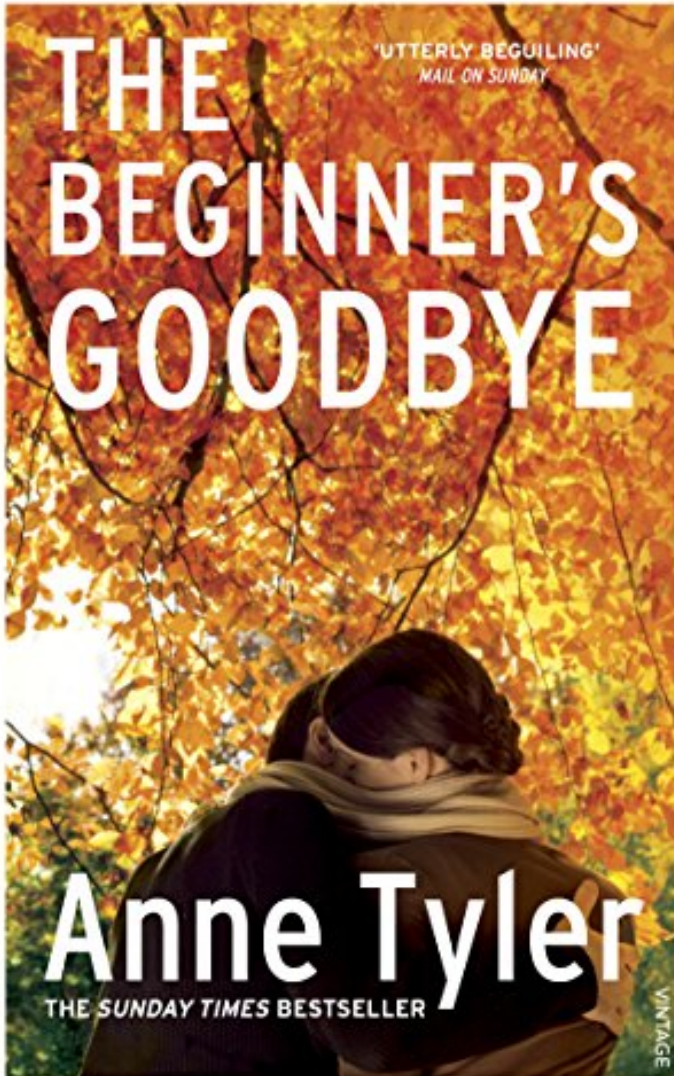


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The Beginner's Goodbye



Par Anne Tyler
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Description :

Prsentation de l'diteurWhen Dorothy came back from the dead, it seemed to Aaron that some people simply didnt notice. The accident that killed Dorothy involving an oak tree, a sun porch and some elusive biscuits leaves Aaron bereft and the house a wreck. As those around him fuss and flap and bring him casserole after casserole, Aaron ploughs on. But then Dorothy starts to materialize in the oddest places. At first, she only comes for a short while, leaving Aaron longing for more. Gradually she stays for longer, and as they talk, they also bicker and the cracks that were present in their perfectly ordinary marriage start to reappear...OVER A MILLION ANNE TYLER BOOKS SOLDShes changed my perception on life Anna Chancellor One of my favourite authors Liane MoriartyShe spins gold' Elizabeth Buchan Anne Tyler has no

