



## **The Lost Garden**

*Katharine Swartz*

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## **The Lost Garden** Katharine Swartz

Marin Ellis is in search of a new start after her father and his second wife die in a car accident, and at thirty-seven she is made guardian of her fifteen-year-old half-sister Rebecca. They leave Hampshire for the picturesque village of Goswell on the Cumbrian coast, and settle into Bower House on the edge of the village church property. When a door to a walled garden captures Rebecca's interest, Marin becomes determined to open it and discover what is hidden beneath the bramble inside. She enlists the help of local gardener Joss Fowler, and together the three of them begin to uncover the garden's secrets. In 1919, nineteen-year-old Eleanor Sanderson, daughter of Goswell's vicar, is grieving the loss of her beloved brother Walter, who was killed just days before the Armistice was signed. Eleanor retreats into herself and her father starts to notice how unhappy she is. As spring arrives, he decides to hire someone to make a garden for Eleanor, and draw her out of - or at least distract her from - her grief and sorrow. Jack Taylor is in his early twenties, a Yorkshire man who has been doing odd jobs in the village, and when Eleanor's father hires him to work on the vicarage gardens, a surprising - and unsuitable - friendship unfolds.

## **The Lost Garden Details**

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Author : Katharine Swartz

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## From Reader Review The Lost Garden for online ebook

### **Jeanne Adamek says**

This novel was very good. I love dual time line stories especially when history mixes in at least one of the time lines. The author did this extremely well giving me a novel that I felt portrayed grief, understanding and forgiveness with just the right touch.

I loved the characterization of a number of Katharine Swartz's characters (Marin, Katherine and Jack) and especially how she surprisingly led these characters away from their own comfort zone making them exceedingly human and more likeable.

Recommended 4.5 stars

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### **Shaz Goodwin says**

I found Eleanor and Marin to be relatable, becoming emotionally attached to them. Both are trying to find a place to belong – Eleanor in a world that has changed as a result of the First World War and Marin in the present time coming to terms with familial rejection that is still shaping her life.

Despite the different societal expectations in the dual timelines, Jack and Joss both hide secrets that alienate them and both have to come to terms with this before a chance at moving forward.

The secondary characters in each timeline also have their own feelings that they need to come to terms with.

I loved the setting in Goswell, both the elements (used to good effect!) and in the present time, the villagers themselves.

Eleanor's sister Katherine volunteered both before the war and afterwards (although in a different capacity) and to pull Eleanor out of the gloom she can't get out of, takes her with her. These scenes are very poignant and serve to show Eleanor that life does go on - the wounded soldiers are making a life for themselves even if it isn't the one they saw for themselves before the war.

I loved the parallels between the two narratives and how discoveries impacted on each. We get to know just enough before moving smoothly between the timelines.

The Lost Garden is a gently paced read that nonetheless kept me engaged. With an emotional ending that is full of hope, the story shows us that no matter the darkness you might be feeling, letting others in will help you believe and trust in the world once again (Marin) and that even with others against your decisions (Eleanor) you can still experience hope for the future.

I would like to thank Lovereading for providing a paperback copy in exchange for an honest review via the reader review panel.

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## A Reader's Heaven says

(I received a free copy of this book from Net Galley in exchange for an honest review.)

*Marin Ellis is in search of a new start after her father and his second wife die in a car accident, and at thirty-seven she is made guardian of her fifteen-year-old half-sister Rebecca. They leave Hampshire for the picturesque village of Goswell on the Cumbrian coast, and settle into Bower House on the edge of the village church property. When a door to a walled garden captures Rebecca's interest, Marin becomes determined to open it and discover what is hidden beneath the bramble inside. She enlists the help of local gardener Joss Fowler, and together the three of them begin to uncover the garden's secrets. In 1919, nineteen-year-old Eleanor Sanderson, daughter of Goswell's vicar, is grieving the loss of her beloved brother Walter, who was killed just days before the Armistice was signed. Eleanor retreats into herself and her father starts to notice how unhappy she is. As spring arrives, he decides to hire someone to make a garden for Eleanor, and draw her out of - or at least distract her from - her grief and sorrow. Jack Taylor is in his early twenties, a Yorkshire man who has been doing odd jobs in the village, and when Eleanor's father hires him to work on the vicarage gardens, a surprising - and unsuitable - friendship unfolds.*

Dual narratives, separated by time, can be quite difficult to get right. Tying the threads together is something that some authors just don't seem to manage perfectly. This is one of those books...

For me, the issues really began at the start - slow to get going, hard to get invested in Marin's story while the flashbacks to Eleanor's story were happening. It took far too much of my time getting used to the style that the author employed for this opening.

