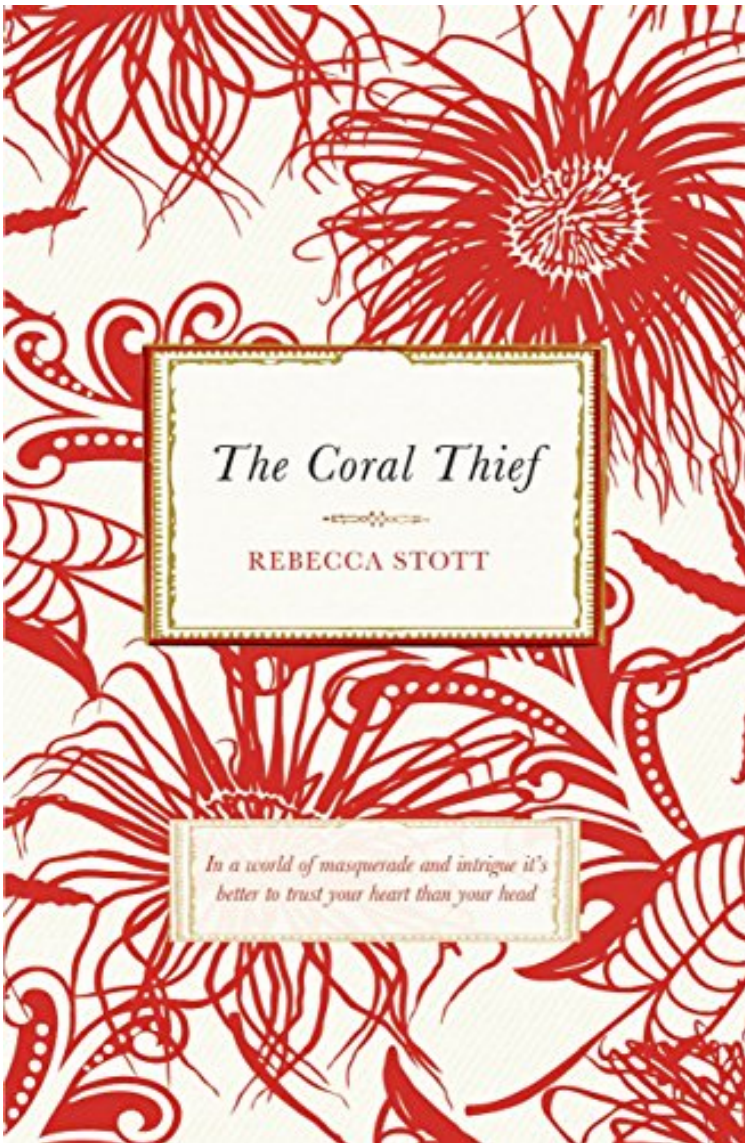


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# The Coral Thief (English Edition)



*Par Rebecca Stott*  
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**Par Rebecca Stott : The Coral Thief (English Edition)** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Coral Thief (English Edition):

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## Description :

Prsentation de l'diteurA young scientist becomes involved with a mysterious band of antiquities robbers in the heady atmosphere of nineteenth-century Paris. A powerful and thrilling novel from the author of GHOSTWALK.Paris, 1815. Napoleon has just surrendered at Waterloo and is due to begin his exile. Meanwhile, Daniel Connor, a young medical student from Edinburgh, has just arrived in Paris to study anatomy at the Jardin des Plantes - only to realise that his letters of introduction and a gift of precious coral specimens, on which his tenure depends, have been stolen by the beautiful woman with whom he shared a stagecoach.In the fervour and tumult of post revolutionary Paris, nothing is quite as it seems. In trying to recover his lost valuables, Daniel discovers that his beautiful adversary is in fact a philosopher-thief who lives in a shadowy world of outlaws and migrs. As Daniel embark on a passionate love affair with the Coral

