

# Visitation

## *A Villanelle*

by [Cristina Nehring](#) (November 2024)



Mother and Child (Mary Cassatt, 1880)

**Whatever the cost** you arrived right on cue.  
Relationships fell through; the world was unhinged.  
Of visitors like you there are only a few.

Your father was bitter; your mother was lost;  
The future was as opaque as onyx.  
**Whatever the cost** you arrived right on cue.

A child with an extra chromosome you  
Took Paris by storm while it was dozing away.  
Of visitors like you there are only a few.

You shook up the town; you exploded your family;  
You conferred on all things a kind of gravity.  
Whatever the cost you arrived right on cue.

The future became clear of a sudden; the past was dismissed.  
From your little glass box in Intensive Care, you blessed all  
who cast their aspersions.  
Of visitors like you, there are only a few.

No one was ready; no one knew what to do,  
But they did it regardless and the sun resumed its place in  
the skies over France.  
Whatever the cost you arrived right on cue.  
Of visitors like you, there are only a few.

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**Cristina Nehring's** most recent book is *The Child Who Never Spoke: 23 1/2 Lessons in Fragility*. She is also the author of *A Vindication of Love* which made the front page of the *New York Times Book Review* as well as two books in French. She writes for *Atlantic*, *Harper's*, the *New York Times* and the *Wall Street Journal*. She lives in Paris with her daughter.

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