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The Thirteenth Tale (English Edition)



Par Diane Setterfield
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Par Diane Setterfield : The Thirteenth Tale (English Edition) before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Thirteenth Tale (English Edition):

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Description :

Prsentation de l'diteurAngelfield House stands abandoned and forgotten. It was once home to the March family - fascinating, manipulative Isabelle, brutal, dangerous Charlie, and the wild, untamed twins, Emmeline and Adeline. But Angelfield House hides a chilling secret which strikes at the very heart of each of them, tearing their lives apart... Now Margaret Lea is investigating Angelfield's past - and the mystery of the March family starts to unravel. What has Angelfield been hiding? What is its connection with the enigmatic writer Vida Winter? And what is the secret that strikes at the heart of Margaret's own, troubled life? As Margaret digs deeper, two parallel stories unfold, and the tale she uncovers sheds a disturbing light on her own life....comSettle down to enjoy a rousing good ghost story with Diane Setterfield's debut novel,

The Thirteenth Tale. Setterfield has rejuvenated the genre with this closely plotted, clever foray into a world of secrets, confused identities, lies, and half-truths. She never cheats by pulling a rabbit out of a hat; this atmospheric story hangs together perfectly. There are two heroines here: Vida Winter, a famous author, whose life story is coming to an end, and Margaret Lea, a young, unworldly, bookish girl who is a bookseller in her father's shop. Vida has been confounding her biographers and fans for years by giving everybody a different version of her life, each time swearing it's the truth. Because of a biography that Margaret has written about brothers, Vida chooses Margaret to tell her story, all of it, for the first time. At their initial meeting, the conversation begins: "You have given nineteen different versions of your life story to journalists in the last two years alone." She [Vida] shrugged. "It's my profession. I'm a storyteller." "I am a biographer, I work with facts." The game is afoot and Margaret must spend some time sorting out whether or not Vida is actually ready to tell the whole truth. There is more here of Margaret discovering than of Vida cooperating wholeheartedly, but that is part of Vida's plan. The transformative power of truth informs the lives of both women by story's end, and *The Thirteenth Tale* is finally and convincingly told. --Valerie Ryan

Extrait The Letter It was November. Although it was not yet late, the sky was dark when I turned into Laundress Passage. Father had finished for the day, switched off the shop lights and closed the shutters; but so I would not come home to darkness he had left on the light over the stairs to the flat. Through the glass in the door it cast a foolscap rectangle of paleness onto the wet pavement, and it was while I was standing in that rectangle, about to turn my key in the door, that I first saw the letter. Another white rectangle, it was on the fifth step from the bottom, where I couldn't miss it. I closed the door and put the shop key in its usual place behind Bailey's *Advanced Principles of Geometry*. Poor Bailey. No one has wanted his fat gray book for thirty years. Sometimes I wonder what he makes of his role as guardian of the bookshop keys. I don't suppose it's the destiny he had in mind for the masterwork that he spent two decades writing. A letter. For me. That was something of an event. The crisp-cornered envelope, puffed up with its thickly folded contents, was addressed in a hand that must have given the postman a certain amount of trouble. Although the style of the writing was old-fashioned, with its heavily embellished capitals and curly flourishes, my first impression was that it had been written by a child. The letters seemed untrained. Their uneven strokes either faded into nothing or were heavily etched into the paper. There was no sense of flow in the letters that spelled out my name. Each had been undertaken separately -- M A R G A R E T L E A -- as a new and daunting enterprise.

But I knew no children. That is when I thought, It is the hand of an invalid. It gave me a queer feeling.

Yesterday or the day before, while I had been going about my business, quietly and in private, some unknown person -- some stranger -- had gone to the trouble of marking my name onto this envelope. Who was it who had had his mind's eye on me while I hadn't suspected a thing? Still in my coat and hat, I sank onto the stair to read the letter. (I never read without making sure I am in a secure position. I have been like this ever since the age of seven when, sitting on a high wall and reading *The Water Babies*, I was so seduced by the descriptions of underwater life that I unconsciously relaxed my muscles. Instead of being held buoyant by the water that so vividly surrounded me in my mind, I plummeted to the ground and knocked myself out. I can still feel the scar under my fringe now. Reading can be dangerous.) I opened the letter and pulled out a sheaf of half a dozen pages, all written in the same laborious script. Thanks to my work, I am experienced in the reading of difficult manuscripts. There is no great secret to it. Patience and practice are all that is required. That and the willingness to cultivate an inner eye. When you read a manuscript that has been damaged by water, fire, light or just the passing of the years, your eye needs to study not just the shape of the letters but other marks of production. The speed of the pen. The pressure of the hand on the page. Breaks and releases in the flow. You must relax. Think of nothing. Until you wake into a dream where you are at once a pen flying over vellum and the vellum itself with the touch of ink tickling your surface. Then you can read it. The intention of the writer, his thoughts, his hesitations, his longings and his meaning. You can read as clearly as if you were the very candlelight illuminating the page as the pen speeds over it. Not that this letter was anything like as challenging as some. It began with a curt "Miss Lea"; thereafter the hieroglyphs resolved themselves quickly into characters, then words, then sentences. This is what I read: I once did an interview for the *Banbury Herald*. I must look it out one of these days, for the biography. Strange chap they sent me. A boy, really. As tall as a man, but with the puppy fat of youth. Awkward in his new suit. The suit was brown and ugly and meant for a much older man. The collar, the cut, the fabric, all wrong. It was the kind of thing a mother might buy for a boy leaving school for his first job, imagining that her child will somehow grow into it. But boys do not leave their boyhood behind when they leave off their school uniform. There was something in his manner. An intensity. The moment I set eyes on him, I thought, "Aha,

