



The Man Who Had All the Luck

Arthur Miller , Christopher Bigsby (Introduction)

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The forgotten classic that launched the career of one of America's greatest playwrightsIt took more than fifty years for *The Man Who Had All the Luck* to be appreciated for what it truly is: the first stirrings of a genius that would go on to blossom in such masterpieces as *Death of a Salesman* and *The Crucible*. Infused with the moral malaise of the Depression era, the parable-like drama centers on David Beeves, a man whose every obstacle to personal and professional success seems to crumble before him with ease. But his good fortune merely serves to reveal the tragedies of those around him in greater relief, offering what David believes to be evidence of a capricious god or, worse, a godless, arbitrary universe. David's journey toward fulfillment becomes a nightmare of existential doubts, a desperate grasp for reason in a cosmos seemingly devoid of any, and a struggle that will take him to the brink of madness. This Penguin Classics edition includes an introduction by Christopher Bigsby.

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The Man Who Had All the Luck Details

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From Reader Review The Man Who Had All the Luck for online ebook

John Wiswell says

One of Miller's earlier and forgotten plays shows much more care than the average first try. It's pungent with sorrow, but still freckled with humor and humility to endear us to the characters as they build to a series of major emotional conflicts. These characters are earthly and fit into the American landscape much better than the "average" characters and stereotypes of comparable plays. The central figure is David, the man who had more luck than he wanted. Around him we meet his brother Amos (a baseball player bound for glory), the father who always overlooked David, the loving fiancée who will be baffled by David's changes, the German engineer who is actually better at David's job than David is, and other characters who swirl through a story that is about David, but that isn't so simpleminded as to only be about him. You'll watch David unable to share his luck with his family and friends no matter how much he'd like, until his own irrational sense of guilt turns the luck into a curse. In a way David is every fortunate person's sense of sympathy for those they rise above, though where this is the source of much charity and philanthropy in modern society, Miller is preoccupied by self-destruction and seeing how far the luck will go. This leaves the play without redemption, in from a plot sense, without resolution, which may make it unsatisfying to some readers and audiences. Despite its shortsightedness, it's an interesting tale to read or see performed in a day when the media paints every wealthy person as selfish and shallow.

Megan says

not my favourite Miller play because I'm a sucker for tragedy, but still enjoyed the portrayal of David's imposter's syndrome, the shame of success and the indiscriminate hand of fate.

Travis says

I love Arthur Miller. No one does it better. There are so many levels to everything he writes. R.I.P. Arthur.

Ali says

David Beeves is a young Midwestern Automobile mechanic who discovers he is blessed with what appears to be almost supernatural good fortune that allows him to overcome every seemingly insurmountable obstacle that crosses his path while those around him fall in defeat, leaving him to wonder if and when his luck will change and he too will be forced to deal with life's tragedies, until he eventually realizes that his good heart, hard work, and quick thought have been responsible for his success far more than luck.

Razi says

Arthur Miller's earliest work and it is simply charming. A tragedy in reverse where fates conspire to destroy

an honest person but fail while people around him go on living normally, meeting tragic ends! I loved this little piece and the concept of the jelly fish on water: floating not causing tides but going along and sometime living on to grab another tide while at others to end up on the beach only to be killed and dried stiff by the sun. This is 'Death of a Salesman' with a positive twist. When everybody else was busy trying to write the Great American Tragedy, Miller chose to make his start off the beaten path by writing this play which is not exactly a comedy but certainly not a tragedy either. Everybody else suffered and stayed positive, while David Beeves, our protagonist suffered from the 'European Disease' of existentialist angst, expecting and hoping for a disaster every minute while good things kept on happening to him. Excellent idea, great play.

R.K. Byers says

think I'd have preferred what I know of the alternate ending.

Morgan says

The first Arthur Miller play I read and maybe not the best choice. Only read this one first because it appears in my edition of his collected plays first. I didn't really care for this one as much. Some of the characters were interesting, but I didn't like the plot. A lot of this was about cars and baseball. While this has an Americana feel to it, you can tell this is an early Miller play. I have a feeling I'll like his other plays a lot better. I will say Miller is a good writer.

