



The Winter Garden

By Jane Thynne

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Berlin, 1937. The city radiates glamour and ambition. But danger lurks in every shadow...Anna Hansen, a bride-to-be, is a pupil at one of Hitler's notorious Nazi Bride Schools, where young women are schooled on the art of being an SS officer's wife. Then, one night, she is brutally murdered and left in the gardens of the school. Her death will be hushed up and her life forgotten. Clara Vine is an actress at Berlin's famous Ufa studios by day and an undercover British Intelligence agent by night. She knew Anna and is disturbed by news of her death. She cannot understand why someone would want to cover it up, but she soon discovers that Anna's murder is linked to a far more ominous secret. With the newly abdicated Edward VIII and his wife Wallis set to arrive in Berlin, and the Mitford sisters dazzling on the social scene, Clara must work in the darkness to find the truth and send it back to London. It is a dangerous path she treads, and it will take everything she has to survive...The Winter Garden is published as Woman in the Shadows in the US.

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Editorial Review

Review

'The perfect fusion of history, suspense and high romance' The Times on Black Roses 'A thoughtful but fast-moving novel' Reader's Digest on Black Roses 'This well-researched story unfolds with utterly knuckle-whitening suspense, and it was my favourite escapist read of the year' Saga Magazine on Black Roses 'Terrific' -- Elizabeth Buchan The Sunday Times on Black Roses 'Jane Thynne's smooth writing, sensitive understanding of the era and sharp observations combine into an excellent historical thriller' -- Jessica Mann Literary Review on Black Roses 'Fast-paced and gripping' The Sunday Times on The Winter Garden 'A thoroughly enjoyable read: fast-paced, atmospheric and genuinely suspenseful' Mail on Sunday on The Winter Garden 'Both historically fascinating and a proper thriller' Reader's Digest on The Winter Garden 'An absolute cracker of a read...Thynne expertly maintains the suspense, while evoking the tension of Berlin as the city gathers its strength for war' The Times on The Winter Garden 'A thumpingly good read with a strong denouement' Mail on Sunday on The Winter Garden 'So convincing one forgets that it is a piece of fiction' The Lady on The Winter Garden 'Pre-war Germany's atmosphere of reprehension, terror and Nazi hubris is vividly evoked in a gripping but sad tale' -- Jessica Mann Literary Review on The Winter Garden 'A tale of suspense and intrigue...Thynne's grasp of the period is first-class, and she has woven in a tender wartime love story' Mail on Sunday on A War of Flowers 'Darkly brooding horror hangs over Germany; an irresistible page-turner packed with historical detail and told from a most unusual perspective' Kirkus Reviews on Faith and Beauty 'This is the fourth of the addictive 'Clara Vine' novels, set in Berlin on the eve of war. Clara is a half-German British agent with access to the inner circle of Nazi wives. Portraits of women such as Magda Goebbels and Eva Braun are ruthlessly truthful, but drawn with compassion. It is early 1939, and Clara is drawn into investigating the murder of a girl at the League of Faith and Beauty finishing school. Brilliant' Saga magazine on Faith and Beauty

About the Author

Jane Thynne was born in Venezuela and educated in London. She graduated from Oxford University with a degree in English and joined the BBC as a journalist. She has also worked at The Sunday Times, The Daily Telegraph and The Independent, as well as for numerous British magazines. She appears as a broadcaster on Radio 4. Jane is married to the writer Philip Kerr. They have three children and live in London. Find out more at www.janethynne.com connect with her on Facebook or follow her on Twitter @janethynne

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Chapter

1

Clara Vine swung her car through the wrought-iron gates of the villa and braked violently to avoid a peacock crossing the drive. As the bird strutted onto the lawn, dragging its magnificent lapis lazuli tail, Clara was sure she divined an arrogant glint in its beady eye. Still, she was relieved she hadn't hit it. It wouldn't do to damage any property belonging to the Reichsminister of Enlightenment and Propaganda, even if that property did happen to be an unwanted pet. The birds were leftovers from Joseph Goebbels's magnificent Olympics party the previous year, when Peacock Island in the Wannsee had been turned into a fairy-tale playground for two thousand guests, filled with dancing and fireworks. Film stars, singers, and all kinds of celebrities mingled with diplomats and high-ranking visitors. The papers had been full of it for days. After the balloons and the banners had been packed away, some of the birds had ended up here, even though Frau Doktor Goebbels detested them. Their jeweled crowns and magnificent displays concealed a nasty temper,

and the stillness of Schwanenwerder was pierced constantly by their shrill cries.

