honor, sacrifice, and triumph over loss."

–**Hawk Ostby**, writer of the Oscar-nominated screenplay for *Children of Men*, the Marvel movie *Iron Man*, *Cowboys & Aliens*, and the hit television series, *The Expanse*

"*The Frontrunner* belongs in the annals with the great novels of running culture. It is a story of tragedy, relationships, and heroic efforts to overcome great obstacles. Readers will come away entertained, and enlightened. I was immediately immersed in *The Frontrunner*. It's a wonderful and at times heart-wrenching, coming-of-age story about human potential, and overcoming tragic life obstacles, but it's also driven by a powerful narrative engine. Brad Fawley nails this with multiple uses of symbolism, foreshadowing, and strong character development."

–**Christopher Kelsall**, *Athletics Illustrated Magazine*

"Most runners at some point begin to wonder how fast they have it in them to run but not many ever find out. The cost of reaching our potential is simply too much to bear. But in Russ Clayton, Brad Fawley has written a character who shows that running can be the spiritual practice that allows us to transcend our limitations. *The Frontrunner* is a hero's journey, but the quest isn't for greatness, it's for freedom. Through Fawley's astute observations of the human psyche, Russ's example will inspire readers to face their obstacles on their paths toward finding out who they are."

–**Scott F. Parker**, author of *The Joy of Running Qua Running*

"Within the first 40 pages, I was hooked. Doug, explaining to Chuck and Russ what it takes to race well, puts into words what many know/feel, but can't verbalize. Brad nails it!"

–**Mike Dunlap**, former professional with the Brooks running team,
two-time U.S. Olympic Team marathon trials qualifier,
and co-host of the "Beards and Dun" Podcast

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Brad Fawley started running in 7th grade. He was a small college All-American in Cross-Country and 5000 meters. After earning a Master's Degree in Oceanography and his law degree from the University of Virginia, Brad practices law as an intellectual property and environmental litigator and has learned the value of storytelling. He has been awarded three U.S. patents for automotive tools. Brad and his wife split their time between Vermont and California and, blessed with good genes and knees, most every morning you can find him either outside running or working on his next book. Visit the author's website to learn more at www.bradfawley.com.

"This book it chalketh out before thine eyes The man that seeks the everlasting prize; It shews you whence he comes, whither he goes; What he leaves undone, also what he does; It also shews you how he runs and runs, Till he unto the gate of glory comes."

— John Bunyan, *The Pilgrim's Progress*

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GREEN WRITERS PRESS— NEW BOOK ANNOUNCEMENT:

The Frontrunner by Brad Fawley

Dear Editors, Producers, Reviewers,

Green Writers Press is thrilled to announce pre-publication of *The Frontrunner*, a provocative and immersive work of literary fiction due out in hardcover in April 2024, with an East Coast launch at the Boston Marathon followed by national marathon events and a book tour.

Russ Clayton is a young man who keeps losing the important people in his life. Each time someone disappears, he finds himself left adrift. The Universe stacked against him. He only finds peace running alone on the roads of his small town in Kansas.

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I would be thrilled to not only further discuss this pitch with you, but the possibility of a feature and/or a book review, or author interview as well. I can send a digital galley or a hardcopy advance reader copy upon request. We have strong national interest in this April 2024 hardcover release.

Thanks in advance for your great work and consideration.

Please let me know if you have any questions and I look forward to connecting with you soon.

Dede Cummings, *publisher*
GREEN WRITERS PRESS

Green Writers Press is an independent, women-owned, Vermont-based publisher whose mission is to spread a message of hope and renewal through the words and images we publish. Throughout we will adhere to our commitment to preserving and protecting the natural resources of the earth. To that end, a percentage of our proceeds will be donated to environmental and social-activist groups. In the past ten years, Green Writers Press has expanded significantly, publishing authors such as Julia Alvarez, Chard deNiord, Dr. M Jackson, former Vermont Governor Madeleine Kunin, Congresswoman Becca Balint, Sharyn Skeeter, Ha Kiet Chau, and Clarence Major. The start-up publishing company was invited to be part of the [Women's Convention](#) in 2017, was a finalist for the Association of Writers and Writing Programs' [Publisher of the Year Award](#), and was a recipient of [The Vermont Literary Inspiration Award](#) in 2019. In 2023, GWP Founder Dede Cummings was selected to appear on "[The Innovation Station](#)," at the Secretary's Office of Global Women's Issues (S/GWI) at the U.S. Department of State. Read more at www.greenwriterspress.com.

FICTION

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ISBN: 979-8-9876631-6-5

\$26.95 print \$9.99 e-book audiobook info (TK)

Publication Date: April 9, 2024

Distributor: IPG / Chicago

Available on Edelweiss for digital ARCs

Rights sold: All rights available.

