



In Parallel ***A Yorkshire Childhood***

Janet Barker

Janet Barker's *In Parallel* is a true and beguiling account of growing up in the years either side of World War II. A much-loved only child, her story is nevertheless a tumultuous one. Driven from Hull by the terrors of the Blitz, the sudden death of her father leaves eight year-old Janet and her mother stranded in a vast public house in the Yorkshire coalfield.

In Parallel tells what life was really like in the 1930s and 1940s, when death threatened from the skies, rations were short, and the 11-plus exam sent childhood friends separate ways. The author's vivid recollections bring to life a diverse cast: her footloose grandfather; the strange Miss de Lacey, mistress of malapropisms; 'Mr Chesterfield', a friend who turned stalker; and the newspapermen and women she worked with as a reporter, including a young Michael Parkinson.

But mainly this is a family story, shot through with laughter and tears. We meet relatives such as Aunt Nancy, who kept her family going despite a reprobate husband, and Aunt Clara, carrying bravely on after the tragic deaths of her sons. And then there is the author's mother, Dorothy, a woman of real character who calmly coped with turns of fate, kindly or otherwise.



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