



# **Suitable Accommodations: An Autobiographical Story of Family Life: The Letters of J. F. Powers, 1942-1963**

*J. F. Powers*

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**A wry, moving collection of letters from the late J. F. Powers, "a comic writer of genius" (Mary Gordon)**

Best known for his 1963 National Book Award-winning novel, *Morte D'Urban*, and as a master of the short story, J. F. Powers drew praise from Evelyn Waugh, Flannery O'Connor, Saul Bellow, and Philip Roth, among others. Though Powers's fiction dwelt chiefly on the lives of Catholic priests, he long planned to write a novel of family life, a feat he never accomplished. He did, however, write thousands of letters, which, selected here by his daughter, Katherine A. Powers, become an intimate version of that novel, dynamic with plot and character. They show a dedicated artist, passionate lover, reluctant family man, pained aesthete, sports fan, and appreciative friend. At times wrenching and sad, at others ironic and exuberantly funny, *Suitable Accommodations* is the story of a man at odds with the world and, despite his faith, with his church. Beginning in prison, where Powers spent more than a year as a conscientious objector, the letters move on to his courtship, marriage, comically unsuccessful attempt to live in the woods, life in the Midwest and in Ireland, an unorthodox view of the Catholic Church, and an increasingly bizarre search for "suitable accommodations," which included three full-scale emigrations to Ireland. Here, too, are encounters with such diverse people as Thomas Merton, Eugene McCarthy, Robert Lowell, Theodore Roethke, Sean O'Faolain, Frank O'Connor, Dorothy Day, and Alfred Kinsey.

An NPR Best Book of 2013



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