



## The Midwich Cuckoos (RosettaBooks into Film)

*John Wyndham*

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John Wyndham's 1957 book *The Midwich Cuckoos* is better known by the more sensational title of its two film adaptations, *Village of the Damned*. The story begins with Richard and Janet Gayford who have spent the night of September 26 in London, returning to their home in Midwich the following day. Then, in ways that are difficult to pin down, the village seems changed--not quite the same place that it was before. The nightmare that descends on Midwich has dire implications for the rest of the world; whatever dwells there is sowing the seeds for a master race of ruthless and inhumane creatures who are bent on nothing less than absolute and total domination.

In Wyndham's classically elegant, calm style, this novel explores the arrival of a collective intelligence on earth that threatens to eliminate mankind. The quiet, eerie changes that befall Midwich manifest in strange ways; on the surface, everything seems normal, but scratch a little deeper and there is a clear sense of dread. After the night of September 26, every woman of childbearing age is pregnant, all to give birth at the same time, to children who are all alike--their eyes mesmerizing, void of emotion. These children are innately possessed with unimaginable mental powers and a formidable intelligence. It is these children who develop into an unstoppable force, capable of anything and far out-reaching other humans in cunning.

The *London Evening Standard* called *The Midwich Cuckoos* "humane and urbane with a lightly sophisticated wit putting the ideas into shape." Wyndham skillfully heightens the terror by making his narrative so rational and matter-of-fact. In such a nuclear and technological age, Wyndham's story is rich in irony in that it is set in the picturesque, bucolic English Village and the "enemy", the threat, are seeming cherubim.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

John Wyndham Parkes Lucas Beynon Harris (1903-69) was a British novelist who wrote under the name John Wyndham, although he had at least seven other pen-names. Wyndham began publishing stories in the early 1930s, often in American magazines, but did not really find his stride as a writer as John Wyndham until he returned from serving for World War II.

The War changed the world drastically and it was now in the grips of nuclear apocalypse, a scenario that both terrified and fascinated Wyndham. His 1951 novel, *The Day of the Triffids* transformed him as a writer. While Wyndham's approach to writing is best classified as fantasy and science fiction, his work is often said to transcend both genre and category.

Following *The Day of the Triffids* in 1951, Wyndham wrote a series of remarkable novels that include *The Chrysalids* (1955) and *The Midwich Cuckoos* (1957), as well as several short story collections. As noted, Wyndham did write under several of his other pseudonyms, and several of these titles were released after his death in March of 1969. There were two film versions, both titled *Village of the Damned*, made from *The Midwich Cuckoos*.

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