what's he after?"I've nothing against people who love truth. Apart from the fact that they make dull companions. Just so long as they don't start on about storytelling and honesty, the way some of them do. Naturally that annoys me. But provided they leave me alone, I won't hurt them. My gripe is not with lovers of the truth but with truth herself. What succor, what consolation is there in truth, compared to a story? What good is truth, at midnight, in the dark, when the wind is roaring like a bear in the chimney? When the lightning strikes shadows on the bedroom wall and the rain taps at the window with its long fingernails? No. When fear and cold make a statue of you in your bed, don't expect hard-boned and fleshless truth to come running to your aid. What you need are the plump comforts of a story. The soothing, rocking safety of a lie. Some writers don't like interviews of course. They get cross about it. "Same old questions," they complain. Well, what do they expect? Reporters are hacks. We writers are the real thing. Just because they always ask the same questions, it doesn't mean we have to give them the same old answers, does it? I mean, making things up, it's what we do for a living. So I give dozens of interviews a year. Hundreds over the course of a lifetime. For I have never believed that genius needs to be locked away out of sight to thrive. My genius is not so frail a thing that it cowers from the dirty fingers of the newspapermen. In the early years they used to try to catch me out. They would do research, come along with a little piece of truth concealed in their pocket, draw it out at an opportune moment and hope to startle me into revealing more. I had to be careful. Inch them in the direction I wanted them to take, use my bait to draw them gently, imperceptibly, toward a prettier story than the one they had their eye on. A delicate operation. Their eyes would start to shine, and their grasp on the little chip of truth would loosen, until it dropped from their hand and fell, disregarded, by the wayside. It never failed. A good story is always more dazzling than a broken piece of truth. Afterward, once I became famous, the Vida Winter interview became a sort of rite of passage for journalists. They knew roughly what to expect, would have been disappointed to leave without the story. A quick run through the normal questions (Where do you get your inspiration? Are your characters based on real people? How much of your main character is you?) and the shorter my answers the better they liked it. (Inside my head. No. None.) Then, the bit they were waiting for, the thing they had really come for. A dreamy, expectant look stole across their faces. They were like little children at bedtime. And you, Miss Winter, they said. Tell me about yourself. And I told. Simple little stories really, not much to them. Just a few strands, woven together in a pretty pattern, a memorable motif here, a couple of sequins there. Mere scraps from the bottom of my ragbag. Hundreds more where they came from. Offcuts from novels and stories, plots that never got finished, stillborn characters, picturesque locations I never found a use for. Odds and ends that fell out in the editing. Then it's just a matter of neatening the edges, stitching in the ends, and it's done. Another brand-new biography. They went away happy, clutching their notebooks in their paws like children with sweets at the end of a birthday party. It would be something to tell their grandchildren. "One day I met Vida Winter, and she told me a story." Anyway, the boy from the Banbury Herald. He said, "Miss Winter, tell me the truth." Now, what kind of appeal is that? I've had people devise all kinds of stratagems to trick me into telling, and I can spot them a mile off, but that? Laughable. I mean, whatever did he expect? A good question. What did he expect? His eyes were glistening with an intent fever. He watched me so closely. Seeking. Probing. He was after something quite specific, I was sure of it. His forehead was damp with perspiration. Perhaps he was sickening for something. Tell me the truth, he said. I felt a strange sensation inside. Like the past coming to life. The watery stirring of a previous life turning in my belly, creating a tide that rose in my veins and sent cool wavelets to lap at my temples. The ghastly excitement of it. Tell me the truth. I considered his request. I turned it over in my mind, weighed up the likely consequences. He disturbed me, this boy, with his pale face and his burning eyes. "All right," I said. An hour later he was gone. A faint, absentminded good-bye and no backward glance. I didn't tell him the truth. How could I? I told him a story. An impoverished, malnourished little thing. No sparkle, no sequins, just a few dull and faded patches, roughly tacked together with the edges left frayed. The kind of story that looks like real life. Or what people imagine real life to be, which is something rather different. It's not easy for someone of my talent to produce a story like that. I watched him from the window. He shuffled away up the street, shoulders drooping, head bowed, each step a weary effort. All that energy, the charge, the verve, gone. I had killed it. Not that I take all the blame. He should have known better than to believe me. I never saw him again. That feeling I had, the current in my stomach, my temples, my fingertips -- it remained with me for quite a while. It rose and fell, with the memory of the boy's words. Tell me the truth. "No," ...