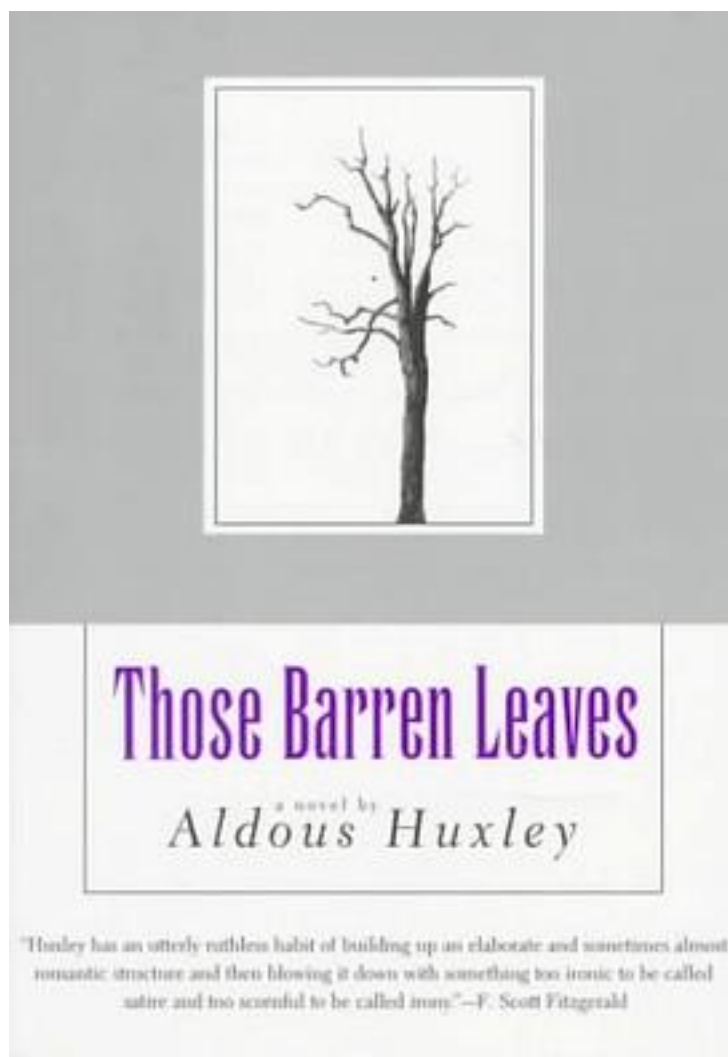


Those Barren Leaves



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著者:Aldous Huxley

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Mrs. Adwinkle, a socially ambitious and self-professed lover of art, has collected her entourage in an Italian palace, in the hopes of recapturing the glories of the Italian Renaissance. Unfortunately, her guests -- a suffering poet, a popular novelist, an aging sensualist philosopher -- fail to fulfill her expectations. Stripping the houseguests of their pretensions, Huxley reveals the superficiality of the cultural elite, those who dare to posture or feign sophistication.

作者介绍:

Mrs. Aldwinkle was proud of Italy. The fauna, the climate, (was it not the best in the world?), the music, the mandolins of Sorrento, the bells of Capri—even the stars that tremoloed with tender, operatic passion in the black night-sky—all belonged to her. She had bought them, it seemed, when she bought the palace of the Cybo Malaspina which perched—a splendid example of baroque architecture—on a hill above the little town of Vezza. Ah, Italy! The boot fitted; she had put it on.

Mrs. Aldwinkle saw herself as a princess, surrounded by a court of poets, artists, philosophers. She desired that beautiful women should swim through her great salons and gardens, glowing with love for the men of genius who might be found lounging, there. Among the beautiful she had collected, at Vezza were an Aldwinkle niece, one Irene, who preferred composing her own chemises to hemming her own sonnets but did the latter to please Mrs. Aldwinkle; Miss Mary Thriplow, novelist, who wanted to be "simple and deep" and whose efforts to please made her, at last, a hypocrite even to hypocrisy; among the men of genius, Tom Cardan, three-bottle philosopher with a face that had two sides—one glowering, the other lifted in perpetual satire, as if stretched in infancy by an enormous monocle; Lord Hovenden who, for all his 21 years, pronounced the "th" in "thingumabob" as a "v," but had a 'wonderful physique and a motor car; Mr. Calamy, 'by inclination a minor prophet, by fate an amorist, whose talent for meditation incessantly scuffled with his genius for seduction; Falx, Guild Socialist, who was amazed and deeply shocked at the characters, at the conversations of these people.

Adjacent to the Malaspina palace was a lofty tower from which one could get a bird's-eye view of the whole country by climbing 208 stone steps. One of Mrs. Aldwinkle's guests climbed these steps every day. He did it to get away from Mrs. Aldwinkle.

He was Francis Chelifer, a poet of no mean ability (as Mr Huxley's verses testify), vacationing in Italy from his duties as editor of The Rabbit Fancier's Gazette. One afternoon, while he had been swimming in the Tyrrhenian, the prow of Mrs. Aldwinkle's sailboat had knocked him unconscious. The lady had thereupon made him her guest and, convinced that by conveying him to the palace in her Ro-Ro † she had saved him from drowning, had fallen in love with him.

Brilliantly, beneath the flamboyant ceiling-piece of the banquet hall, on the terrace under the tremoloing stars, the company conversed. They spoke of man's relationship to the Absolute, of the art of Correggio, contraception, the difference between amour and amore, hypocrisy (it gangrenes gallantry), religion, cats. Little by little, they split off into pairs, these beautiful women, these men of genius. Irene became engaged to Hovenden despite his lack of dental fricatives; Calamy gave himself to Miss Thriplow and made her regret it; Mrs. Aldwinkle, rebuffed by Chelifer, went off to Monte Carlo.

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