Rights & Publicity contact: Dede Cummings

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THE FRONTRUNNER

Selected Excerpts & Powerful Quotes

Eight excerpts from various parts of the novel:

Russ Clayton stands, balanced on the edge of the very top of the quarry, the cold rock beneath his bare feet, long boned and white. His toes grip the sandstone. At least 60 feet below, the still water shines, a pool of obsidian. The half-moon and its penumbra of light floats in the center. A breeze rises up the quarry wall, warm and soft. Passes over his face. Ruffles his hair. A nightbird calls out but there is no response, only the murmur of the wind brushing leaves. A cloud passes. The moon's reflection fades and then snaps back to sharp focus against the flat, dark water. Russ's heart thuds. In his hands, with fingers spread wide, he holds a small boulder. The size of a bowling ball. He is afraid that it's weight will tip him over the edge.

He lifts the rock up before him, chin, eyes, and chest high, as if in offering, and lets it roll off his fingertips. Holding only moonlight in his palms, he counts off the seconds as the rock falls through the black air, passing the carved face of the quarry wall in silence.

#

“Two kinds of racers. Frontrunners and the rest. Frontrunners are a rare breed. They go out fast and run from the front. They run for time and figure if they go fast enough for long enough the rest will suffer so badly they will just give the fuck up.”

“The rest?”

“The rest? Those that made the promise and are really racing, not just going through the motions? They hang and kick. They hope to stick with the Frontrunner, not break that invisible thread that connects them to the leader. Ahead of them is the Frontrunner, tortured by not knowing where anyone else is and self-doubt. Think of it. No one has ever been where he is in that moment, there in the front of *this race, on this day* with nothing ahead but an ocean of pain and the empty track. A man running without limits. While all the rest? They only need to stay with the Frontrunner until the very last seconds when they will try to pass him and kick it to the tape. The hangers have it easy. They already know that *someone* has run faster than them. There he is, leading. So they know it is possible. They're not plowing new ground or breaking any barriers. There the guy is, right in front of them. So, the only test they face is sticking with the leader and then outkicking him.”

Russ asks, “Why would anyone want to be a Frontrunner?”

“It's not something you decide. You are born to it or, you're not.”

#

As he watches his boy run down the road and head for home, Chuck remembers sending him off to school the first time. He must have been about five. After he found his seat on the bus, Russ had turned to look out of the window and Chuck could see the boy's eyes following him, wide open, not worried, but wondering. Then, the bus disappeared down the road and Chuck went back into the trailer and sat there in the kitchen watching the coffee in his cup grow cold and listening to the faucet drip. As he thought about it, it seemed to Chuck that he was destined to be alone in the world. Caroline left him, his parents now dead, the other women and Tiffany gone. Now Russ.

It got easier as the years passed or, at least, he had gotten used to the going away. But, he knows that this time will not be like the times Russ got on the school bus. There will be no coming home at the end of the day with art projects clutched in his hand and a mostly empty lunch box. He knows he can never run the odometer back and try again. You get one shot and one shot only. It makes him shake his head to wonder at the fact that here he is doing his damn best on this empty country road to help his son get away.

My damn best. That's something I can hold onto.

#

Buck does not clap or wave. He stands, hands in his pockets. Mute. Eyes flicking from Russ back to the chase pack. Then back to him and, as Russ draws close, they meet eye to eye. But by then, anything he might say would have come too late. The fragile mental barrier Russ constructed between himself and fear, shatters. It's too much. And while he knows as a Frontrunner, that he must not, he can't help but commit the cardinal sin.

He looks over his shoulder.

#

Eventually, as is inevitable, the day ends and dusk falls. Sunburned and encrusted with a film of salt and again feeling dizzy, he approaches the outskirts of another small village whose place is marked on the horizon by a concrete grain elevator. He climbs a rolling rise a few miles from the town and, at the crest, sees below him, sitting on the edge of a cornfield with the end of day light flashing off its aluminum sides, a diner and the yellow light that spills from its windows. Dot's Diner.

It's time. Russ knows that the road for him ends here today. He is empty. Both mind and body fragile vessels cracked wide open and drained. A pile of shards waiting to be fitted back together in a new form and filled to the brim with a clear lake of shimmering hope. A bowl held by his own two loving hands. And, inside, peering back and reflected on the surface, a visage of himself he struggles to recognize.

#

“It's the *anticipation* of pain that makes us slow down, not pain itself. Your brain is the governor God gave us. You've got to ignore your brain. You've got to ignore God.”

“How? How do you ignore God?”

#

The sun sets and the night drops a dark blanket over the land. The stars appear. Russ runs. Around midnight, the moon peaks out from over the mountains and throws Russ's shadow on the track. It follows him, stretching and contracting, ahead and then to the side and then behind, lap after lap flashing past the kerosene lamps glowing yellow in the night. A silent ghost floating across the land.

