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The Holy Terrors: (Les Enfants Terribles) (New Directions Paperbook, Ndp212)

Jean Cocteau

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Cocteau's novel *Les Enfants Terribles*, which was first published in 1929, holds an undisputed place among the classics of modern fiction.

Written in a French style that long defied successful translation—Cocteau was always a poet no matter what we was writing—the book came into its own for English-language readers in 1955 when this translation was completed by Rosamund Lehmann. It is a masterpiece of the art of translation of which the *Times Literary Supplement* said: "It has the rare merit of reading as though it were an English original." Lehrmann was able to capture the essence of Cocteau's strange, necromantic imagination and to bring fully to life in English his story of a brother and sister, orphaned in adolescence, who build themselves a private world out of one shared room and their own unbridled fantasies. What started in games and laughter because for Paul and Elisabeth a drug too magical to resist. The crime which finally destroys them has the inevitability of Greek tragedy. Illustrated with twenty of Cocteau's own drawings.

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