Then, once we got the "introductions" of the two timelines out of the way, the story really did start to pick up. I did get wrapped up in the historical aspect of the story - so much so, that I was disappointed a little every time we went back to the present day. There was something quite magical about the way those historical sections were written.

And then it all crashed down into a steaming pile of junk when we got to the end. The need to wrap up the whole 350 pages in a tell-not-show summary at the end was sudden and unexpected - and unappreciated. I had finally decided to like this book, despite the slow start, and then this ending happened. And I was disappointed.

Would I read more of this series? Quite possibly. I think there is a REALLY good book in the future. I hope to read it...

Paul  
ARH

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## Beckie Burnham says

Katharine Swartz takes her readers back to the small Cumbrian village of Goswell in her novel *The Lost Garden*. Contemporary and historical story lines intersect in this tale of love, grief and forgiveness. This novel is very British and will appeal to the Anglophile reader.

Marin finds herself the guardian of her 15-year old sister following the deaths of her father and step-mother. Awkward with relationships, Marin bravely faces making a home and life for Rebecca. After moving to Cumbria, Marin finds herself intrigued with a walled garden at the back of her property. She becomes determined to discover the secrets it and a photograph taken almost 100 years previous hold. Eleanor is the subject of the photograph, and her story of lost innocence and enduring love captures Marin and the reader's imaginations.

Swartz's characters are very realistic and relatable. Their hopes and fears, flaws and triumphs are well-written. She also does a great job making the setting an important part of the story. As Marin clears away the brambles that have overtaken the walled garden, suppressed emotions are exposed, griefs are revealed and forgiveness is offered. The grief expressed is more of what could have been rather than what has actually been lost — regrets over lost opportunities. The freedom found in taking responsibility is also expressed.

A rather quiet novel — there isn't a lot of action — *The Lost Garden* will make the reader think. And in my case, want to hop on a plane and head to the windy coast of Cumbria!

Recommended.

Audience: adults.

(I received this book courtesy of Lion Hudson and Kregel. All opinions expressed are mine alone.)

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### **La Mala 🌸 says**

*An ARC of this book was provided by NetGalley in exchange for an honest review* Thank you, thank you so much!

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### **Irene says**

Provided by publisher and Netgalley. A lovely book featuring 2 women almost a century apart in the same garden wilderness. Loved the style of writing and the women's stories brought to life by Katharine Swartz. Will definitely read other books from this author.

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### **Beth says**

I have always been drawn to dual-time narratives. I love the idea of past and present intersecting and exploring ways that the past can affect the present and the future. Although there were times in *The Lost Garden* that I wished for the story to go deeper, I did enjoy the interweaving of present and past portrayed. It took me a while to warm up to the story, especially the portions set in post-World War I, which is surprising because I usually prefer historical stories over contemporary. For me, there was a bit too much time spent on set-up, but at the same time, there wasn't enough build-up to ever be fully emotionally invested in Eleanor's story. Once the story got to the halfway point, at least in the historical story line, I did start to feel more invested as Eleanor's character grew and developed.

In the present-day, I found Marin's story much more compelling, if somewhat predictable at times. I really loved the setting that Katharine created in the village of Goswell and the home that Marin chooses for herself and Rebecca, a home called Bower House, which includes a mysterious garden, walled, overgrown and wild. As two estranged half-sisters, Marin and Rebecca really have no way to relate to one another. Their interactions had a very life-like quality to them that really spoke to how individuals process and move on from grief.

The historical segments create a nice parallel to this in that Eleanor and her family are still mourning the loss of brother and son Walter. While Marin and Rebecca hold in their grief in because of self-induced isolation, this family living in Post-WWI Goswell held in their grief due to social constraints of the time. Eleanor defies that convention in the sense that she dares to feel hope again, even in a nation that is mourning and still trying to come to terms with a broken generation of men. While physical wounds were addressed, the mental and emotional state of returned soldiers was often overlooked during that time. I thought Katharine portrayed this very realistically in the relationship between Eleanor's sister, Katherine, and Katherine's betrothed, James. These details as well as the work that Katherine and Eleanor did to help permanently injured soldiers find a new place in society served to give the story a genuine feel.

I would describe the story's pace as gentle and a bit slower, but still engaging. There aren't any highly tense scenes, although there are some very emotional scenes and secrets to be revealed – Katherine makes parallels of both aspects in each storyline, and I think it is intended for those comparisons to be made. I love when story's connect the past and present on a very human level, that despite a great gap in time, some things are always going to remain the same. I definitely feel like it is one of the most compelling elements of the story.

Now that I've read *The Lost Garden*, I hope to go back and eventually read the first book in the Tales from Goswell. I think fans of Melanie Dobson's recent books would enjoy *The Lost Garden*, as would many readers who enjoy dual-time narratives, with equal attention on both the historical and contemporary story lines.

