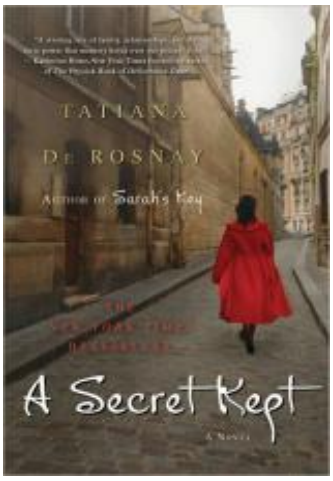
A Secret Kept

by Tatiana de Rosnay



About the Book

This stunning new novel from Tatiana de Rosnay, author of the acclaimed *New York Times* bestseller **Sarah?s Key**, plumbs the depths of complex family relationships and the power of a past secret to change everything in the present.

It all began with a simple seaside vacation, a brother and sister recapturing their childhood. Antoine Rey thought he had the perfect surprise for his sister Mélanie?s birthday: a weekend by the sea at Noirmoutier Island, where the pair spent many happy childhood summers playing on the beach. It had been too long, Antoine thought, since they?d returned to the island --- over 30 years, since their mother died and the family holidays ceased. But the island?s haunting beauty triggers more than happy memories; it reminds Mélanie of something unexpected and deeply disturbing about their last island summer. When, on the drive home to Paris, she finally summons the courage to reveal what she knows to Antoine, her emotions overcome her and she loses control of the car.

Recovering from the accident in a nearby hospital, Mélanie tries to recall what caused her to crash. Antoine encounters an unexpected ally: sexy, streetwise Angèle, a mortician who will teach him new meanings for the words life, love and death. Suddenly, however, the past comes swinging back at both siblings, burdened with a dark truth about their mother, Clarisse.

Trapped in the wake of a shocking family secret shrouded by taboo, Antoine must confront his past and also his troubled relationships with his own children. How well does he really know his mother, his children, even himself? Suddenly fragile on all fronts as a son, a husband, a brother and a father, Antoine Rey will learn the truth about his family and himself the hard way. By turns thrilling, seductive and destructive, with a lingering effect that is bittersweet and redeeming, **A Secret Kept** is the story of a modern family, the invisible ties that hold it together, and the impact it has throughout life.

Discussion Guide

1. Discuss the different narrative structures employed in A Secret Kept. What do you think the author intended to achieve with each? Do you prefer one over the others?

2. How does the author describe the classic, wealthy 16th arrondissement of Paris --- where Blanche Rey's apartment and the avenue Kleber one are located --- as opposed to where Antoine lives, on the Left bank? What does this tell you about the Rey family?

3. Part of the novel takes place on Noirmoutier Island which is connected to the west coast of France by the Gois Passage. Why is Antoine so attached to Gois Passage? Do you see any parallels between the author?s descriptions of this place and the story as a whole?

4. What was your impression of Antoine at the beginning of the book? What about at the end? Over the course of the novel, how does he change and what does he learn about himself?

5. Discuss the different themes and imagery of death that come up in the novel and that Antoine has to face. Did you find them morbid? Or realistic?

6. Did you like the character of the sexy, streewise mortician Angèle Rouvatier? What makes her different from other heroines and what do you think she represents? In what ways does she have a hand in the changes in Antoine?s character?

7. François and Antoine Rey are two opposite personalities, as fathers, husbands, brothers, and sons. Discuss specific differences you see. Do you believe Antoine will ever get through to his father? What exactly do you think François knows about Clarisse, her life, her death?

8. Clarisse Rey is the invisible woman of this book. Yet her letters, photos, and the film that Antoine watches at the end, as well as Gaspard's confession, gradually expose her. What kind of woman was she? What do we learn about her? Compare her to Angèle, Melanie, and Astrid.

9. How do Melanie and Antoine react differently when they discover the truth about their mother and her death? Why do you think that Melanie chooses not to remember? Do you think you would react more like Melanie or Antoine?

10. This novel explores taboo subjects and family secrets in a conservative French bourgeois society. Discuss those subjects and whether they would be taboo if the novel were set in the USA. What do you think really happened the day Clarisse went to confront Blanche?

11. Do you personally believe that family secrets should be revealed or hidden forever? In cases like the novel?s, do you think the truth is more painful than lying?

12. If you have read **Sarah's Key** --- also by de Rosnay --- can you point to any themes that are found in both books?

Author Bio

Tatiana de Rosnay is the author of over 10 novels, including the *New York Times* bestseller SARAH'S KEY, an international sensation with over 11 million copies in 44 countries worldwide. Together with Dan Brown, Stephenie Meyer and Stieg Larsson, she has been named one of the top 10 fiction writers in Europe. De Rosnay lives in Paris, France.

Critical Praise

A SECRET KEPT is a beautiful and haunting exploration of wanting --- and not wanting --- to understand one's past, of learning to see parents as individuals, whether the parents in question are our own or ourselves.

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