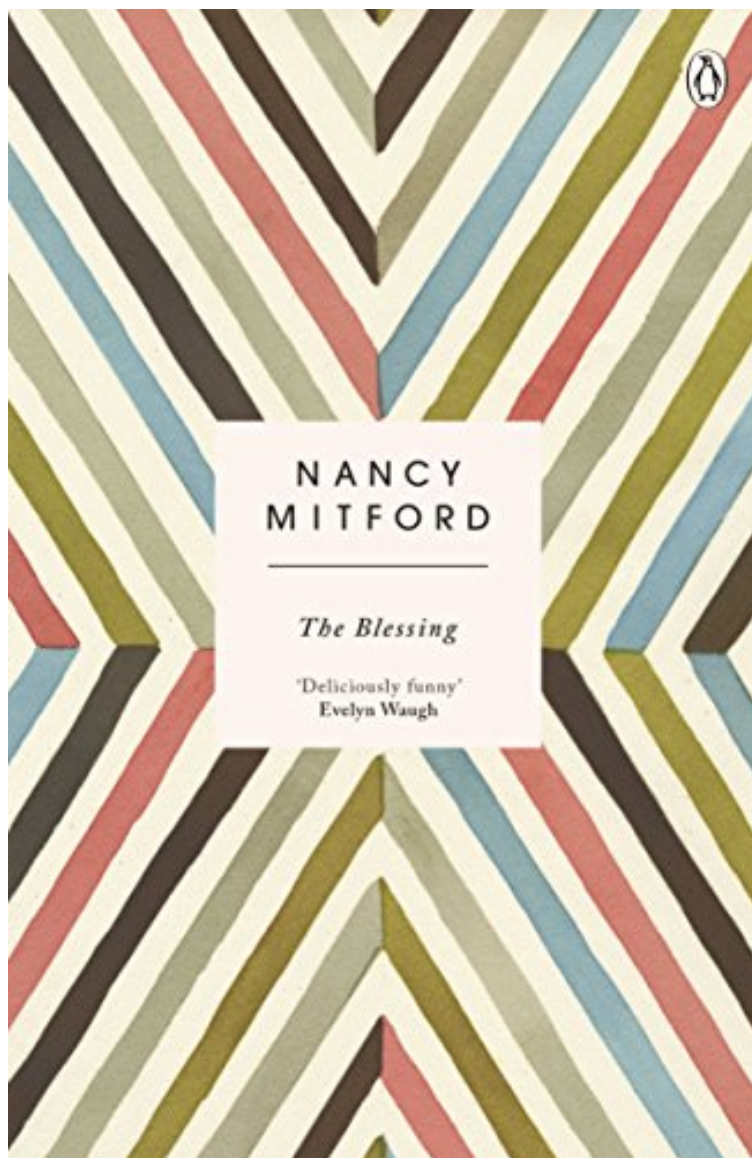


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# The Blessing



*Par Nancy Mitford*  
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## Description :

Prsentation de l'diteurThe Blessing by Nancy Mitford It isn't just Nanny who finds it difficult in France when Grace and her young son Sigi are finally able to join her dashing aristocratic husband Charles-Edouard after the war. For Grace is out of her depth among the fashionably dressed and immaculately coiffured French women, and shocked by their relentless gossiping and bedhopping. When she discovers her husband's tendency to lust after every pretty girl he sees, it looks like trouble. And things get even more complicated when little Sigi steps in . . .The Blessing is a hilarious tale of love, fidelity, and the English abroad, tailored as brilliantly as a New Look Dior suit.'Entirely original, inimitable and irresistible' Spectator'Deliciously funny' Evelyn Waugh'Utter, utter bliss' Daily MailExtrait1 The foreign gentleman

