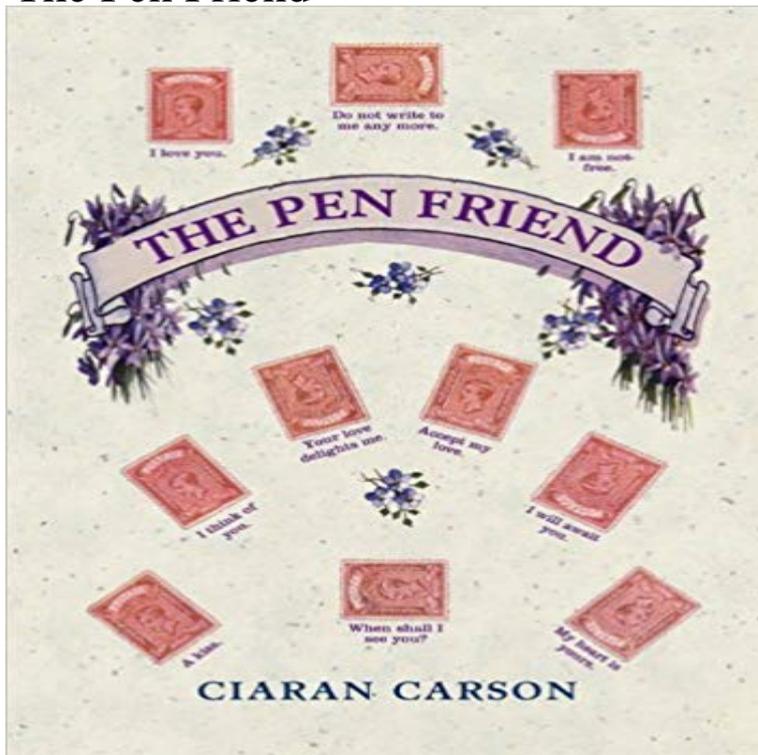


The Pen Friend



More than twenty years after the end of their love affair, Gabriel receives a series of cryptic postcards from his old flame. Inspired to write his own letter, Gabriel dwells in sensuous detail on perfumes, clothes, and conversations as he tries to recapture the spirit of their romance in 1980s Belfast. As Gabriel teases out the significance of the postcards, the layers of meaning in the images and messages, his reveries develop into richly textured meditations on writing, memory, spiritualism, and surveillance. The result is an elaborate and intricate web of fact and fiction, a narrative that marries sharp historical insights with imaginative exuberance, a strange and wonderful novel confirming Ciaran Carson as one of Ireland's most exciting writers. Surprisingly effective as a novel. When a bomb goes off in a cafe, it showers the narrative with a kind of Belfast confetti, shrapnel-sharp questions that lend the story of Gabriel and Nina a new urgency.-The Virginia Quarterly Review, Summer 2010 Carson's prose works collectively reveal a mind at work, a mind that is well worth attending to as it begins to make sense of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries.-World Literature Today

This is unmistakably a novel written by a poet whose sense of the porousness of language speaks to both a post-modern sensibility and the acute ear of a bilingual writer.-Irish Literary Supplement

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