



The Beginning of Spring

By Penelope Fitzgerald

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Short-listed for the Booker Prize

“Fitzgerald was the author of several slim, perfect novels. *The Blue Flower* and *The Beginning of Spring* both had me abuzz for days the first time I read them. She was curiously perfect.” — Teju Cole, author of *Open City*

“Writing so precise and liting it can make you shiver.” — *Los Angeles Times*

March 1913. Moscow is stirring herself to meet the beginning of spring. English painter Frank Reid returns from work one night to find that his wife has gone away; no one knows where or why, or whether she'll ever come back. All Frank knows for sure is that he is now alone and must find someone to care for his three young children.

Into Frank's life comes Lisa Ivanovna, a quiet, calming beauty from the country, untroubled to the point of seeming simple. But is she? And why has Frank's bookkeeper, Selwyn Crane, gone to such lengths to bring these two together?

This new edition features an introduction by Andrew Miller, author of *Pure*, along with new cover art.

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

In March 1913, Frank Reid's wife abruptly leaves him and Moscow for her native England. Naturally, she takes their daughters and son with her. The children, however, only make it as far as the train station--and even after returning home remain unaffected by their brief exile. "They ought either to be quieter or more noisy than before," their father thinks, "and it was disconcerting that they seemed to be exactly the same." Frank's routines, however, drift into disorder as he tries desperately to take charge of life at home and work. Even his printing plant is suddenly confronted by the specters of modernization and utter instability.

In Penelope Fitzgerald's fiction, affection and remorse are all too often allied, and desire and design seem never to meet. Frank wants little more than a quiet, confident life--something for which he is deeply unsuited, and which Russia certainly will not go out of her way to provide. *The Beginning of Spring* is filled with echoes of past wrongs and whispers of the revolution to come, even if the author evokes these with abrupt comic brio. (In one disturbance, "A great many shots had hit people for whom they were not intended.") As ever, Fitzgerald makes us care for--and want to know ever more about--her characters, even the minor players. Her two-page description of Frank's chief type compositor, for instance, is a miracle of precision and humor, sympathy and mystery. And the accountant Selwyn Crane--a Tolstoy devotee, self-published poet, and expert at making others feel guilty--is a sublime creation. His appetite for do-gooding is insatiable. After one fit of apparent altruism, "Selwyn subsided. Now that he saw everything was going well, his mind was turning to his next charitable enterprise. With the terrible aimlessness of the benevolent, he was casting round for a new misfortune." As she evokes her household of tears and laughter, Fitzgerald's prose is as witty as ever, rendering the past present and the modern timeless. --*Kerry Fried*

From Publishers Weekly

Booker Prize-winner Fitzgerald (*Offshore* ; *Innocence*) reveals here the depth of a distinct and imaginative talent to amuse. Set in Moscow in the spring of 1913, the story concerns an English household that has fallen apart with the unexpected flight of Nellie Reid, a good and proper wife and heretofore devoted mother of three young children. (Fitzgerald is especially good at very droll children.) Nellie's husband, Frank, must carry on with his family and printing business while holding out hope for her return. A mysterious young woman from the countryside--she may be a dryad--is engaged to care for the children, and the plot, such as it is, takes many unexpected turns. But one doesn't read Fitzgerald for plot structure so much as for her sheer powers of invention: her novel raises more questions than it means to answer. Rich in subtle characterizations, wit and wonderfully textured prose, Fitzgerald's seventh novel succeeds in evoking the very essence of life one long-ago spring at 22 Lipka Street.

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From Library Journal

Set in Moscow in 1913, this tale chronicles several months in the life of Frank Reid, who is mysteriously deserted by his wife and must engage the simple peasant girl Lisa Ivanova to care for his three small children. Reid plods along in a remarkably mundane existence, relating to everyone with an amazing, unflagging apathy. Even an armed student radical who breaks into his shop and shoots at him cannot stir him to action. Lisa, to her credit, manages to stir him briefly to passion. The sole bright spot in this otherwise bleak, boring saga is Reid's hilariously precocious daughter, Dolly, whose abrupt, insightful comments are priceless. In this story, resolved anticlimactically in the last line of the text, there is very little spring, but a lot of grim, eternal winter.

- *Ronald L. Coombs, SUNY Health Science Ctr. at Brooklyn Lib.*

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Thomas Abrams:

Do you have favorite book? For those who have, what is your favorite's book? E-book is very important thing for us to be aware of everything in the world. Each e-book has different aim or even goal; it means that book has different type. Some people experience enjoy to spend their a chance to read a book. They may be reading whatever they acquire because their hobby is definitely reading a book. Consider the person who don't like studying a book? Sometime, man or woman feel need book after they found difficult problem or exercise. Well, probably you will require this The Beginning of Spring.

Harry Nelson:

In this 21st one hundred year, people become competitive in every single way. By being competitive at this point, people have do something to make all of them survives, being in the middle of often the crowded place and notice through surrounding. One thing that often many people have underestimated it for a while is reading. Yeah, by reading a publication your ability to survive raise then having chance to stand than other is high. For you who want to start reading some sort of book, we give you this kind of The Beginning of Spring book as beginner and daily reading reserve. Why, because this book is greater than just a book.

Jennifer Crowe:

This book untitled The Beginning of Spring to be one of several books this best seller in this year, this is because when you read this publication you can get a lot of benefit into it. You will easily to buy this specific book in the book store or you can order it by means of online. The publisher in this book sells the e-book too. It makes you quickly to read this book, as you can read this book in your Mobile phone. So there is no reason to your account to past this guide from your list.

Marlyn Melia:

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