



Rules of Civility: A Novel

By Amor Towles

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The New York Times bestselling novel that "enchants on first reading and only improves on the second" (*The Philadelphia Inquirer*)

A Gentleman in Moscow – the highly anticipated new novel from Amor Towles – **is now available from Viking**

This “wonderful” (*Chicago Tribune*) and “sharply stylish” (*Boston Globe*) debut novel presents the story of a young woman whose life is on the brink of transformation. On the last night of 1937, twenty-five-year-old Katey Kontent is in a second-rate Greenwich Village jazz bar when Tinker Grey, a handsome banker, happens to sit down at the neighboring table. This chance encounter and its startling consequences propel Katey on a year-long journey into the upper echelons of New York society—where she will have little to rely upon other than a bracing wit and her own brand of cool nerve. With its sparkling depiction of New York’s social strata, its intricate imagery and themes, and its immensely appealing characters, *Rules of Civility* won the hearts of readers and critics alike.

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Rules of Civility: A Novel By Amor Towles Bibliography

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

Amazon Best Books of the Month, August 2011 Set during the hazy, enchanting, and martini-filled world of New York City circa 1938, *Rules of Civility* follows three friends--Katey, Eve, and Tinker--from their chance meeting at a jazz club on New Year's Eve through a year of enlightening and occasionally tragic adventures. Tinker orbits in the world of the wealthy; Katey and Eve stretch their few dollars out each evening on the town. While all three are complex characters, Katey is the story's shining star. She is a fully realized heroine, unique in her strong sense of self amidst her life's continual fluctuations. Towles' writing also paints an inviting picture of New York City, without forgetting its sharp edges. Reminiscent of Fitzgerald, *Rules of Civility* is full of delicious sentences you can sit back and savor (most appropriately with a martini or two). --*Caley Anderson*

A sophisticated and entertaining debut novel about an irresistible young woman with an uncommon sense of purpose.

Set in New York City in 1938, *Rules of Civility* tells the story of a watershed year in the life of an uncompromising twenty-five-year-old named Katey Kontent. Armed with little more than a formidable intellect, a bracing wit, and her own brand of cool nerve, Katey embarks on a journey from a Wall Street secretarial pool through the upper echelons of New York society in search of a brighter future.

The story opens on New Year's Eve in a Greenwich Village jazz bar, where Katey and her boardinghouse roommate Eve happen to meet Tinker Grey, a handsome banker with royal blue eyes and a ready smile. This chance encounter and its startling consequences cast Katey off her current course, but end up providing her unexpected access to the rarified offices of Conde Nast and a glittering new social circle. Befriended in turn by a shy, principled multimillionaire, an Upper East Side ne'er-do-well, and a single-minded widow who is ahead of her times, Katey has the chance to experience first hand the poise secured by wealth and station, but also the aspirations, envy, disloyalty, and desires that reside just below the surface. Even as she waits for circumstances to bring Tinker back into her orbit, she will learn how individual choices become the means by which life crystallizes loss.

Elegant and captivating, *Rules of Civility* turns a Jamesian eye on how spur of the moment decisions define life for decades to come. A love letter to a great American city at the end of the Depression, readers will quickly fall under its spell of crisp writing, sparkling atmosphere and breathtaking revelations, as Towles evokes the ghosts of Fitzgerald, Capote, and McCarthy.

Amor Towles's *Rules of Civility* Playlist

You can listen to the playlist here.

While jazz is not central to the narrative of *Rules of Civility*, the music and its various formulations are an important component of the book's backdrop.

On the night of January 16, 1938, Benny Goodman assembled a bi-racial orchestra to play jazz to a sold-out Carnegie Hall--the first jazz performance in the hallowed hall and one which is now famous for bringing jazz (and black performers) to a wider audience. I am not a jazz historian, but for me the concert marks something of a turning point in jazz itself--from the big-band, swing-era sound that dominated the 1930s (and which the

orchestra emphasized on stage that night) towards the more introspective, smaller group styles that would soon spawn bebop and its smoky aftereffects (ultimately reaching an apogee with Miles Davis's *Kind of Blue* in 1957). For it is also in 1938 that Coleman Hawkins recorded the bebop antecedent "Body & Soul" and Minton's Playhouse, one of the key bebop gathering spots, opened in Harlem. By 1939, Blue Note Records was recording, and Dizzy Gillespie, Charlie Parker and Thelonious Monk were all congregating in New York City. From 1935-1939, Goodman himself was stepping out of the big-band limelight to make more intimate improvisational recordings with a quartet including Gene Krupa and Lionel Hampton.