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### **Helen says**

“She wondered who would open this gate one day in the future. Another girl, another gardener? Would they fill it with flowers, even butterflies? She almost smiled to think of the garden being redeemed and loved again”.

To my mind, this is historical fiction at it's finest. And what is even better - you get two stories for the price of one! Katharine Swartz has interwoven two fabulous stories here: one set just after the war in 1919, the other in modern day with the ‘lost garden’ being the common thread.

Full review at:

<http://greatreadsandtealeaves.blogspot.com/2014/07/the-lost-garden-by-katharine-swartz.html>

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### **Carole Jarvis says**

Reviewed at The Power of Words: <http://bit.ly/1gUfEKf>

The Lost Garden by Katharine Swartz is a moving story with beautiful prose, rich characterization, and an atmospheric quality - simply my kind of relationship drama. This is an emotional story involving two sets of sisters - Marin and Rebecca in contemporary times, and Eleanor and Katherine almost 100 years earlier - both occupying the same plot of land and both dealing with grief. Every chapter alternates between Marin and Eleanor's voice, in a way that was never confusing, and I was equally invested in both stories, loving the way they connected.

This is a character-driven story, and readers won't find fast-paced action or passionate chemistry between the characters, yet the emotions simmer beneath the surface. Foundations are laid during the first several chapters, with the pace picking up and building to a powerful and beautiful ending. Thanks to Katharine's quality writing, I was caught up in the vividly-conveyed Cumbria setting, which felt like a major character, and given much cause for reflection.

Beginning shortly after the signing of the Armistice in 1918, Eleanor's story was especially compelling as she faced the effects of war - from the death of a loved one to the inexplicable changes in those who returned . . . "The men who did come back were not the same as those who had left. . . . These men were gaunt, hollow-eyed strangers; some of them missing limbs, others blind or scarred. And even the ones with no visible wounds at all still seemed different - somehow less."

When it comes to drama, there's just something special about British characters and settings. It was easy for me to connect with these characters as they struggled with loss and not knowing how to just "be." The Lost Garden is real and honest, but not depressing, and spiritual themes are woven throughout. I hope to read more books by Katharine Swartz. Highly recommended to those who enjoy relational drama with rich characterization.

Thank you to Kregel Publications for providing a copy of this book in exchange for my honest review.

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### **Becky says**

The Lost Garden by Katharine Swartz first caught my attention because of the stunning cover (probably my favorite cover so far in 2015), and it kept my attention because of the beautiful prose and sweetly gripping story line.

The Lost Garden is not a particularly fast read—it's not one of those novels that moves at breakneck pace or is full of passionate romance. But it is a beautiful novel—one that you read slowly so as to savor the experience as the story unfolds.

Swartz weaves her dual narratives in such a way that as Marin is learning the secrets of the garden and its inhabitants, those events are unfolding in Eleanor's time. The narrative switches between past and present with each chapter, and I never found myself more interested in one timeline than another—both are equally fascinating.

In both timelines, the main characters deal with grief in wildly different ways. Yet their journeys to love and healing do mirror each other in an interesting fashion. Both story lines would be compelling on their own, but the intertwining of the two makes for a much richer and emotional reading experience. This is my first time reading a Katharine Swartz novel, but I'm sure it won't be my last.

Disclosure of Material Connection: I received this book free for review from Kregel Publications. I was not required to write a positive review. The opinions I have expressed are my own.

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### **Amy says**

This dual-time-period narrative started off a bit too slow for my taste, with several long passages of flashbacks, but eventually picked up quite nicely and really engaged me emotionally. Then the abrupt, wrap-it-all-up-in-a-telling-narrative ending left a sour taste in my mouth at the end. A sound, if not exactly stellar, read. Recommended for fans of Susan Meissner and Rachel Hauck's *The Wedding Dress*.

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### **Michelle says**

This book is beautiful inside and out. I loved every page and really didn't want the story to end. I feel like this storyline could have kept going chapters more and I felt it ended too abruptly. The setting is wonderful as Marin and Rebecca move into a new village and start a new life. The book switches between 1919 to present day and I enjoyed both sides. The past takes you more into the "lost garden" and how it came about. Eleanor's family is still reeling from the war and losing her brother, I love the history part! There are so many issues and personalities that blend these pages together. The only thing is the name of every male in the book starts with J and made it really confusing as to who was saying what.

I loved it and highly recommend this book and the author!

Five stars!

"Thanks to Kregel for offering me a free copy in exchange for an honest review."

