



A Special Place: The Heart of a Dark Matter

By Peter Straub

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A Special Place: The Heart of a Dark Matter By Peter Straub

From the bestselling author of *Ghost Story*, *Shadowland*, and *The Talisman*, a novella-length rumination on the nature of evil.

A Special Place, Peter Straub's first published novella, will come to stand as one of the author's most deeply unsettling works of fiction. A rumination on the nature of evil, the story centers on a boy, Keith Hayward, who is drawn by his nature to an irresistible fascination with death and the taking of life. His father's brother, the good-looking, suave Uncle Till—the infamous ladykiller, who has led a shadowy career as a local celebrity—recognizes his nephew's innermost nature and gleefully tutors him in art of doing ill without getting caught.

Even a cold-blooded sociopath must learn some lessons in survival, in seems, and Uncle Till is only happy to provide a tutorial, in the latest imaginative and disturbing work from one of America's most celebrated horror writers.

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A Special Place: The Heart of a Dark Matter By Peter Straub Bibliography

- Sales Rank: #1521873 in Books
- Published on: 2010-07-20
- Format: Bargain Price
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 8.30" h x .50" w x 5.70" l,
- Binding: Paperback
- 136 pages

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Starred Review. Creepy to the core, this novella shines a terrible light on the backstory of Straub's acclaimed *A Dark Matter* (2010). Young Keith Hayward idolizes his charming, charismatic Uncle Till. When Keith's mother asks Till to talk to Keith after the boy is found dismembering a dead cat, Till recognizes a kindred spirit and begins to instruct Keith on smart, secret ways to pursue his evil endeavors. As the years pass, Keith grows older and bolder in his sadistic pleasures, and when Till comes back into town, Keith finds the perfect way to impress him. Vivid but never overly graphic or grotesque, Straub's words paint horrific pictures of two depraved men. The violence is minimal, but understood in the most subtle of ways. This beautifully horrifying, delightfully disturbing tale of a family tree of evil will stay with the reader long after the last page is done.

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From [Booklist](#)

Straub's fandom will soon feel a frisson of déjà vu reading this, his first singly published novella. It's an extract from *Skylark* (2009), the limited-edition long version of *A Dark Matter* (2010), which relates the backstory of the college student, Keith Hayward, sensationally killed at the novel's climax. By then, Keith is a sociopath on the verge of following his uncle's lead into serial murder. The novella lays out the course of his education for the trade by Uncle Till, right up to his—Keith's—first murder. To Keith, beginning at least at age 12, Till is utterly fascinating, but when the handsome, apparently footloose man returns the interest in the wake of a neighbor's suspicion that Keith has killed her cat and suggests that the boy find and use a special place for his possibly compromising pleasures, fascination becomes enthrallment. A lowering aura like that of the high-school scenes involving the hero's son in David Cronenberg's film *A History of Violence* broods over this immaculately written portrait of a maculate-to-the-max character in formation. -- Ray Olson

Review

"Straub can write circles around most of the authors topping bestseller lists these days." (*Booklist*)

"When Peter Straub turns on all his jets, no one in the scream factory can equal him." (**Stephen King**)

"Peter Straub is a national treasure." (**Lawrence Block**)

"Starred Review. This is high quality disturbing horror. Recommended not only for horror fans but for those who appreciate outstanding writing." (*Library Journal*)

"Frightening. Straub can write superb horror." (*Washington Post*)

"Starred Review. Vivid but never overly graphic or grotesque, Straub's words paint horrific pictures of two depraved men. The violence is minimal, but understood in the most subtle of ways. This beautifully horrifying, delightfully disturbing tale of a family tree of evil will stay with the reader long after the last page is done." (*Publishers Weekly*)

"Straub is a master at creating an otherworldly type of fiction. It has earned him a fierce following." (*New York Daily News*)

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Donna Antonucci:

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