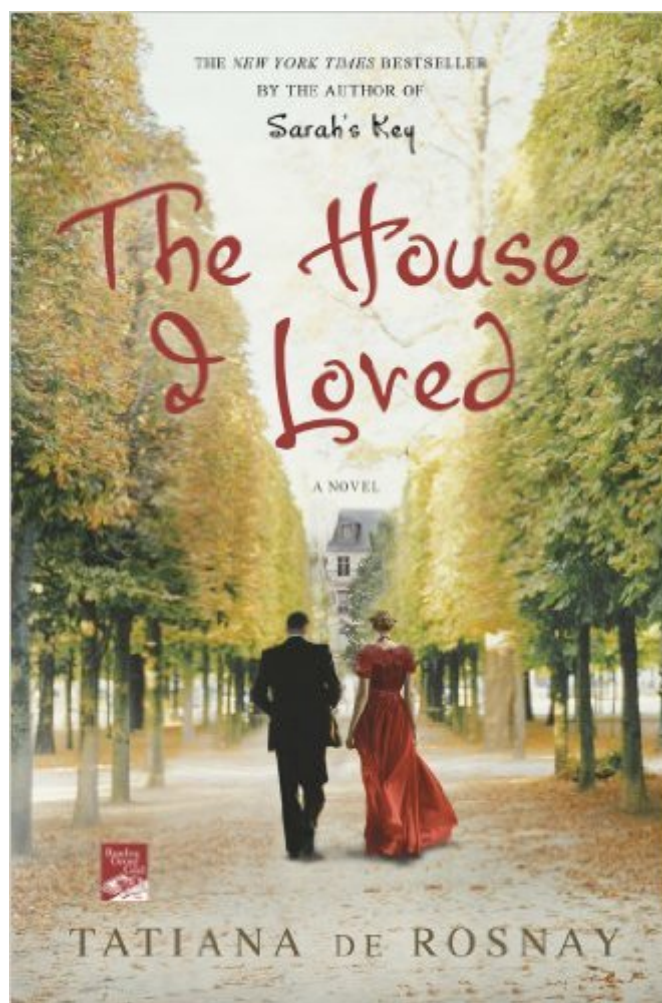


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# The House I Loved



## Synopsis

From Tatiana de Rosnay, the New York Times bestselling author of *Sarah's Key* and *A Secret Kept*, comes *The House I Loved*, an absorbing new novel about one woman's resistance during an Époque that shook Paris to its very core. Paris, France: 1860s. Hundreds of houses are being razed, whole neighborhoods reduced to ashes. By order of Emperor Napoleon III, Baron Haussmann has set into motion a series of large-scale renovations that will permanently alter the face of old Paris, molding it into a "modern city." The reforms will erase generations of history—and in the midst of the tumult, one woman will take a stand. Rose Bazelet is determined to fight against the destruction of her family home until the very end. As others flee, she stakes her claim in the basement of the old house on rue Childebert, ignoring the sounds of change that come closer and closer each day. Attempting to overcome the loneliness of her daily life, she begins to write letters to Armand, her beloved late husband. And as she delves into the ritual of remembering, Rose is forced to come to terms with a secret that has been buried deep in her heart for thirty years.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

This book is actually Rose Bazelet's letter to her deceased husband as she waits for their cherished family home to be torn down during the reconstruction-modernization of Paris in the 1860's. In it, she recalls her life with her husband and children, she updates her husband about her life since his death ten years before, and she divulges some secrets she didn't have the heart to share with him when he was alive. She expresses her feelings as she waits for her approaching death. She reveals

her feelings about the importance of family history as she refuses to surrender to the renovation of "her" Paris. This historical fiction reflects the reconstruction of Paris ordered by Napoleon III and the pain that many may have suffered as they lost the Paris that they knew, grew up with, and loved. This book is filled with carefully-accurate sentiments. The characters and the settings come alive in the pages of this book, giving the reader a glimpse of the old Paris and its charm. This is a wonderful story of love, compassion, strength, and family.

Tatiana DeRosany gained many followers with her successful book, "Sarah's Key." This new book, "The House I Loved," won me over with the descriptions of life in Paris before Napoleon III decided to raze the city and build a monument to his greatness. In doing so, he and his architects swept away homes like so many fallen leaves, disregarding the impact of moving thousands of citizens out of their old homes. They paid for the "inconvenience," but money cannot buy a neighborhood. The book is written as both letters and meditations by Rose Bazelet as she waits for the house to fall down around her. She remembers her youth, her marriage, her friends. The atmosphere of Paris is well defined in this book. The plot is somewhat hazy and then the "big" surprise at the end isn't so big at all. I liked the book well enough, but I wouldn't call it great fiction. For me, the local color aspect wins.

I have mixed feelings about this book, but because it taught me about a period of history I had not yet known, it is deserving of praise. I was completely unaware that during the reign of Napoleon III, the city of Paris was besieged by a radical redesign plan. Medieval alleys, narrow streets, dead ends and ancient buildings were all demolished to create a more modern, efficient and sanitary Paris. But what of all the people residing in these buildings that were laid to waste to make room for wider boulevards, proper sewers, and stone facades? Rose has firmly decided that she will not abandon the house she loved, the house that had been in her late husband's family for generations. The novel is one long letter to her husband in an attempt to justify her defiance and to illustrate her life since his death. The chapters were short and this was a relatively quick read, and though I enjoyed some of Rose's recollections, much of her narrative was redundant. She is overly nostalgic and she constantly laments her contempt for the Prefect (Baron Haussmann, the man behind the urban redevelopment). In the beginning of the book, I can understand why she would have such an attachment to this house, but as she reveals the horrible memories she also associates with it, it made me frustrated. It's not only that she invests such emotion to a house that has brought her both happiness and pain, but Rose is not an entirely likeable character. She's a bit haughty, vain, and

insolent. There are other characters that I really liked, especially Rose's tenant and flower shop owner Alexandrine and the local book store proprietor. I felt there was a duality to Rose that was not entirely reconciled. As a piece of historical fiction, it was entirely effective in making me want to learn about the subject of the renovations of Paris in the 19th century. It was not exceptionally written, but I read it quickly and did enjoy aspects of it.

I love Paris and was excited to get a book that dealt with the era of Paris's reinvention. However, this book did not deliver on that, nor on any storyline that was worth the 200+ pages. The book was written as a letter from an elderly woman to her long dead husband, who's family home was being razed to make way for Baron Haussmann's new boulevards. The writing was barely worthy of a Harlequin Romance novel and the "big secret" could be guessed from as early as page 50. I think that I'll have to stick to non fiction accounts of the era and the process.

I seem to be in the minority here, but.....I finished this book this morning and LOVED it! From the beginning, I just knew it wasn't going to have a "feel good" ending. AND that's okay. I feel the author wrote the story realistically, not the way readers maybe thought she should. de Rosnay stayed true to the story she was telling. Yes, I'm a confirmed Francophile, but there was SO much more to this story. But I did very much enjoy reading, once again, about my beloved Paris. I connected with Rose and some of the other characters very easily. I thought the author did a superb job of creating her character. Almost felt like I was there with Rose, listening to and observing her story as it unfolded. Over all....a most definite FIVE for this book. Very well done!

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