



The Castle of Otranto

Horace Walpole

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The Gothic masterwork that revolutionized popular fiction

When Prince Manfred of Otranto loses his son in a strange and terrifying accident, he fears that an ancient prophecy has come to pass and his family will be stripped of its castle and lands before he can produce a new heir. Desperate to hold on to their power, he decides to divorce his wife and marry Isabella, his son's betrothed. But Isabella escapes into the gloomy passages beneath the castle, and with the help of a young peasant named Theodore, finds sanctuary in a nearby monastery. Manfred threatens to kill Theodore unless Friar Jerome turns the girl over to him. Only a shocking twist of fate can save Isabella and ensure that the Castle of Otranto falls to its rightful heir.

An immediate sensation when it was published pseudonymously in 1764, *The Castle of Otranto* is widely considered to be the first Gothic novel. Rich with romance, spine-tingling suspense, and supernatural horror, the novel profoundly influenced the works of Bram Stoker, Edgar Allan Poe, and Mary Shelley.

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