



Who Walk in Darkness: A Novel

Chandler Brossard

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Considered by many to be the first Beat novel, this underground classic follows a clique of young bohemians from dive bar to dance hall in 1940s New York

Recently fired from his job and not yet ready to find a new one, aspiring author Blake Williams begins his evenings at the Sporting Club Bar in Greenwich Village, where he knows he will find Henry Porter. An ambitious and manipulative writer rumored to be “passing” for white, Henry has a cold-hearted charisma that is both irresistible and infuriating to his friends.

While sipping beers delivered by the bar’s surly Italian waiter, Henry and Blake discuss their plans for the night: a trip uptown to dance to the strains of a Puerto Rican orchestra, perhaps, or a prize fight at Madison Square Garden, or maybe a party in a dim and crowded apartment on Prince Street, reefer smoke clouding the air. The possibilities are endless—until the money runs out.

Originally published in 1952, *Who Walk in Darkness* was one of the most controversial novels of midcentury America. Its cast of hip young men and women—from the unforgettable antihero Henry Porter to Harry Lee, a talented but heavy-drinking novelist going through a period of grave self-doubt—were based on well-known figures of the era. Their existential crises are portrayed with an honesty that shocked the publishing establishment and helped give rise to one of the most significant literary movements in American history.

As relevant today as it was more than half a century ago, *Who Walk in Darkness* is the masterwork of an author far ahead of his time and a captivating character study whose influence can be felt in novels as wide-ranging as Jack Kerouac’s *On the Road* and Philip Roth’s *The Human Stain*.

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