



The Visitor

Maeve Brennan

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The current revival of the work of Maeve Brennan, who died in obscurity in 1993, has won her a reputation as a twentieth-century classic—one of the best Irish writers of stories since Joyce.

Now, unexpectedly, Brennan's oeuvre is immeasurably deepened and broadened by a miraculous literary discovery—a short novel written in the mid-1940s, but till now unknown and unpublished. Recently found in a university archive, it is a story of Dublin and of the unkind, ungenerous, emotionally unreachable side of the Irish temper.

The Visitor is the haunting tale of Anastasia King, who, at the age of twenty-two, returns to her grandmother's house—the very house where she grew up—after six long years away. She has been in Paris, comforting her disgraced and dying mother, the runaway from a disastrous marriage to Anastasia's late father, the grandmother's only son. "It's a pity she sent for you," the grandmother says, smiling with anger. "And a pity you went after her. It broke your father's heart." Anastasia pays dearly for the choice she made, a choice that now costs her her own strong sense of family and makes her an exile—a visitor—in the place she once called home.

Penelope Fitzgerald, writing of Brennan's story "The Springs of Affection," said that it carries an "electric charge of resentment and quiet satisfaction in revenge that chills you right through." The same can be said of the *The Visitor*, Maeve Brennan's "lost" novel—the early work of an incomparable master.

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