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### **Clare O'Beara says**

This is an interesting women's fiction story, centring on the stagnation and thorniness of grief. If that sounds daunting, don't worry. The grief is expressed and made visible in the form of an old herb garden, overgrown with brambles. Marin in her mid thirties and her half sister Rebecca aged fifteen, come to live in Cumbria in a cottage in a village, as Marin is now her sister's guardian. They have a garden without realising, as it is hidden behind walls. I'd have been over the wall or up a ladder when the door didn't open, but with the aid of a gardener they eventually get to see the area and realise clearing it will provide them with a huge task.

Interspersed we get the 1918 story of the original family, and young Eleanor who dreads the telegram informing them of her brother's death. Her life seems to halt, because even after the war ends, the Spanish flu is killing people weakened by hunger, while her family doesn't know how to adjust. Halfway through the story Eleanor finally picks herself up and starts to construct a flower garden where the bramble-grown herb garden stands. As she gets more into the task, so in modern times we see the two newcomers getting more involved in village life and Marin tackling the brambles, without much help from the sulking, moody

Rebecca.

The two tales mirror each other well, Marin learning past village history as the events unfold in the earlier timeline. Eleanor's I found the slowest, perhaps because women didn't have many options in those days. I liked the inclusion of blind men learning to type in Braille, a good touch. The tool Marin's gardener calls a strimmer I call a hedge-trimmer; a strimmer generally won't cut brambles. He would have needed to provide her with a can of petrol as one tank doesn't go far. And I was surprised that we see no animals but the occasional sheep. In the rural village we'd surely expect horses, dogs, cats and wild birds; with horses being part of daily life in 1918 because there was no petrol.

Enjoy.

I received an e-ARC. This is an unbiased review.

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### **Cleo Bannister says**

If you like a good dual time-line novel then this is probably for you and as a bonus both the past and the present tales are equally interesting.

Marin took her younger half-sister Rebecca on a trip to give them a break from their normal routine. Rebecca's parents, and Marin's father, had died in a car-crash three months previously and Marin had found herself in charge of the bewildered fifteen year old so a tip away was just what they both needed. When they came across the Bower House in Goswell an impulsive decision saw them uprooting and moving to the village.

In 1919 Eleanor Sanderson is also grieving, for her brother Walter who died just before Armistice Day. Eleanor has her family about her but as the realities of the war being over become apparent she had to stop wallowing in what she had lost and find an interest.

Both stories, unsurprisingly given the title are linked by a garden. In the past Eleanor has the Vicarage gardener to help her transform the gated garden into something beautiful and magical. In the present Marin borrows a strimmer to cut back the brambles that have overtaken the space. As she gets to know the other villagers Marin decides to explore the history of her garden and with a tantalising photograph begins to uncover the past.

Although the two women's tales are linked by grief, they both explore how to overcome it and in turn embrace life and learn to forgive those that have wronged them. The secondary characters are equally as interesting, particularly Eleanor's spiky elder sister Katherine who has hidden depths. Katherine is the one to suspect that Eleanor's interest in the garden has as much to do with the gardener Jack Taylor, as the seed catalogues she pours over. Even as society is changing in the post war years a relationship between the vicar's daughter and a common gardener is not going to be well-received but is Eleanor mature enough to proceed with caution? Of course not! Where's the fun or story in that. Marin also begins a tentative relationship, something that is relatively new to her too.

This was a gentle story which was bound to appeal to this reader with the echo of The Secret Garden where nature lends a helping hand to soothe the emotions. The past section was well-researched with the details

included natural to the storyline. An all-round enjoyable escape with a few lump-in-the-throat moments which I consider essential for this type of story.

I'd like to thank the publisher Lion Fiction for allowing me to read a copy of this book for review purposes. *The Lost Garden* will be published on 15 May 2015.

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### **Paula Sealey says**

Present day, and Marin and her half-sister Rebecca move to the Cumbrian coast after the death of their father and Rebecca's mother, they settle in a unique home called the Bower House and discover a walled garden, overgrown, but holding a mystery they are determined to solve with the help of local gardener, Joss.

In 1919, Eleanor is grieving for her brother who was killed in the war. She decides to makeover the Bower House garden with the help of newly arrived handyman Jack. As they begin clearing the way for plants, they start to have feelings for each other, but Jack refuses to act on them and remains elusive about the reason.

A wonderful dual timeline story, and unusually for me, I enjoyed both parts in equal measure. Eleanor and Jack's story played out beautifully with an unexpected ending, and the involvement of Marin, Rebecca and Joss with a parallel type of storyline set in the present day was a clever addition. The author writes movingly about grief and its effects which helped endear me to certain characters, and I adored the descriptions of the garden in both eras. A lovely read.

\*Thank you to the publishers for providing a review copy through NetGalley.

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