BEECHER BOOK & BAKE

JANUARY 6, 2024 - THE THIRTEENTH TALE



WELCOME!

Thank you for joining us today!

It is such a joy to spend time with books, food, and friends isn't it? I hope our time today will "fill your bucket" as 2024 gets underway. Remember, this is fun! You are surrounded by friends new and old who enjoy the comforts of a great story.

Our time together will consist of book time and kitchen time. The kitchen time will connect us to a very traditional recipe for Yorkshire Puddings (a.k.a. popovers). The recipe I am using, along with tips for making Yorkshire Puddings, comes from <u>Serious Eats</u>. I will include a QR code for access below.

During book time, we'll use the following pages to guide our conversation but by no means is this meant to limit our talking points. You are encouraged to follow the path, however winding it may be, to the place our discussions draws you.

No. Judgement. Here.



Scan for access to the Yorkshire Pudding recipe

CHOSEN AUTHOR:

Diane Setterfield

QUOTES TO NOTE:

VIDA'S LETTER

"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...When fear and cold make a statue of you in your bed, don't expect hardbones 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." Vida, p. 5)

This quote gives us insight to Vida's world. What does it imply to you?

"There was something in his manner. An intensity.

The moment I set my eyes on him, I thought,

"Aha, what's he after?" (Vida, p. 5)

Upon finishing the novel, it is interesting to reread Vida's letter to Margaret. How does knowing Aurelius's story change how you interpret Vida's reaction to "the strange chap" from the Bradbury Herald?

"...plunging deep into Miss Winter's story was a way of turning my back on my own" (Margaret, p. 282)

Did it work??

MARGARET

"That was that? The words were a curiously understated endnote to the disappearance of Miss Winter's mother. It was clear that Miss Winter didn't think much of Isabelle's abilities as a parent; indeed the word mother seemed absent from her lexicon. Perhaps it was understandable; from what I could see, Isabelle was the least maternal of women. But who was I to judge other people's relations with their mothers?" (p. 110)

What could explain the dismissal of Isabelle so easily by Vida? Does this shed any insight about Vida's lack of maternal instinct?

What does the last sentence tell us about Margaret's own story?

"All morning I struggled with the sensation of stray wisps of one world seeping through the cracks of another. Do you know the feeling when you start reading a new book before the membrane of the last one has had time to close behind you? ... Well, it was like that. All day I had been prey to distractions. Thoughts memories, feelings, irrelevant fragments of my own life, playing havoc with my concentration."

Vida's story and Margaret's story seem to congeal here. What could be on the other side of the metaphorical "membrane" to which Margaret refers? (What is the significance of Margaret's birthday?)

Hester

"I do not like what I cannot fathom." (p. 323)

What insight does this quote, and the diary excerpt (p. 318-319) provide about Hester?

VIDA

"When I was born, "Miss Winter told me, "I was no more than a subplot." (p. 351)

This is (finally) the beginning of Vida's story. In your mind, what does Vida mean by using the word subplot?

"It is a painful thing to love a twin." (Vida, p. 366)

How does this statement ring true for both Margaret and Vida?

"Hers was a mad fire; it couldn't catch; I knew it couldn't.

But I could not reassure myself. Her desire for flames

was all the kindling she needed. All she had to do was

look at something for it to spark. The incendiary magic

she possessed was so strong she could set fire to water if

she wanted to badly enough." (Vida, p. 374)

For the reader, what notion does thie above quote solidify?

"In the meantime, the girl in the mist was going to have to come out of the shadows. It was time to stop playing and grow up." (Vida, p. 247)

QUESTIONS TO PONDER

Why do you think Vida Winter omitted the thirteenth tale from her book Thirteen Tales of Change and Desperation?

Why would one consider The
Thirteenth Tale a ghost story? (One should always pay attention to ghosts, shouldn't one, Miss Lea?"
Vida, p. 58)
Who would you consider the "ghosts" in the story?

Margaret's reading preferences are mentioned throughout the book. How did this impact your impression of her? What insight did it provide? What connections can be made between Margaret's reaching choices and Setterfield's *The Thirteenth Tale*?

Vida frequently changes points of view from third to first person, from "they" to "we" to "I," in telling Margaret her story. The first time she uses "I" is in the recounting of Isabelle's death and Charlie's disappearance. What did you make of this shifting when Margaret points it out on page 204?

When did you first suspect Vida's true identity? What were some clues?

We know that the novel takes place in Yorkshire, but we do not have a specific time period, although there are hints. What parts of the novel seem timeless to you, and what parts provide you with an idea of when events took place?

Who perished in the fire and how can we be certain?

RELATIONSHIPS

AND THERE SIGNIFICANCE

Let's explore the different mother/daughter relationships in the book. How do they differ and what are commonalities? How did the specific relationships impact their lives?

- Mathilde Isabelle
- Isabelle Emmeline, Adeline
- Mrs. Lea Margaret
- Victim of George Vida
- *Missus Emmeline, Adeline, Vida
- Mrs. Love Aurelius
- Emmeline Aurelius
- George Angelfield and Mathilde Angelfield
- George Angelfield and Isabelle Angelfield
- Charlie Angelfield and Isabelle Angelfield
- Roland March and Isabelle Angelfield
- Adeline and Emmeline
- John the Dig and the Missus
- Dr. Maudsley and Hester
- Emmeline and Vida
- Margaret Lea and Ivan Lea
- Margaret Lea and Vida Winter