

Mind of Winter

Harper Perennial

By Laura Kasischke

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Introduction

Laura Kasischke, the critically acclaimed and nationally bestselling poet and author of *The Raising*, returns with *Mind of Winter*, a dark and chilling thriller that combines domestic drama with elements of psychological suspense and horror—an addictive tale of denial and guilt that is part Joyce Carol Oates and part Chris Bohjalian.



On a snowy Christmas morning, Holly Judge awakens with the fragments of a nightmare floating on the edge of her consciousness. Something followed them from Russia. Thirteen years ago, she and her husband Eric adopted baby Tatty, their pretty, black-haired Rapunzel, from the Pokrovka Orphanage #2. Now, at fifteen, Tatiana is more beautiful than ever—and disturbingly erratic.

As a blizzard rages outside, Holly and Tatiana are alone. With each passing hour, Tatiana's mood darkens, and her behavior becomes increasingly frightening . . . until Holly finds she no longer recognizes her daughter.

Questions for Discussion

1. Over the course of Tatty's adoption story, Holly sees her as both cloaked in some sort of evil and at other times as a fairy princess. What do you think are some of the complicated emotions that go with adopting a child?
2. Kasischke does an excellent job of making the snow into a constant, ambient presence throughout the novel. What kind of metaphors can you ascribe to the mounting storm?
3. Though not the central focus of the book, one of the themes Kasischke explores is teenage sexuality. What sort of authorial observations does she make about Tatty's beauty and burgeoning sensuality? How do these observations tie into the other themes of the book?
4. What are some of the devices and motifs Kasischke uses to lend an air of eeriness to the entire narrative?
5. Why do you think the author chose to set the story during Christmas?

6. Relationships between mothers and their teenage daughters are famously contentious. In what way does *Mind of Winter* illuminate that dynamic? What point, if any, do you think Kasischke is trying to make about mother-daughter relationships?
7. How did learning the ending alter earlier aspects of the plot for you?
8. Do you think that Holly was always unstable or do you think it was her grief that broke her?
9. Finally, what are some other possible endings you considered while reading the book? Do you think the author intended for those scenarios to enter the reader's mind? If so, why?