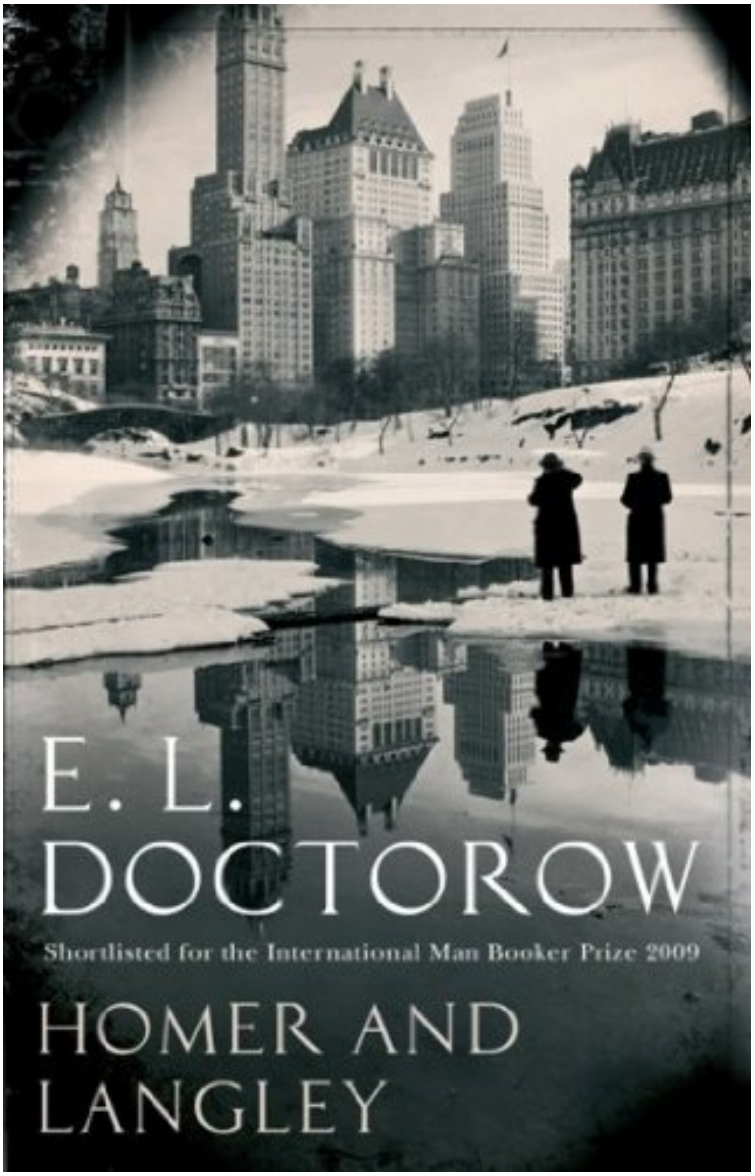
# Homer And Langley (English Edition)






*Par E. L. Doctorow*
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(Download) Homer And Langley (English Edition)

**Par E. L. Doctorow : Homer And Langley (English Edition)** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Homer And Langley (English Edition):

**Description :**

Prsentation de l'diteurBrilliant brothers Langley and Homer Collyer are born into bourgeois New York comfort in settled times, their home a fin-de-sicle mansion on upper Fifth Avenue, their future rosy. But before he is out of his teens Homer begins to lose his sight, Langley returns from the War in Europe with his lungs seared by gas, and when the death of their parents in the influenza epidemic of 1918 leaves the brothers orphaned, they seem perilously ill-equipped to deal with the new era.Around Central Park carriages give way to motor cars, Prohibition to free love, but Homer and Langley adapt: their townhouse fills and empties and fills again, with servants, lodgers, tea-dancers and gangsters. They are mocked and spied on, embraced by hippies and besieged by bailiffs, but as the world turns ever more incomprehensible Homer and