Scripturiently Swag The Dragon-Hearted says

Yaws. I thought the minks were metaphors for something else throughout the whole play until the end HAW!

I also thought this was supposed to be an "upbeat" Arthur Miller play. It wasn't, but I could forgive that because it was an Arthur Miller play. Had it been written by any other playwright, I would have been let down :)

It had echoes of Death of a Salesman in it, but it read like an essay (in a way). Each instance was its own part. In other words, in act 1, I found myself thinking, "thesis." In act 2, I thought, "body paragraph #1." Act 3 was "body paragraph #2," and so on. Maybe I'm just too institutionalized to let go of this essay-istic conception I had of Miller's play. I don't know. I did like each instance though, and how they all built on each other.

This play definitely seemed more preachy than Death of a Salesman, but I give Miller a lot of credit. An artist has to find the balance between preaching and being impossibly bland and pointless. This was one of Miller's earlier plays (or so I understand), so I'm super-excited that he even had a thematic viewpoint to begin with :)

One last thing: I loved the hypocrisy of Dave's wife, Hester. In the last act, she was ready to move out because of the bad financial circumstances that loomed on the horizon. She thought Dave was crazy. And he might very well have been so. However, as the failure was averted, Hester did a 180 and actively decided to stay and enjoy her good fortune. She even encouraged David to come up the stairs with her to see their new

child or whatever. And her nature was established even earlier in the play: after Dave had another one of his trademark successes, Hester said something like, "I wish you could always act this way!" (Which could be interpreted as her wishing he would always be successful) What's even more interesting is that Miller didn't explore this superficiality as much as he could have. Sure, it might have muddied the plot and the thematic message of the play, but Hester's character was really fascinating.

Anyway, I liked it. It was "upbeat" and relateable, but more could have been done with Hester's character.

Jeremiah Blackman says

This was a pretty good play, but very clearly one of Miller's earlier pieces.

Ivonne Rovira says

This must be Arthur Miller's least-known play; I'm pretty knowledgeable about literature and theater, and I had never heard of *The Man Who Had All the Luck*.

It's a rare happy ending for Miller, and, while this is no *Death of a Salesman* nor *The Crucible*, I enjoyed it pretty much. The play is a treatise on free will versus fate: Do we make our own luck through hard work and perspicacity, or is the way that one character says: "A man is a jellyfish. The tide goes in and the tide goes out. About what happens to him, a man has very little to say." ?Definitely worth a listen, and, as always, L.A. Theatre Works' capable actors do a fabulous job.

Jose says

Terrific, good early stuff

Lalit Jindal says

How much of it is luck and blind chance and how much of it is your actions?

Balaram Briant says

I didn't buy *The Penguin Arthur Miller: Collected Plays* with the intention of reading the book play by play, in chronological order. I thought it would sit, and I'd read *Death of a Salesman*, and occasionally I might sample the others. But after reading the introduction I was inspired; I continued right on to the first play, which was this one. A bit of research reveals that this wasn't Miller's first play *written*, but it was his first one on Broadway. It didn't do well, receiving poor reviews and closing after four shows.

I liked it a lot. I *can* conceive of the dialogue being better in some places, (a little more oblique, maybe) but altogether it was great. Miller maintained suspense by encouraging us, the audience, to share David's

conviction that something tragic was set to come upon him any minute. We think, along with David, that his lucky streak is bound to end badly sooner or later. The story keeps us following the characters wants and ambitions while also providing ample thematic development. At times it's even comic, while still feeling like a tragedy, and the premise's final affirmation is hopeful despite itself. And I always hold hope as the best way to end a story.

Steven says

Starts off slow but grows in existential insight and tension as it progresses.

Katelyn says

This story means a lot to me. I believe the eternal views of the internal conflict emphasizes the strength of a person's brain. It's human nature to question and to wonder and to get your mind stuck on something - more often than not i see it in people close to me. Even though this book is just an example, it's really also very true to a human characteristic that's found often.