seems to be in a terrible hurry, dear. And indeed the house, though quite large, what used to be called a family house, in Queen Annes Gate, was filled with sounds of impatience. Somebody was stamping about, moving furniture, throwing windows up and down, and clearing his throat exaggeratedly. Ahem! Ahem! How long has he been here, Nanny? Nearly an hour I should think. He played the piano, very fast and loud, for a while, which seemed to keep him quiet. Hes only started this shindy since John went and told him you were in and would be down presently. You go, darling, and tell him he must wait while I change out of these trousers, said Grace, who was vigorously cleaning her neck with cotton wool. Oh, the dirt. What I need is a bath. The drawing-room door was now flung open. Do I see you or not? The voice was certainly foreign. All right very well. Ill come down now, this minute. She looked at Nanny, laughing, and said, He might go through the floor, like Rumpelstiltskin. But Nanny said, Put on a dress dear, you cant go down like that. Shall I come upstairs? said the voice. No, dont, here I am, and Grace ran down, still in her A.R.P.trousers. The Frenchman, tall, dark and elegant, in French Air Force uniform, was on the drawing-room landing, both hands on the banister rail. He seemed about to uproot the delicate woodwork. When he saw Grace he said Ah! as though her appearance caused him gratified surprise, then, Is this a uniform? Its not bad. Did you receive my note? Only now, said Grace. Ive been at the A.R.P. all day. They went into the drawing-room. Your writing is very difficult. I was still puzzling over it when I heard all that noise it was like the French Revolution. You must be a very impatient man. No. But I dont like to be kept waiting, though this room has more compensations than most, I confess. I wouldnt have kept you waiting if Id known a little sooner why didnt you . . . He was no longer listening, he had turned to the pictures on the walls. I do love this Olivier, he said. You must give it to me. Except that it belongs to Papa. Ah yes, I suppose it does. Sir Conrad. He is very well known in the Middle East I neednt tell you, however. The Allingham Commission, ah! cunning Sir Conrad. He owes something to my country, after that. He turned from the picture to Grace looking at her rather as if she were a picture, and said, Natoire, or Rosalba. You could be by either. Well, we shall see, and time will show. Papa loves France. Im sure he does. The Englishmen who love France are always the worst. The worst? Each man kills the thing he loves, you know. Never mind. Youve come from Cairo? she said. I thought I read Cairo in your letter and something about Hughie? You saw him? The fianc I saw. And youve come to give me news of him? Good news that is to say no news. Why is this picture labeled Drouais? I suppose it is by Drouais, said Grace with perfect indifference. Brought up among beautiful things, she took but small account of them. Indeed? What makes you think so? Are you an art dealer? An art deal-ee. But you said you had news. Naturally I supposed it was the reason for your visit, to tell this news. Have you any milk chocolate? No, Im sure we havent. Never mind. Would you like a cocktail or a glass of sherry? Sherry, with delight. Did you enjoy Cairo? Hughie says its great fun. The museum is wonderful but of course no pictures, while the millionaires, poor dears, have wonderful pictures, for which theyve paid wonderful prices (from those ateliers where Renoirs and Van Goghs are painted on purpose for millionaires), but which hardly satisfy ones cravings. Even their Corots are not always by Trouillebert. You see exactly how it is. So this afternoon I went to the National Gallery shut. That is war. Now you will understand what an oasis I have found in Sir Conrads drawing-room, though I must have a word with him some time about this Drouais, so called. Im afraid you wont see many pictures in London now, said Grace. Papa has sent all his best ones to the country, and most people have shut up their houses, you know. Never mind. I love London, even without pictures, and English women I love. Do you? Dont we seem terribly dowdy? Of course. Thats what make you so amusing and mysterious. What can you possibly do, all day? Do? Yes. How do you fill those endless eons of time when Frenchwomen are having their hair washed, trying on hats, visiting the collections, discussing with the lingre what is lingre in English? Underclothes-maker. Hours they spend with the underclothes-maker. What a funny word are you sure? Anyhow, Frenchwomen always give one to understand that arranging themselves is full-time work. Now you English, like flowers in a basket, are not arranged, which is quite all right when the flowers are spring flowers. He gave her another long, approving look. But how do you fill in the time? That is the great puzzle. Im afraid, she said, laughing, that we fill it in (not now, of course, but before the war) buying clothes and hats and having our hair washed. Perhaps the results were not quite the same, but I assure you that great efforts were made. Please dont tell me. Do leave me in the dark, it makes you so much more interesting. Do let me go on believing that the hours drift by in a dream, that those blind blue eyes which see nothing, not even your fathers pictures, are turned inward upon some Anglo-Saxon fairyland of your own. Am I not right? He was quite right, though perhaps she hardly

knew it herself. Revue de presse Admirable, deliciously funny, consistent and complete (Evelyn Waugh)