



The Orton Diaries

Joe Orton

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"To be young, good-looking, healthy, famous, comparatively rich *and* happy is surely going against nature." When Joe Orton (1933–1967) wrote those words in his diary in May 1967, he was being hailed as the greatest comic playwright since Oscar Wilde for his darkly hilarious *Entertaining Mr. Sloane* and the farce hit *Loot*, and was completing *What the Butler Saw*; but less than three months later, his longtime companion, Kenneth Halliwell, smashed in Orton's skull with a hammer before killing himself. *The Orton Diaries*, written during his last eight months, chronicle in a remarkably candid style his outrageously unfettered life: his literary success, capped by an *Evening Standard Award* and overtures from the Beatles; his sexual escapades—at his mother's funeral, with a dwarf in Brighton, and, extensively, in Tangiers; and the breakdown of his sixteen-year "marriage" to Halliwell, the relationship that transformed and destroyed him. Edited with a superb introduction by John Lahr, *The Orton Diaries* is his crowning achievement.

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