



The Gentleman: A Novel

Forrest Leo

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A funny, fantastically entertaining debut novel, in the spirit of Wodehouse and Monty Python, about a famous poet who inadvertently sells his wife to the devil--then recruits a band of adventurers to rescue her.

When Lionel Savage, a popular poet in Victorian London, learns from his butler that they're broke, he marries the beautiful Vivien Lancaster for her money, only to find that his muse has abandoned him.

Distraught and contemplating suicide, Savage accidentally conjures the Devil -- the polite "Gentleman" of the title -- who appears at one of the society parties Savage abhors. The two hit it off: the Devil talks about his home, where he employs Dante as a gardener; Savage lends him a volume of Tennyson. But when the party's over and Vivien has disappeared, the poet concludes in horror that he must have inadvertently sold his wife to the dark lord.

Newly in love with Vivian, Savage plans a rescue mission to Hell that includes Simmons, the butler; Tompkins, the bookseller; Ashley Lancaster, swashbuckling Buddhist; Will Kensington, inventor of a flying machine; and Savage's spirited kid sister, Lizzie, freshly booted from boarding school for a "dalliance." Throughout, his cousin's quibbling footnotes to the text push the story into comedy nirvana.

Lionel and his friends encounter trapdoors, duels, anarchist-fearing bobbies, the social pressure of not knowing enough about art history, and the poisonous wit of his poetical archenemy. Fresh, action-packed and very, very funny, *The Gentleman* is a giddy farce that recalls the masterful confections of P.G. Wodehouse and Hergé's beautifully detailed Tintin adventures.

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