



Legacy of the Monster

David Neades

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Legacy of the Monster is a fresh take on the modern morality play.

David Neades's *Legacy of the Monster* is a straightforward character study and morality play that examines blurred lines between good and evil, as well as issues of intolerance and bigotry.

Two gods debate the fate of two recently deceased men: Adolf Hitler, who was reincarnated as Charles and murdered his wife and children; and Mohandas Gandhi, reincarnated as Payton, a respectful and honest man who died in a car accident.

Since a soul may fall from grace three times, the gods decide to reincarnate the two in an experiment to determine whether good influences evil. Karl is born into an abusive home in Kingston, Iowa, and he has a tendency to react violently to adults abusing children.

Born into a loving family in the same city, Joseph grows up to become a violent homophobe. Emily, the sister of a murdered gay man, becomes their object of attraction, and the battleground upon which their lives intersect with life-altering consequences.

The story reads fluidly and concisely, following a seamless and logical progression from beginning to end, moving quickly like a screenplay. The story sets out to examine established stereotypes and perceptions, leaving room for interpretation without sacrificing the overall structure of the narrative.

The story devotes considerable time to character development. Nearly half of the short novel is dedicated to establishing the contrasting arcs of Karl and Joseph. While these backgrounds seem clichéd, sufficient violence is interjected into each man's story to provoke a level of ambiguity about their reincarnated identities.

"Sometimes passion burns out of control and beyond morality," surmises one of the gods, which describes the actions undertaken by the two men in their respective journeys of spiritual redemption.

On the flip side, women characters aren't developed beyond their damsel-in-distress roles. Grieving Emily engages in questionable behavior to compensate for her insecurities, and Brenda, Karl's mother, is cast as a helpless victim.

The emphasis on character development leaves the action feeling rushed, resulting in a simplicity that betrays the more complex psychological narrative at play.

Exposition dominates, with straightforward and simple narration used to move the plot along. Sequences of events are laid out logically and methodically. Criminal and investigative details are meticulously handled, from the plotting of murders to questioning by detectives and the deduction of well-placed clues.

The novel's themes are relevant to current political and social events, particularly its acts of violence against LGBTQ

people.

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NANCY POWELL (August 1, 2017)

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