

## The Victim

*S.Bellow*

Dec 22 - Dec 24, 2004

A clear forerunner of Bellows 'Herzog'. A Jewish middle-aged fellow at the end of his tether. In the summer New York may be as steamy and hot as Bangkok, and Leventahl is at loose ends during the absence of his wife. Somehow a distant acquaintance, a certain Allbee, is getting a hold on him. Pestering and playing on his guilt. At one time did not the protagonist did him a bad turn? The story is twisted and ridiculous, and the man is clearly mad. Yet he is unable to shake him off, is intrigued by him against his will and better judgement and actually consents to have him move into his apartment, a trust that Allbee makes his best to abuse. There are side-shows, a crisis with his sister-in-law out in Staten Island. A nephew being sick and eventually dying. A long overdue encounter with his brother inhibited by mutual politeness. The final chapter is an epilogue of sorts, rather surprising in content.

But it is the depiction of hot steamy New York that fascinates. The accumulation of telling details, the evocation of weather and moods. Clearly New York of the forties was not that much different from New York of the seventies. Chains on the doors. Latin superintendents. Rattling subways. Decaying garbage in the summer heat.

And in fact you do care about the fate of the protagonist. Otherwise hilarious in tone, occasionally downright absurd, a few good jokes. What else can you expect from a novel?

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