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The awkward age : A NOVEL By: Henry James (World's Classics)

Henry James

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The Awkward Age is a novel by Henry James, first published as a serial in Harper's Weekly in 1898-1899 and then as a book later in 1899. Originally conceived as a brief, light story about the complications created in her family's social set by a young girl coming of age, the novel expanded into a general treatment of decadence and corruption in English fin de siècle life. James presents the novel almost entirely in dialogue, an experiment that adds to the immediacy of the scenes but also creates serious ambiguities about characters and their motives.Mr. and Mrs. Edward Brookenham host an effete, rather corrupt social circle. They are the parents of worthless Harold and sweet but knowledgeable Nanda (age eighteen). Mr. Longdon attends one of their social functions and is amazed at how much Nanda resembles her grandmother, his long-ago love who married another man. Vanderbank, a young civil servant with little money, admires both Mrs. Brookenham (nicknamed "Mrs. Brook") and Nanda. Mrs. Brook seems to want an affair with "Van" but he appears more interested in Nanda. Mr. Longdon promises him a dowry if he marries Nanda. Mrs. Brook is instead trying to get her daughter married to Mitchy, a very rich but rather naive member of her social circle. But Nanda urges Mitchy to marry Aggie, the supposedly sheltered step-niece of one of Mrs. Brook's friends (the Duchess). Mitchy follows the advice, then watches helplessly as Aggie kicks over the traces and starts playing around on him. Van constantly hesitates about proposing to Nanda. She finally tells him and Mitchy to be kind to her mother, then prepares to stay at Mr. Longdon's country home as a kind of surrogate daughter.

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