Thief, he is drawn to join her salon of thieves to execute one last breathtakingly bold robbery...ExtraitChapter OneIn the dark hours of a hot July night in 1815, sitting on the outside of a mail coach a few miles from Paris, I woke to the sound of a womans voice, speaking in French, deep and roughly textured, like limestone. We had stopped outside a village inn whose sign creaked in the night wind. Attention, she said to the driver. Be careful.I opened my eyes as a tall figure, her head obscured by the hood of her cloak, climbed into the seat beside me. Groaning with the effort, the driver passed up to her a large bundle wrapped in a red velvet blanket. It was a sleeping child; I could just make out a dimpled hand, the sleep-hot flush of a cheek, and a curl of dark hair. The woman spoke softly to the child, soothing it, rearranging the folds of its blanket. There are several empty seats inside, madame, I said in French, concentrating hard on my pronunciation. She answered me in perfect English: But who would want to sit inside on a night like this? Her voice was surprisingly low for a woman, and it stirred me. The black of the sky was already shading to a deep inky blue over toward the horizon. Mist hung over the fields and hedgerows and gathered a little in the trees on either side of the road. Is it safe in France for a woman to travel alone? I asked as the coach lurched back into movement. The Edinburgh newspapers regularly reported attacks on carriages traveling at night across open country. She laughed and turned toward me, her face illuminated by the light of a half-moon. Over to my left somewhere a rooster crowed; we must have been passing a farm or a village. But I am not traveling alone, she said, dropping her voice to a whisper and leaning toward me. I have Delphine. She is no ordinary child, you see. She is asleep now, of course, so it may be a little difficult for you to believe, but this child, she can fight armies and slay dragons. I have seen it with my own eyes. I have seen her lift an elephant and its rider with a single hand. Non, I am entirely safe with Delphine. Otherwise, of course, I would never travel alone. It is far too dangerous. What about you, monsieur? Are you not afraid? I No, of course you are not afraid. She smiled. You are a man. I have never left England before, I stammered. I have never traveled so far or had to make myself understood in another language. Three times I decided I must take the next mail coach back to Calais . . . Ive never felt so much of a coward. She laughed, her voice mesmerizing in the darkness. There it is. Paris. See the lights ahead . . . on the horizon? We will be there by dawn. Imagine . . . She stopped suddenly, gazing out toward the flattened shapes of the distant hills. Sometimes its easier to see all that water in the darkness. I cant see any water, I said, confused. She pointed from right to left. Everything you see from there to there, the entire Paris basin, was under water thousands of years ago. Paris was just a hollow in the seafloor then. There were cliffs of chalk over there, see, where the land began. Picture it giant sea lizards swimming around us, oysters and corals beneath us, creatures with bodies so strange we couldnt possibly imagine them crawling across the seabed. Later, when the water retreated, the creatures pulled themselves onto the rocks to make new bodies with scales and fur and feathers. Mammoths wandered down from the hills to drink from the Seine, under the same moon as this one, calling to one another. Thats a strange thing to think about, I said. Oui. She laughed. I suppose it is. But I think about it often, this earth before man. I look at the fossils in the rocks, the remains of that time so long ago, and I think about how late we came. Even the sea slugs appeared before we did. It took thousands of years for these bodies of ours to take shape, for our clever eyes and our curious brains to come to be. And now that we are big and strong, we think everything belongs to us, that we know and own everything. Come to be? I said, surprised and a little alarmed. So you think species have changed? You are a student of Professor Lamarck, the transformist? I was once, she said. Lamarck is right about most things. Species are not fixed. Everything is changing, all the time. The animals, the people, the hillseven the little things, skin, hair, everything is constantly renewing itself, taking new shapes. Just think of what we have come from simple sea creatures with no eyes or hearts or minds then think of what we might yet become. Doesnt that excite you? She ran her fingers across the childs face. She Delphine, the dragonslayer stirred, her eyes flickering open for a moment and then closing again. Paris is riddled with infidels, Professor Jameson had warned me back in Edinburgh. They are poets, these French transformists, not men of science. They dream up notions about the origins of the earth and the transmutation of species. Castles in the air. Most of them are atheists too heretics. Steer clear. Jameson had not mentioned that there were women who had studied with Lamarck. I wondered what he would make of this infidel sitting beside me now. I would have to record this conversation in my notebook, I thought; Jameson would want a report. He would want to know the kind of words she used, what she had read, whom she talked to. So did I. It will get bigger, you know, she said, her eyes shining in the dark with a touch of malevolence. What will? The city. It doesnt look so big now, at night, but it will swallow you up. Are you not afraid? Yes. I smiled. Yes. Of course Im afraid. Paris aroused complicated feelings in me then. What did I know of cities the sound of