My assertion of this as a turning point (like most such assertions) is rough, inexact and misleading, but it helps give shape to an evolution and bring into relief two ends of a jazz spectrum. On the big-band front, the power of the music naturally springs from the collective and orchestration. In numbers like "Sing, Sing, Sing," the carefully layered, precisely timed waning and waxing of rhythm and instrumentation towards moments of unified musical ecstasy simply demand that the audience collaborate through dance, cheers, and other outward expressions of joy. While in the smaller groups of bebop and beyond, the expressive power springs more from the soloist and his personal exploration of the music, his instrument, and his emotional state at that precise moment in time. This inevitably inspires in the listener a cigarette, a scotch, and a little more introspection. In a sense, the two ends of this jazz spectrum are like the public/private paradox of Walker Evans's subway photographs (and of life in the metropolis itself.)

If you are interested, I have created an playlist of music from roughly 1935-1945 that spans this transition. The playlist is not meant to be comprehensive or exact. Among other items, it includes swinging live performances from Goodman's Carnegie Hall Concert as well as examples of his smaller group work; there are precursors to bebop like Coleman Hawkins and some early Charlie Parker. As a strange historical footnote, there was a strike in 1942–1944 by the American Federation of Musicians, during which no official recordings were made. As such, this period at the onset of bebop was virtually undocumented and thus the records of 1945 reflect something of a culmination of early bebop rather than its starting point. The playlist also reflects the influence of the great American songbook giants (Cole Porter, Duke Ellington, Irving Berlin, Rodgers & Hart, the Gershwins), many of whom were at the height of their powers in the 1930s. --Amor Towles

Listen to the playlist

Review

Praise for *Rules of Civility*

"An irresistible and astonishingly assured debut about working class-women and world-weary WASPs in 1930s New York...in the crisp, noirish prose of the era, Towles portrays complex relationships in a city that is at once melting pot and elitist enclave – and a thoroughly modern heroine who fearlessly claims her place in it." —*O, the Oprah Magazine*

"With this snappy period piece, Towles resurrects the cinematic black-and-white Manhattan of the golden age...[his] characters are youthful Americans in tricky times, trying to create authentic lives." —*The New York Times Book Review*

“This very good first novel about striving and surviving in Depression-era Manhattan deserves attention...The great strength of *Rules of Civility* is in the sharp, sure-handed evocation of Manhattan in the late ‘30s.” —*Wall Street Journal*

“Put on some Billie Holiday, pour a dry martini and immerse yourself in the eventful life of Katey Kontent...[Towles] clearly knows the privileged world he’s writing about, as well as the vivid, sometimes reckless characters who inhabit it.” —*People*

“[A] wonderful debut novel...Towles [plays] with some of the great themes of love and class, luck and fated encounters that animated Wharton’s novels.” —*The Chicago Tribune*

“Glittering...filled with snappy dialogue, sharp observations and an array of terrifically drawn characters...Towles writes with grace and verve about the mores and manners of a society on the cusp of radical change.” —NPR.org

“Glamorous Gotham in one to relish...a book that enchants on first reading and only improves on the second.” —*The Philadelphia Inquirer*

About the Author

Amor Towles has written fiction which has appeared in The Paris Review. This is his first novel. He lives in New York.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Linda Amos:

This *Rules of Civility: A Novel* are usually reliable for you who want to certainly be a successful person, why. The key reason why of this *Rules of Civility: A Novel* can be one of several great books you must have is definitely giving you more than just simple examining food but feed you with information that perhaps will shock your earlier knowledge. This book is handy, you can bring it just about everywhere and whenever your conditions throughout the e-book and printed versions. Beside that this *Rules of Civility: A Novel* giving you an enormous of experience such as rich vocabulary, giving you test of critical thinking that we know it useful in your day activity. So , let's have it appreciate reading.

Bryan Jones:

Reading can called head hangout, why? Because if you are reading a book specifically book entitled Rules of Civility: A Novel your head will drift away trough every dimension, wandering in each and every aspect that maybe mysterious for but surely might be your mind friends. Imaging just about every word written in a publication then become one form conclusion and explanation this maybe you never get just before. The Rules of Civility: A Novel giving you one more experience more than blown away your mind but also giving you useful information for your better life in this particular era. So now let us present to you the relaxing pattern the following is your body and mind are going to be pleased when you are finished reading through it, like winning a. Do you want to try this extraordinary wasting spare time activity?

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Karen Ofarrell:

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