

A LETTER FROM THE AUTHOR

Dear Reader,

It's a question that all writers are asked, especially those who write fiction: *how did you come up with the idea for this book?* As an avid reader myself, I love hearing stories about the inspiration behind the work. I love tracing those elusive trails of bread crumbs that lead authors to their creations.

As for my novel, *The Maid*, I can pinpoint precisely when the idea was born. It happened on a business trip in 2019, during which I stayed at a hotel in London. I instantly imagined it in its heyday—plush red carpets leading to an elegant Art Deco entrance, smartly dressed porters crisscrossing the lobby with guest luggage in tow, the grand marble staircase and brass railings polished to a gleaming shine.

After a meeting outside the hotel, I returned to my room and startled the maid who was folding the jogging pants I'd thrown in a tangled mess on the bed. It occurred

to me in that moment what an intimate and invisible job it is to be a room maid. Simply by cleaning my room every day, this maid knew so much about me. But what did I know about her?

On the plane ride home from that trip, I continued to think about this diligent maid and about the hotel itself. Ideas germinated in my mind. What if a hotel room maid were to stumble across the scene of a crime in a guest room she cleaned every day? What if she knew things that no one else did, about the hotel itself and its guests? What if the hotel was pristine and grandiloquent, a little like the maid who worked there? I gave the hotel a name—the Regency Grand, a five-star boutique that prides itself on sophisticated elegance and proper decorum for the modern age.

I didn't have any paper on the plane, so I took the napkin from under my drink and began to write. Molly's voice emerged in the form of a prologue. I didn't know it then, but I'd just begun my debut novel.

I hope you enjoy armchair traveling to the world of the Regency Grand. And I hope, too, that you enjoy meeting Molly the maid.

With many thanks to you for being a reader, because without you books have little meaning.

Warmly, Nita Prose

I AM YOUR MAID I'm the one whe cleans your hote I room. Who enters like a phanten when you are out gallivantine for the day, no care at all about you we left behind, the mess, or what I see when you're gone (in the one who the recei your trach, tossine out yoursheets 4 Gon 1 straighten pur door plump your pi low, on which heirs , Yours " Not likely athen I'm dance my work, I lave your room pristing. The bed is prumpt has though no one had even Your perelly est to wel our poced imachine - lack at to as though your filth has been erased your maid. I know so much about you what do you know about me?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1. What did you think of Molly as a character? What made her believable to you? What were your feelings about the revelations in the epilogue about Molly's involvement in the case?
- 2. Gran has a number of iconic sayings that Molly relies on to get her through both very happy and very difficult situations. What were some of your favorites?
- 3. Gran and Molly believe in the three E's—Etiquette, Elocution, and Erudition. Is there a moment in the novel where Molly's application of these three values stood out to you? If you had to pick just one of these, which would you say is the most important?
- 4. Molly says she is "blessed with this ability—to clean my mind as I would a room. I picture offensive people or recall uncomfortable moments, and I wipe them away." What did you make of some of the moments when Molly's memories came creeping back in? Did some of her darker memories, when she finally revealed them, surprise you? Did you understand why she'd want to "wipe them away"?
- 5. Molly is aware that others tend to make assumptions about her based on her demeanor and her position as a maid. This is a fact that she uses to her advantage during her interrogation by saying, "I'm a hotel maid. Who would ever want to talk to me?" when asked about her friendship with Giselle. The detective easily accepts this answer and lets Molly go free, which feels like a bittersweet victory. What did you think of this exchange? What does it suggest about power dynamics, and about the assumptions people tend to make about others who are different from themselves?
- 6. Molly has a very distinct sense of what is right and wrong, but sometimes this takes the form of her Gran's "Robin Hood" morality, in which her sense of fairness and justice can override what others may traditionally consider "right" or "wrong." Do you think this willingness to help others is brave or naive? What would you do in her situation?
- 7. Despite the danger to his family and himself, Juan Manuel decides to help Molly in the end. While everything ends up okay, each one of Molly's allies risks something to help her. What do you think influenced each of their decisions?
- 8. What were some of your takeaways from the book? What message do you think the author was trying to convey?



MOLLY'S MUSINGS

QUOTES FROM YOUR FAVORITE FICTIONAL MAID

"I am your maid. I know so much about you. But when it comes down to it: what is that you know about me?"

"It's easier than you'd ever think—existing in plain sight while remaining largely invisible. That's what I've learned from being a maid."

"Never leave a mess to be discovered by a guest."

"I don't believe that some people are more important than other people. We're all very important in our own way."

"I do sometimes feel angry. Especially when guests are careless. When they forget that their actions have an impact on others, when I'm treated like I don't matter."

"One thing I've learned in my business is that you can hide dirt for a while, but at some point, it all comes to the surface."

"Isn't it interesting how luxury has an unmistakable scent, as unmistakable as fear or death?"

"Laughs are just like smiles. People use them to express an array of confounding emotions."

"Vile and evil are composed of the same letters. One begets the other."



MOLLY'S CLEANING CHART