peer Anita Shreve My favourite writer, and the best line-and-length novelist in the world Nick Hornby A masterly author Sebastian Faulks Tyler is not merely good, she is wickedly good John Updike I love Anne Tyler Anita Brookner Her fiction has strength of vision, originality, freshness, unconquerable humour Eudora Welty Extrait The strangest thing about my wifes return from the dead was how other people reacted. We were strolling through Belvedere Square, for instance, on an early-spring afternoon when we met our old next-door neighbor, Jim Rust. Well, what do you know, he said to me. Aaron! Then he noticed Dorothy beside me. She stood peering up at him with one hand shielding her forehead from the sun. His eyes widened and he turned to me again. I said, Hows it going, Jim? Visibly, he pulled himself together. Oh... great, he said. I mean... or, rather... but of course we miss you. Neighborhood is not the same without you! He was focusing on me alone specifically, on my mouth, as if I were the one who was talking. He wouldnt look at Dorothy. He had pivoted a few inches so as to exclude her from his line of vision. I took pity on him. I said, Well, tell everybody hello, and we walked on. Beside me, Dorothy gave one of her dry chuckles. Other people pretended not to recognize either one of us. They would catch sight of us from a distance, and this sort of jolt would alter their expressions and they would all at once dart down a side street, busy-busy, much to accomplish, very important concerns on their minds. I didnt hold it against them. I knew this was a lot to adjust to. In their position, I might have behaved the same way. I like to think I wouldnt, but I might have. The ones who made me laugh aloud were the ones who had forgotten shed died. Granted, there were only two or three of those people who barely knew us. In line at the bank once we were spotted by Mr. von Sant, who had handled our mortgage application several years before. He was crossing the lobby and he paused to ask, You two still enjoying the house? Oh, yes, I told him. Just to keep things simple. I pictured how the realization would hit him a few minutes later. Wait! he would say to himself, as he was sitting back down at his desk. Didnt I hear something about... ? Unless he never gave us another thought. Or hadnt heard the news in the first place. Hed go on forever assuming that the house was still intact, and Dorothy still alive, and the two of us still happily, unremarkably married. I had moved in by then with my sister, who lived in our parents old place in north Baltimore. Was that why Dorothy came back when she did? She hadnt much cared for Nandina. She thought she was too bossy. Well, she was too bossy. Is. Shes especially bossy with me, because I have a couple of handicaps. I may not have mentioned that. I have a crippled right arm and leg. Nothing that gets in my way, but you know how older sisters can be. Oh, and also a kind of speech hesitation, but only intermittently. I seldom even hear it, myself. In fact, I have often wondered what made Dorothy select the moment she did to come back. It wasnt immediately after she died, which is when you might expect. It was months and months later. Almost a year. Of course I could have just asked her, but somehow, I dont know, the question seemed impolite. I cant explain exactly why. One time we ran into Irene Lance, from my office. Shes the design person there. Dorothy and I were returning from lunch. Or I had had lunch, at least, and Dorothy had fallen into step beside me as I was walking back. And suddenly we noticed Irene approaching from St. Paul. Irene was hard to miss. She was always the most elegant woman on the street, not that that was much of a challenge in Baltimore. But she would have seemed elegant anywhere. She was tall and ice-blonde, wearing a long, flowing coat that day with the collar turned up around her throat and the hemline swirling about her shins in the brisk spring breeze. I was curious. How would a person like Irene handle this type of thing? So I slowed my pace, which caused Dorothy to slow hers, and by the time Irene caught sight of us we were almost at a standstill, both of us waiting to see what Irene would do. Two or three feet away from us, she stopped short. Oh... my... God, she said. We smiled. UPS, she said. I said, What? I phoned UPS for a pickup and theres nobody in the office. Well, never mind. Were heading back there right now, I told her. I used the word we on purpose, although Dorothy would most likely depart before I entered the building. But all Irene said was, Thanks, Aaron. I must be getting Alzheimers. And off she went, without another word. She would really have worried about Alzheimers if she had known what shed just overlooked. I glanced over at Dorothy, expecting her to share the joke, but she was pursuing her own line of thought. Wild Strawberries, she said, in a reflective tone of voice. Pardon? Thats who Irene reminds me of. The woman in the old Bergman movie the daughter-in-law, with the skinned-back bun. Remember her? Ingrid Thulin, I said. Dorothy raised her eyebrows slightly, to show she was impressed, but it wasnt so very difficult to dredge that name up. I had been enamored with Ingrid Thulin since college. I liked her cool, collected air. How long do you suppose it will be before Irene does a double take? I asked Dorothy. Dorothy merely shrugged. She seemed to view our situation much more matter-of-factly than I did. Maybe the reason I didnt ask Dorothy why she had come back when she did was that I worried it would make her ask herself the same question. If she had just sort of wandered back, absentmindedly, the way you would return to an old address

out of habit, then once I'd brought it up she might say, Oh! My goodness! I should be going! Or maybe she would imagine I was asking what she was doing here. Why she had come back at all, in other words. Like when you ask a houseguest how long he's planning to stay and he suspects you're asking, When can I hope to be rid of you? Maybe that was why I felt it wouldn't be polite. It would kill me if she left. I had already gone through that once. I didn't think I could do it all over again. She was short and plump and serious-looking. She had a broad, olive-skinned face, appealingly flat-planed, and calm black eyes that were noticeably level, with that perfect symmetry that makes the viewer feel rested. Her hair, which she cut herself in a heedless, blunt, square style, was deeply, absolutely black, and all of a piece. (Her family had come from Mexico two generations before.) And yet I don't think other people recognized how attractive she was, because she hid it.

Or, no, not even that; she was too unaware of it to hide it. She wore owl-like, round-lensed glasses that mocked the shape of her face. Her clothes made her figure seem squat-wide, straight trousers and man-tailored shirts, chunky crepe-soled shoes of a type that waitresses favored in diners. Only I noticed the creases as fine as silk threads that encircled her wrists and her neck. Only I knew her dear, pudgy feet, with the nails like tiny seashells. My sister said Dorothy was too old for me, but that was just because I had foolishly told the truth when I was asked. Even though she was eight years my senior—forty-three when she died—she seemed younger, because of that good strong Hispanic skin. Plus, she had enough padding to fill out any lines. You wouldn't really think about age at all, with Dorothy. My sister also said she was too short for me, and it is undeniable that when Dorothy and I hugged, all the wrong parts of us met. I am six-foot-four.

Dorothy was not quite five-one. If you saw us walking down the street together, my sister said, you would take us for a father and child heading off to grammar school. And too professional, my sister said. Ha! There's a novel objection. Dorothy was a doctor. I work as an editor in my family's publishing firm. Not all that great a disparity, right? What Nandina meant was, too intent upon her profession. Too work-obsessed. She left for her office early, stayed late, didn't greet me with my slippers in the evening, barely knew how to boil an egg. Fine with me. But not with Nandina, evidently. Maybe it was just a long, long way to travel, and that's why it took Dorothy all those months to come back. Or maybe she had first tried to do without me, the way I had first tried to do without her to get over my loss, find closure, move on, all those ridiculous phrases people use when they're urging you to endure the unendurable. But eventually, she had faced the fact that we simply missed each other too much. She had given in and returned. That's what I liked to believe.

Revue de presse "Anne Tyler draws a comedy that is not so much brilliant as luminous - its observant sharpness sweetened by a generous understanding of human fallibility" (Jane Shilling, Daily Telegraph) "A brilliant writer of emotionally sophisticated novels, funny, tragic, wise" (Lynne Truss, Independent) "One of my favourite authors, one of the very few I rush out to buy in hardback" (Craig Brown, Mail on Sunday) "Anne Tyler is a novelist who has elevated pitch-perfect observation of everyday detail into an art form" (Elizabeth Day, Observer) "Out of this everyday material she spins gold: stories so achingly truthful, so achingly funny, so sad and so real that you can only marvel" (Elizabeth Buchan, Daily Mail)