Not that the neighbors would have dreamt of complaining. The Goebbelses' villa, at Inselstrasse 8, was in the most desirable position on this tiny, exclusive enclave. Though it was called an island, it was actually a peninsula, which stretched out from the Grunewald into the lake, connected by a single, narrow road. Surrounded on all sides by water, and wooded with oak, birch, and pine, Schwanenwerder was only a few kilometers from the center of Berlin, yet it might have been another country. It had been colonized a hundred years ago by the very wealthiest of Berlin's society, the bankers, industrialists, and department store owners, who had competed among themselves to build the most tasteful, luxurious country houses and take advantage of Schwanenwerder's restorative air. Since then, in the space of four years, a new elite had emerged to replace them. On the day Hitler came to power, Nazi storm troopers flocked onto the island and raised the swastika flag on its water tower. Most of the homes were now occupied by senior Party figures. Number 8 had been bought by Goebbels at a price far beneath its genuine value from the chairman of the Deutsche Bank, who had been all too eager to sell before his enforced departure abroad. It had a panoramic view of the Greater Wannsee, extensive lawns running down to a boathouse, and a garden ringed with oaks, pines, and fruit trees.

Clara parked the red Opel next to a Mercedes-Benz cabriolet with beige leather seats, checked her lipstick in the rearview mirror, and smoothed her hair beneath her hat. She sat for a second, waiting for her trepidation, like a surge of stage fright, to come under control. Then she stepped out of the car. As she made her way to the front door, a pear, like a tiny, unexploded bomb, dropped beside her into the grass.

The maid showed her into the drawing room, whose French windows at one end led to a flag terrace circled by a balustrade, beyond which was a magnificent view of the lake, edged by the gloomy, impenetrable Grunewald. Now, at five in the afternoon, the sun was a molten orb in a streaked caramel sky, turning the waters of the Wannsee into a sheet of hammered gold. At the end of the garden, Clara could see a private beach and a jetty, where Goebbels kept his motor yacht, Baldur. Seagulls squawked and wheeled in the sky, and farther out in the lake, a couple of fishermen drifted in their boats, hunched over their tranquil lines waiting for pike, like figures from a nineteenth-century painting.

Clara crossed her arms and waited, pretending a nonchalance she did not feel, as she tried, yet again, to work out what Magda Goebbels could possibly want with her.

The message had come that morning out of the blue. A messenger had brought the note to Clara directly onto the set at the Ufa film studios in Babelsberg, where she was filming a romantic comedy called *A Girl for Everything*. He had shouldered his way through the makeup girls and the script man, right into the dazzle of the arc lights, to deliver it. The boy's face was a picture of urgency and intense curiosity, as befitted a summons from Magda Goebbels, wife of Hitler's right-hand man and the woman informally known as the First Lady of the Reich. The other actors had looked on avidly as Clara quickly scanned the message, then folded the note and slipped it in a pocket. Her face, she knew, gave nothing away.

Now Clara walked around the drawing room, assessing the pictures and furniture on display. Last year Goebbels had claimed he was embarrassed to have moved into such a large villa because he hated luxury, yet for the sake of the Reich he could not be expected to receive distinguished guests in his old apartment. One look at this room, however, revealed that his aversion to luxury did not run very deep. The place was furnished in solid bourgeois taste: rich Persian rugs and fat sofas upholstered in satin and watered silk, side tables in restrained nineteenth-century style on a parquet floor polished to a high shine. A Gobelin tapestry hung on the wall, and a Bechstein piano stood in the front window. The standard portrait of the Führer, de rigueur in any Party home, hung above a mantelpiece crowded with family photographs, most of which Clara

had already seen in the newspapers. There was Goebbels in open-necked shirt and sunglasses, at the wheel of his motorboat. The four Goebbels children, Helga, Hilde, Helmut, and Holde, the girls in matching white dresses and ribbons, and Helmut in a sailor suit, sitting in their miniature pony carriage. Goebbels, it was said, insisted on one baby a year. Four children may be enough for a string quartet, he joked, but not enough for a National Socialist. He had publicly promised another five babies for the Reich.

Catching sight of herself in a gold Rococo mirror, Clara scrutinized the picture she presented with a critical eye. She was wearing a buttoned ivory blouse beneath a fitted serge navy suit with a fur collar, her chestnut hair freshly cut in a neat bob. A new, fashionably tilted navy velvet hat. Red Coral lipstick by Max Factor. Lizard-skin clutch bag. Every inch the screen actress whose career was on the rise, though not so successful that she would be recognized on the street. And all of it a façade. Clara was used to a life of deception now. Sometimes deception seemed like an extension of her own being, moving bodily with her as she walked the streets of Berlin or sat with friends in bars or crossed the sets of the Ufa film studios. The Clara Vine she saw in the mirror was both herself and not herself. What the real Clara Vine might look like, she could no longer say.

