



The Last Man

By Mary Shelley

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The Last Man By Mary Shelley

Mary Shelley (1797-1851) was a British novelist, short story writer, dramatist, essayist, biographer and travel writer, whose gothic style and progressive ideas have made a permanent fixture in literary history. Daughter of political philosopher William Godwin and feminist Mary Wollstonecraft, Mary Shelley quickly developed ideas about female independence, sexual freedom and how to compromise in the face of nineteenth century English convention. Her 1826 novel, "The Last Man", reflects Shelley's fears about civilization and the shortcomings of human behavior. The narrator discovers a prophetic manuscript, written in 2100 by the last survivor of a twenty-first century apocalypse, which recounts how a deadly plague spread throughout Europe and the world. The scribe, Lionel Verney, describes a world that is both fantasy, and a reflection of Shelley's reality. She used this novel to scrutinize the machinations of politics and philosophy, and reflect upon pitfalls of human behavior – selfishness, brutality, pride – that she saw in the world around her.

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