Russ remembers his watery image caught in the plate glass window of the hardware store. He thinks of Doug bending over him at the Compton race, showing him the stopwatch. He thinks of his father, standing on the pedals to keep pace, ringing the bell, loving him. He remembers Mollie letting him sit in her bay window and talking with him. And Stewie and Jimmy laying on the grassy infield. And sitting with Lauren on the hill and watching the lights blink on in Eugene below, tickling her and laughing.

After mile 19, Russ asks, “What was my time?”

“Does it matter?”

After the first lap of mile 20, as Russ passes the Brad in the lawn chair, Brad shouts out into the darkness, “Where are you?”

Russ does not answer.

But he knows.

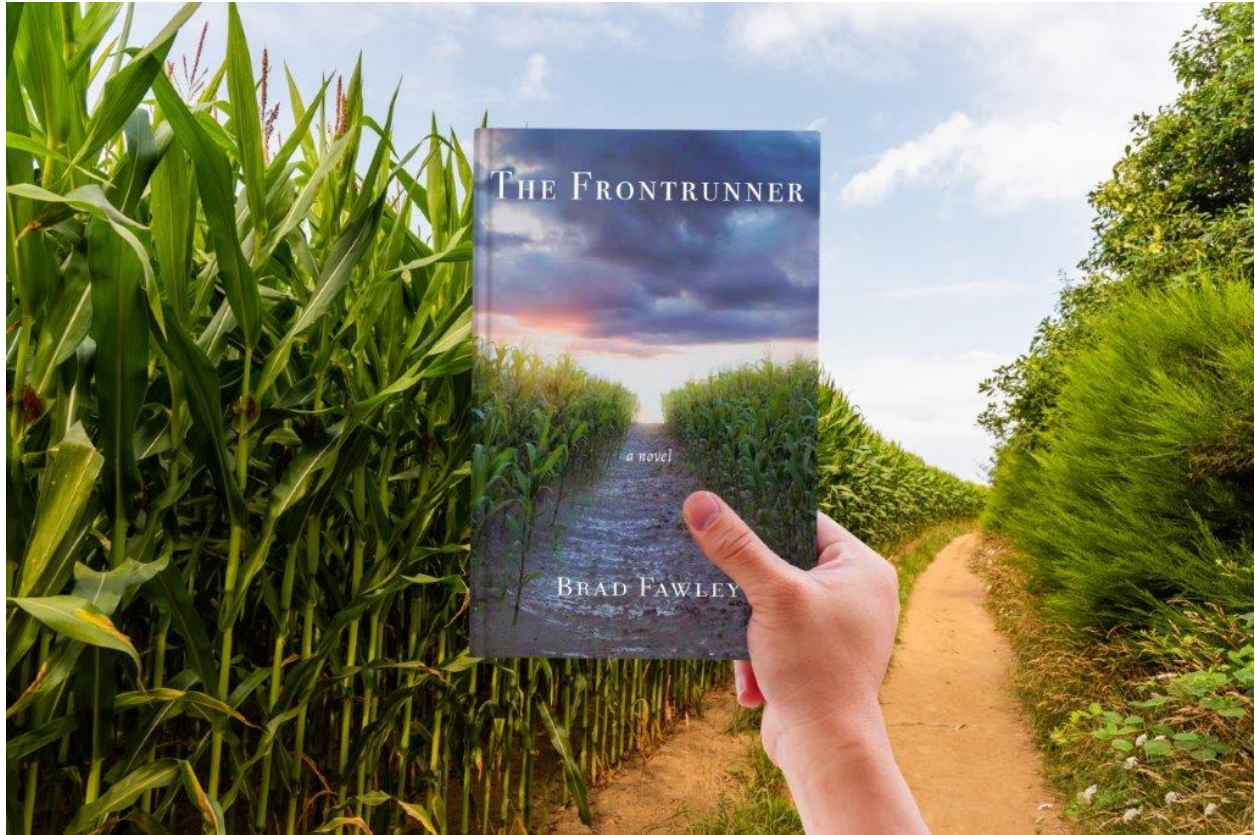
I'm right here, right now.

#

Russ turns off the engine and it ticks, spilling heat into the cool morning air. He looks up at the crystalline blue sky domed above and thinks of his long journey to this place. In the rearview, his father's eyes look back, set deep on each side of his mother's nose.

Russ smiles remembering what his father told him about the promise he made to himself in the trailer some twenty years ago, looking down into his son's tiny face. A resolution made by an underdog. A promise that no one would have bet he would make, much less be able or equipped to keep. The odds stacked against him. *Dad had the meeting. Just him facing him. He came to the line clear eyed. Certain he could not fail if he took the lead, ran from the front and never looked back.*

The proof sitting right here in an old pickup truck.



Author's website: bradfawley.com | Book Page: <https://greenwriterspress.com/book/the-frontrunner/>

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