Langley hold fast to their principles of self-reliance, courage, kindness and love, and they endure.ExtraitIm Homer, the blind brother, I didn't lose my sight all at once, it was like the movies, a slow fade-out. When I was told what was happening I was interested to measure it, I was in my late teens then, keen on everything. What I did this particular winter was to stand back from the lake in Central Park where they did all their ice skating and see what I could see and couldnt see as a day-by-day thing. The houses over to Central Park West went first, they got darker as if dissolving into the dark sky until I couldnt make them out, and then the trees began to lose their shape, and then finally, this was toward the end of the season, maybe it was late February of that very cold winter, and all I could see were these phantom shapes of the ice skaters floating past me on a field of ice, and then the white ice, that last light, went gray and then altogether black, and then all my sight was gone though I could hear clearly the scoot scut of the blades on the ice, a very satisfying sound, a soft sound though full of intention, a deeper tone than youd expect made by the skate blades, perhaps for having sounded the resonant basso of the water under the ice, scoot scut, scoot scut. I would hear someone going someplace fast, and then the twirl into that long scurratch as the skater spun to a stop, and then I laughed too for the joy of that ability of the skater to come to a dead stop all at once, going along scoot scut and then scurratch.Of course I was sad too, but it was lucky this happened to me when I was so young with no idea of being disabled, moving on in my mind to my other capacities like my exceptional hearing, which I trained to a degree of alertness that was almost visual. Langley said I had ears like a bat and he tested that proposition, as he liked to subject everything to review. I was of course familiar with our house, all four storeys of it, and could navigate every room and up and down the stairs without hesitation, knowing where everything was by memory. I knew the drawing room, our fathers study, our mothers sitting room, the dining room with its eighteen chairs and the walnut long table, the butlers pantry and the kitchens, the parlor, the bedrooms, I remembered how many of the carpeted steps there were between the floors, I didnt even have to hold on to the railing, you could watch me and if you didnt know me you wouldnt know my eyes were dead. But Langley said the true test of my hearing capacity would come when no memory was involved, so he shifted things around a bit, taking me into the music room, where he had earlier rolled the grand piano around to a different corner and had put the Japanese folding screen with the herons in water in the middle of the room, and for good measure twirled me around in the doorway till my entire sense of direction was obliterated, and I had to laugh because dont you know I walked right around that folding screen and sat down at the piano exactly as if I knew where he had put it, as I did, I could hear surfaces, and I said to Langley, A blind bat whistles, thats the way he does it, but I didnt have to whistle, did I? He was truly amazed, Langley is the older of us by two years, and I have always liked to impress him in whatever way I could. At this time he was already a college student in his first year at Columbia. How do you do it? he said. This is of scientific interest. I said: I feel shapes as they push the air away, or I feel heat from things, you can turn me around till Im dizzy, but I can still tell where the air is filled in with something solid.And there were other compensations as well. I had tutors for my education and then, of course, I was comfortably enrolled in the West End Conservatory of Music, where I had been a student since my sighted years. My skill as a pianist rendered my blindness acceptable in the social world. As I grew older, people spoke of my gallantry, and the girls certainly liked me. In our New York society of those days, one parental means of ensuring a daughters marriage to a suitable husband was to warn her, from birth it seemed, to watch out for men and to not quite trust them. This was well before the Great War, when the days of the flapper and women smoking cigarettes and drinking martinis were in the unimaginable future. So a handsome young blind man of reputable family was particularly attractive insofar as he could not, even in secret, do anything untoward. His helplessness was very alluring to a woman trained since birth, herself, to be helpless. It made her feel strong, in command, it could bring out her sense of pity, it could do lots of things, my sightlessness. She could express herself, give herself to her pent-up feelings, as she could not safely do with a normal fellow. I dressed very well, I could shave myself with my straight razor and never nick the skin, and at my instructions the barber kept my hair a bit longer than it was being worn in that day, so that when at some gathering I sat at the piano and played the Appassionata, for instance, or the Revolutionary tude, my hair would fly aboutI had a lot of it then, a good thick mop of brown hair parted in the middle and coming down each side of my head. Franz Lisztian hair is what it was. And if we were sitting on a sofa and no one was about, a young lady friend might kiss me, touch my face and kiss me, and I, being blind, could put my hand on her thigh without seeming to have that intention, and so she might gasp, but would leave it there for fear of embarrassing me.I should say that as a man who never married I have been particularly sensitive to women, very appreciative in fact, and let me admit right off that I had a sexual experience or two in this time