thousands of people moving together, the tangled dealings of commerce and trade? I had always been a country boy. I knew the insides of the cave networks and mine workings of Derbyshire; I knew the angles and curves of the hills, the names of trees, ferns, lichens, and fishes; I could tell you how the light fell across the lakes, but I knew almost nothing of cities. Edinburgh quiet, solid, rainy Edinburgh, hewn out of the rock and built across a ravine where I had lived and worked for four years, had overwhelmed me as a seventeen-year-old boy arriving by carriage one frosty morning. As I slipped through the crowd of Princes Street, I could scarcely feel the beginnings and ends of myself in the roar and flow of it. So I had anchored myself, establishing daily routes between the lecture theaters, the anatomy school, the libraries, museums, and taverns. Despite the best efforts of my fellow students, one of whom urged me with mock seriousness to fall in love for the sake of my health, I had lived largely in and among books. I had seen London fleetingly, passing through from time to time on my way from Edinburgh to my family home in Derbyshire. One day in May I walked from the inn where I was staying to the optical-instrument makers shop in the Strand and bought a bronze-cased microscope in a velvet-lined box with money I had saved for three years. On that brief walk, London, for all its smoke and smell and noise, enraptured me. My curiosity, that shapeless thing that drove at me relentlessly, that propelled the search for origins and explanations and connections, my desire to see further and further into the insides of things that had compelled me from the day I had touched my first microscope, or turned the first page of Aristotles History of Animals, or opened the encyclopedia at the page marked Anatomy, had seemed all the more heightened in London. There were answers to be found in cities; there were libraries, instrument shops and museums and professors who knew how to pose extraordinary questions. Now that I had graduated, I wanted more than anything to be part of what was happening in Paris the conversations and discoveries in the debating rooms, the libraries, and the museums. The French professors, given authority, freedom, and money by Napoleon, were making new inroads into knowledge. The museums in Paris were remarkable, the lectures groundbreaking. But it was also the city my father and his friends feared and loathed, the Paris of the Revolution a city of people so hungry they had marched on Versailles, stormed the Bastille, imprisoned and then killed a royal family. I thought about the newspaper reports my father had kept that described the guillotine swallowing up lives, thousands of them; blood in the streets; mobs; children with sticks and garden tools hunting down the children of aristocrats and beating them to death; a king made to wear a red cap; bloodied heads on spikes; the grocer burned alive on a pyre made of furniture thrown from the windows of the palaces of migrants. Then there was the Paris of Napoleon Bonaparte. I had seen drawings of the buildings and squares and streets the Emperor had built: the vast classical perspective of the Arc du Carrousel and the Arc de Triomphe; the new bridges and water fountains; the classical faades, colonnades, marble columns all so cool and quiet the imperial aspirations of the Emperor laid serenely on top of fire, blood, and death. Paris was to be the new Rome, Napoleon had declared. Now that Napoleon had been captured, Wellington had restored the French king to the throne Louis XVIII, they called this one; the brother of the guillotined king. But everyone was still half expecting Napoleon to rise again, like a body that just wouldnt drown. A... *Revue de presse* A powerful offering from an immensely talented writer Vividly atmospheric, propulsive, and intricately plotted, this is a surefire page turner with literary heft and wide appeal. *Publishers Weekly*, starred review Stott again skillfully combines an intriguing love story, complex scientific concepts, and a beautifully realized historical setting Riveting on all fronts, from its suspenseful plot to its elegant presentation of evolutionary theory. *Booklist*, starred review Stott once again juxtaposes science with a tale of love, mystery and intrigue, setting this volatile mix against a backdrop of critical events in post-Revolutionary France Skillfully embeds early 19th-century culture, history, and attitudes into a story that flows like the Seine and floods the senses. *Kirkus*, starred review