



The Human Comedy, Vol. I: At the Sign of the Cat and Racket and Other Works (Noumena Classics)

Honoré de Balzac

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A painter's greatest masterpiece is inspired by a young girl of angelic beauty, but their resulting marriage only serves to reveal the deep divide between their true natures . . . a haughty young demoiselle, the last child to marry from an old noble family, is raised to be all too discerning in her choice of a future husband, with tragic consequences . . . a lifelong correspondence between two young women illustrates their different ideas about love and marriage—one valuing romance and excitement, the other marital duty—but as they begin to live out their philosophies of love and life, one thrives and prospers as a wife and mother while the other is slowly consumed by jealousy . . . These three works (At the Sign of the Cat and Racket, The Ball at Sceaux, and Letters of Two Brides) form the first volume of Balzac's monumental Comédie Humaine. Left unfinished at the time of the writer's death, it is a vast literary undertaking composed of some hundred short stories, novellas, and novels set in the shadow of the Napoleonic Wars during the Bourbon Restoration and the July Monarchy. Throughout, Balzac utilizes nineteenth century French society to examine humanity and the human experience with all its attendant virtues, vices, and peculiarities. The works in this volume are preceded by an introduction in which the author sets forth the history of the project and explains his principles of composition. Following the authoritative French Pléiade edition in the ordering of the stories, Noumena Press plans to release Balzac's complete magnum opus in a set of forty-five matching volumes, each one newly annotated, edited, and with the original illustrations from the Furne edition of 1842.

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