I am describing, this time of my blind city life as a handsome young fellow not yet twenty, when our parents were still alive and had many soirees, and entertained the very best people of the city in our home, a monumental tribute to late Victorian design that would be bypassed by modernityas for instance the interior fashions of our family friend Elsie de Wolfe, who, after my father wouldnt allow her to revamp the entire place, never again set foot in our manseand which I always found comfortable, solid, dependable, with its big upholstered pieces, or tufted Empire side chairs, or heavy drapes over the curtains on the ceiling-to-floor windows, or medieval tapestries hung from gilt poles, and bow-windowed bookcases, thick Persian rugs, and standing lamps with tasseled shades and matching chinois amphora that you could almost step intoit was all very eclectic, being a record of sorts of our parents travels, and cluttered it might have seemed to outsiders, but it seemed normal and right to us and it was our legacy, Langleys and mine, this sense of living with things assertively inanimate, and having to walk around them.Our parents went abroad for a month every year, sailing away on one ocean liner or another, waving from the railing of some great three- or four-stackerthe Carmania, the Mauretania, the Neuresthaniaas she pulled away from the dock. They looked so small up there, as small as I felt with my hand in the tight hand of my nurse, and the ships horn sounding in my feet and the gulls flying about as if in celebration, as if something really fine was going on. I used to wonder what would happen to my fathers patients while he was away, for he was a prominent womens doctor and I worried that they would get sick and maybe die, waiting for him to return.Even as my parents were running around England, or Italy, or Greece or Egypt, or wherever they were, their return was presaged by things in crates delivered to the back door by the Railway Express Company: ancient Islamic tiles, or rare books, or a marble water fountain, or busts of Romans with no noses or missing ears, or antique armoires with their fecal smell.And then, finally, with great huzzahs, there, after Id almost forgotten all about them, would be Mother and Father themselves stepping out of the cab in front of our house, and carrying in their arms such treasures as hadnt preceded them. They were not entirely thoughtless parents for there were always presents for Langley and me, things to really excite a boy, like an antique toy train that was too delicate to play with, or a gold-plated hairbrush.we did some traveling as well, my brother and I, being habitual summer campers in our youth. Our camp was in Maine on a coastal plateau of woods and fields, a good place to appreciate Nature. The more our country lay under blankets of factory smoke, the more the coal came rattling up from the mines, the more our massive locomotives thundered through the night and big harvesting machines sliced their way through the crops and black cars filled the streets, blowing their horns and crashing into one another, the more the American people worshipped Nature. Most often this devotion was relegated to the children. So there we were living in primitive cabins in Maine, boys and girls in adjoining camps.I was in the fullness of my senses, then. My legs were limber and my arms strong and sinewy and I could see the world with all the unconscious happiness of a fourteen-year-old. Not far from the camps, on a bluff overlooking the ocean, was a meadow profuse with wild blackberry bushes, and one afternoon numbers of us were there plucking the ripe blackberries and biting into their wet warm pericarped pulp, competing with flights of bumblebees, as we raced them from one bush to another and stuffed the berries into our mouths till the juice dripped down our chins. The air was thickened with floating communities of gnats that rose and fell, expanding and contracting, like astronomical events. And the sun shone on our heads, and behind us at the foot of the cliff were the black and silver rocks patiently taking and breaking apart the waves and, beyond that, the glittering sea radiant with shards of sun, and all of it in my clear eyes as I turned in triumph to this one girl with whom I had bonded, Eleanor was her name, and stretched my arms wide and bowed as the magician who had made it for her. And somehow when the others moved on we lingered conspiratorially behind a thicket of blackberry bushes until the sound of them was gone and we were there unattended, having broken camp rules, and so self-defined as more grown-up than anyone believed, though we grew reflective walking back, holding hands without even realizing it.Is there any love purer than this, when you dont even know what it is? She had a moist warm hand, and dark eyes and hair, this Eleanor. Neither of us was embarrassed by the fact that she was a good head taller than me. I remember her lisp, the way her tongue tip was caught between her teeth when she pronounced her Ss. She was not one of the socially self-assured ones who abounded in the girls side of the camp. She wore the uniform green shirt and gray bloomers they all wore but she was something of a loner, and in my eyes she seemed distinguished, fetching, thoughtful, and in some state of longing analogous to my ownfor what, neither of us could have said. This was my first declared affection and so serious that even Langley, who lived in another cabin with his age group, did not tease me. I wove a lanyard for Eleanor and cut and stitched a model birch bark canoe for her.Oh, but this is a sad tale I have wandered into. The boys and girls camps