Though she couldn't fault the image, still Clara felt uneasy. The near miss with the peacock had done nothing to improve her nerves. Behind her she heard the creak of the door and the heavy tread of her hostess.

"You haven't changed a bit!"

It sounded like more of an accusation than a welcome. As Magda Goebbels entered the room, permitting a transitory smile to twitch across her crimson lips, Clara tried to conceal her surprise at the change in her hostess. Even if she had wanted to return Magda's compliment, it was impossible. Four children in five years had done Magda no favors. Clara had seen her often enough in the newspapers, of course, decked out in satin and pearls, hosting grand Party occasions at Hitler's side, presiding at the Mothers' Union and the Winter Relief charity, partying with foreign dignitaries at last year's Olympic games. But, close up, it was a very different picture. Magda was still elegantly turned out in the height of fashion; she wore a Chanel dress in peach silk, and her platinum hair was scalloped tightly against her cheeks. But beneath the rouge, her skin was putty-colored; her mouth was lined, and the dress bulged at the belt. Her body was waging a war between elegance and middle-aged spread, and it seemed the spread was winning.

They sat on low chairs looking out onto the garden while a maid shuffled in, straining under the weight of a tea tray laden with brown bread spread thickly with butter, sponge cake, and Lebkuchen. Magda aligned the handles of the cups precisely and gestured to the girl to pour, wincing as her trembling hand spilled tea into the saucer. Impatiently Magda waved her away.

"I'm sorry about that. She's training. There's a Bride School on the island, and we like to help out by giving their girls a little practice with serving. But I have to say I feel sorry for those poor husbands-to-be."

She waited until the girl had left and closed the door behind her. Then she said: "So, Fräulein Vine. Your career is blossoming, I hear. My husband tells me you are quite the rising star at Ufa now."

"Thank you. And how are you, Frau Doktor?"

"Not too good. I've been at the clinic in Dresden again."

Like most women in Berlin, Magda Goebbels was obsessed with her health. She was always visiting spas and clinics to receive injections purported to calm her nerves.

“I’m afraid I haven’t kept up with your films.” Magda gestured at the family photographs. “My life is rather busy.”

So this was how it was to be. From the first line of the script, Clara could judge the expected dialogue, and she was relieved. Their conversation would be confined to pleasantries. Magda was icy as ever. There would be no reference to what had gone before.

“I’ve been busy too, fortunately.”

“Indeed. You have a new film out now, I see.” In her lap, Magda’s hands were a tight fist of nerves. “I’m trying to remember what it’s called?”

“Madame Bovary. It’s directed by Gerhard Lamprecht. I’m just finishing another, called A Girl for Everything, and in a few weeks I’ll begin a new film with Ernst Udet. The Pilot’s Wife. He plays a Luftwaffe pilot who is shot down, and I’m his wife.”

At the mention of Ernst Udet, Magda Goebbels responded the way everyone, from small boys to middle-aged women, tended to respond. Her eyes brightened and her attention was captured. The subject of aviation in general, and Ernst Udet in particular, was an exciting one at the moment. The handsome fighter ace, with his strikingly blue eyes, deeply cleft chin, and jovial smile, was not just a war hero but a national celebrity. He had been the best friend of Manfred von Richthofen, the Red Baron, and after the war he became a film star, moving to Hollywood and taking up stunt flying for the movies. Now back in Germany, in his forties and unmarried, he was something of a playboy. His lean frame had rounded out, but it suited him, and besides, German women liked their men with some flesh on them. His autobiography had sold millions. Lessing and Co, the cigarette company, had even produced a special Ernst Udet brand, which came in a pretty cobalt tin, bisected by a soaring scarlet biplane.

In the past year, however, Udet had been dragooned into the service of the Reich. At Goering’s insistence he had been appointed head of the Technical Division of the Luftwaffe. He was supposed to be too busy overseeing aircraft manufacture and development to waste his time stunt flying, but still he couldn’t resist it. He was coming into the studio later that week to discuss filming *The Pilot’s Wife*.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Joshua Rodrigue:

The reason why? Because this *The Winter Garden* is an unordinary book that the inside of the book waiting for you to snap the idea but latter it will distress you with the secret it inside. Reading this book close to it was fantastic author who have write the book in such awesome way makes the content within easier to understand, entertaining way but still convey the meaning fully. So , it is good for you because of not hesitating having this anymore or you going to regret it. This amazing book will give you a lot of benefits than the other book have such as help improving your expertise and your critical thinking way. So , still want to hesitate having that book? If I ended up you I will go to the publication store hurriedly.

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