



# The Thirteenth Tale: A Novel

*Diane Setterfield*

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**The Thirteenth Tale: A Novel** Diane Setterfield

**When Margaret Lea opened the door to the past, what she confronted was her destiny.**

*All children mythologize their birth...* So begins the prologue of reclusive author Vida Winter's collection of stories, which are as famous for the mystery of the missing thirteenth tale as they are for the delight and enchantment of the twelve that do exist.

The enigmatic Winter has spent six decades creating various outlandish life histories for herself -- all of them inventions that have brought her fame and fortune but have kept her violent and tragic past a secret. Now old and ailing, she at last wants to tell the truth about her extraordinary life. She summons biographer Margaret Lea, a young woman for whom the secret of her own birth, hidden by those who loved her most, remains an ever-present pain. Struck by a curious parallel between Miss Winter's story and her own, Margaret takes on the commission.

As Vida disinters the life she meant to bury for good, Margaret is mesmerized. It is a tale of gothic strangeness featuring the Angelfield family, including the beautiful and willful Isabelle, the feral twins Adeline and Emmeline, a ghost, a governess, a topiary garden and a devastating fire.

Margaret succumbs to the power of Vida's storytelling but remains suspicious of the author's sincerity. She demands the truth from Vida, and together they confront the ghosts that have haunted them while becoming, finally, transformed by the truth themselves.

*The Thirteenth Tale* is a love letter to reading, a book for the feral reader in all of us, a return to that rich vein of storytelling that our parents loved and that we loved as children. Diane Setterfield will keep you guessing, make you wonder, move you to tears and laughter and, in the end, deposit you breathless yet satisfied back upon the shore of your everyday life.

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