were separated by a stand of woods through the length of which was a tall wire fence of the kind to keep animals out and so it was a major escapade at night for the older boys to climb over or dig under this fence and challenge authority by running through the girls camp shouting and dodging pursuing counselors, and banging on cabin doors so as to elicit delighted shrieks. But Eleanor and I breached the fence to meet after everyone was asleep and to wander about under the stars and talk philosophically about life. And thats how it happened that on one warm August night we found ourselves down the road a mile or so at a lodge dedicated like our camp to getting back to nature. But it was for adults, for parents. Attracted by a flickering light in the otherwise dark manse we tiptoed up on the porch and through the window saw a shocking thing, what in later time would be called a blue movie. Its licentious demonstration was taking place on a portable screen something like a large window shade. In the reflected light we could see in silhouette an audience of attentive adults leaning forward in their chairs and sofas. I remember the sound of the projector not that far from the open window, the whirring sound it made, like a field of cicadas. The woman on the screen, naked but for a pair of high-heeled shoes, lay on her back on a table and the man, also naked, stood holding her legs under the knees so that she was proffered to receive his organ, of which he made sure first to exhibit its enormity to his audience. He was an ugly bald skinny man with just that one disproportionate feature to distinguish him. As he shoved himself again and again into the woman she was given to pulling her hair while her legs kicked up convulsively, each shoe tip jabbing the air in rapid succession, as if shed been jolted with an electric current. I was rapthorrified, but also thrilled to a level of unnatural feeling that was akin to nausea. I do not wonder now that with the invention of moving pictures, their pornographic possibilities were immediately understood.Did my friend gasp, did she tug at my hand to pull me away? If she did I would not have noticed. But when I was sufficiently recovered in my senses I turned and she was nowhere to be seen. I ran back the way we had come, and on this moonlit night, a night as black and white as the film, I could see no one on the road ahead of me. The summer had some weeks to go but my friend Eleanor never spoke to me again, or even looked my way, a decision I accepted as an accomplice, by gender, of the male performer. She was right to run from me, for on that night romance was unseated in my mind and in its place was enthroned the idea that sex was something you did to them, to all of them including poor shy tall Eleanor. It is a puerile illusion, hardly worthy of a fourteen-year-old mind, yet it persists among grown men even as they meet women more avidly copulative than they.From the Hardcover edition.Revue de presseCunningly panoramicDoctorow has packed this tale with episodes of existential wonder that cpature the brothers in all their fascinating wackiness. ElleDoctorow paints on a sweeping historical canvas, imagining the Collyer brothers as witness to the aspirations and transgressions of 20th century America; yet this books most powerfully moving moments are the quiet ones, when the brothers relish a breath of cool morning air, and each others tragically exclusive company. O MagazineDoctorow works his usual magic in bringing history to life and larding it with disturbing implicationsAs with much of Doctorows masterful fiction, Homer Langley turns the American dream on its ear, offering us a glimpse of the dark side of our nationaland personaleccentricities. BookPageFollowing the panoramic scope of The March, Doctorow creates a microcosmic and mythic tale of compulsion, alienation, and dark metamorphosis inspired by the famously eccentric Collyer brothers of New York City Doctorow has Homer, who is blind, narrate with deadpan humor and spellbinding precisionOver the decades, people come and golovers, a gangster, a jazz musician, a flock of hippies, but finally Homer and Langley are irrevocably alone, prisoners in their fortress of rubbish, trapped in their warped form of brotherly love. Wizardly Doctorow presents an ingenious, haunting odyssey that unfolds within a labyrinth built out of the detritus of war and excess.Booklist starred review A sweeping masterpiece about the infamous New York hermits, the Collyer brothers. Occasionally, outsiders wander through the house, exposing it as a living museum of artifacts, Americana, obscurity and simmering madness. Doctorows achievement is in not undermining the dignity of two brothers who share a lush landscape built on imagination and incapacities. Its a feat of distillation, vision and sympathy.Publishers Weekly starred review From the Hardcover edition.