



The Beast in the Jungle (Henry James Collection)

Henry James

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Dodo Classics brings you another classic from Henry James, 'The Beast in the Jungle'.

The Beast in the Jungle is a 1903 novella by Henry James, first published as part of the collection, The Better Sort. Almost universally considered one of James' finest short narratives, this story treats appropriately universal themes: loneliness, fate, love and death. The parable of John Marcher and his peculiar destiny has spoken to many readers who have speculated on the worth and meaning of human life. John Marcher, the protagonist, is reacquainted with May Bartram, a woman he knew ten years earlier, who remembers his odd secret: Marcher is seized with the belief that his life is to be defined by some catastrophic or spectacular event, lying in wait for him like a "beast in the jungle." May decides to buy a house in London with the money she inherited from a great aunt, and to spend her days with Marcher, curiously waiting what fate has in store for him. Marcher is a hopeless egoist, who believes that he is precluded from marrying so that he does not subject his wife to his "spectacular fate".

He takes May to the theater and invites her to an occasional dinner, but does not allow her to get close to him. As he sits idly by and allows the best years of his life to pass, he takes May down as well, until the denouement where he learns that the great misfortune of his life was to throw it away, and to ignore the love of a good woman, based upon his preposterous sense of foreboding.

Henry James, OM (15 April 1843 – 28 February 1916) was an American writer who spent most of his writing career in Britain. He is regarded as one of the key figures of 19th-century literary realism. He was the son of Henry James, Sr. and the brother of philosopher and psychologist William James and diarist Alice James.

He is best known for a number of novels showing Americans encountering Europe and Europeans. His method of writing from a character's point of view allowed him to explore issues related to consciousness and perception, and his style in later works has been compared to impressionist painting. His imaginative use of point of view, interior monologue and unreliable narrators brought a new depth to narrative fiction.

James contributed significantly to literary criticism, particularly in his insistence that writers be allowed the greatest possible freedom in presenting their view of the world. James claimed that a text must first and foremost be realistic and contain a representation of life that is recognizable to its readers. Good novels, to James, show life in action and are, most importantly, interesting.

In addition to his voluminous works of fiction he published articles and books of travel, biography, autobiography, and criticism, and wrote plays. James alternated between America and Europe for the first twenty years of his life; eventually he settled in England, becoming a British subject in 1915, one year before his death. James was nominated for the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1911, 1912, and 1916.

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