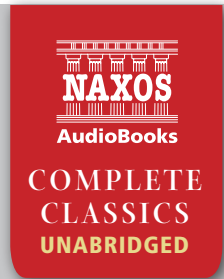




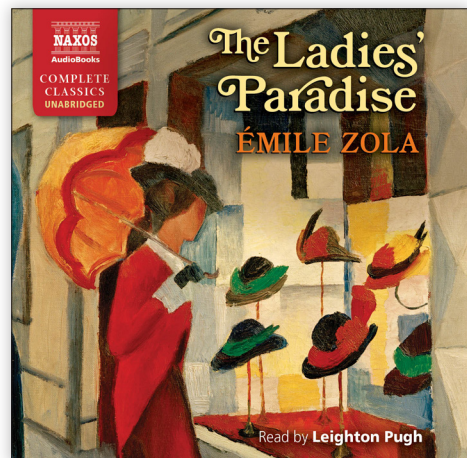
The Ladies' Paradise

ÉMILE ZOLA



Read by
Leighton Pugh

Zola's *The Ladies' Paradise* (*Au Bonheur des Dames*, 1883) plays out in a colossal and opulent Parisian department store of the same name. Its owner, Octave Mouret, builds his innovative, upmarket women's fashion empire at the expense of the city's smaller, traditional shops. A self-declared manipulator of women, Mouret not only plays on his female customers' personal insecurities and social aspirations to keep his takings high, but also exploits his mostly female staff who work long hours in harsh conditions. After a difficult start, one young recruit, Denise Baudu, ends up giving Mouret much more than he bargained for.



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Leighton Pugh trained at LAMDA, after studying Modern Languages at Queen's College, Oxford. Radio work includes the plays *Murder by the Book* and *Scenes from Provincial Life* for BBC Radio 4 and the voice of Heinrich von Kleist in the BBC Radio 3 documentary *The Tragical Adventure of Heinrich von Kleist*. Leighton has been in five productions for the National Theatre, most recently *The Lehman Trilogy* (NT Live 2018–19, New York, West End). For Naxos AudioBooks he has recorded, among other things, *The Diary of Samuel Pepys*, Zola's *Germinal*, *Nana* and *L'Assommoir*, and featured in Walton's *The Compleat Angler*.

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Translated by Ernest Alfred Vizetelly; updated by Leighton Pugh

Produced by Neil Rosser

Edited and mastered by Ross Burman

Executive Producer: Genevieve Helsby

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