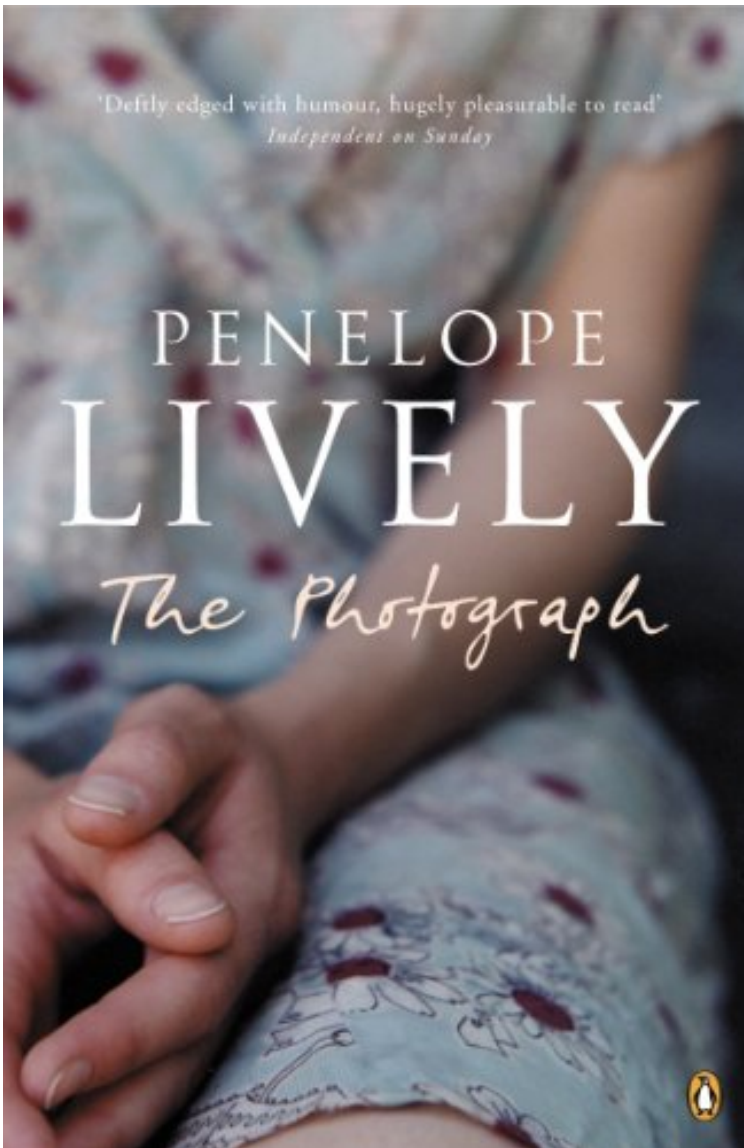


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The Photograph



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Description :

Prsentation de l'diteurA seductive and hugely suspenseful novel about what can happen when you look too closely into the past; The Photograph is the thirteenth novel by Booker Prize winning author Penelope Lively.Searching through a little-used cupboard at home, Glyn Peters chances upon a photograph he has never seen before. Taken in high summer, many years earlier, it shows his wife, Kath, holding hands with another man.Glyn's work as a historian should have inured him to unexpected findings and reversals, but he is ill-prepared for this radical shift in perception. His mind fills with questions. Who was the man? Who took the photograph? Where was it taken? When? Had Kath planned for him to find out all along?As Glyn begins to search for answers, he, and those around him, find the certainties of the past and present slip away, and

the picture of the beautiful woman they all thought they knew distort. 'One of Britain's most talented and experienced writers. The closer you look the more mystery you see' The Times Penelope Lively is the author of many prize-winning novels and short-story collections for both adults and children. She has twice been shortlisted for the Booker Prize: once in 1977 for her first novel, *The Road to Lichfield*, and again in 1984 for *According to Mark*. She later won the 1987 Booker Prize for her highly acclaimed novel *Moon Tiger*. Her other books include *Going Back*; *Judgement Day*; *Next to Nature*, *Art*; *Perfect Happiness*; *Passing On*; *City of the Mind*; *Cleopatra's Sister*; *Heat Wave*; *Beyond the Blue Mountains*, a collection of short stories; *Oleander*, *Jacaranda*, a memoir of her childhood days in Egypt; *Spiderweb*; her autobiographical work, *A House Unlocked*; *The Photograph*; *Making It Up*; *Consequences*; *Family Album*, which was shortlisted for the 2009 Costa Novel Award, and *How It All Began*. She is a popular writer for children and has won both the Carnegie Medal and the Whitbread Award. She was appointed CBE in the 2001 New Year's Honours List, and DBE in 2012. Penelope Lively lives in London.

Extrait Kath. Kath steps from the landing cupboard, where she should not be. The landing cupboard is stacked high with what Glyn calls low-use material: conference papers and student references and offprints, including he hopes an offprint that he needs right now for the article on which he is working. The strata in here go back to his postgraduate days, in no convenient sequential order but all jumbled up and juxtaposed. A crisp column of Past and Present is wedged against a heap of tattered files spewing forth their contents. Forgotten students drift to his feet as he rummages, and lie reproachful on the floor: 'Susan Cochrane's contributions to my seminar have been perfunctory'; Labelled boxes of photographs - Aerial, Bishops Munby 1979, Leeds 1985 - are squeezed against a further row of files. To remove one will bring the lot crashing down, like an ill-judged move in that game involving a tower of balanced blocks. But he has glimpsed behind them a further cache which may well include offprints. On the shelf above he spots the gold-lettered spine of his own doctoral thesis, its green cloth blotched brown with age; on top of it sits a 1980s run of the *Yorkshire Archaeological Journal*. Come to think of it, the contents of the landing cupboard are a nice reflection of his own trade - it is a landscape in which everything co-exists, requiring expert deconstruction. But he does not dwell on that, intent instead upon this, increasingly irritating, search. He tugs at a file to improve his view of what lies beyond and, sure enough, there is a landslide. Exasperated, he gets down on hands and knees to shovel up this mess, and suddenly there is Kath. A brown foolscap-size wallet file, with her loopy scrawl across the flap: *Keep!* She smiles at him; he sees her skimpy dark fringe, her eyes, that smile. What is she doing here, in the middle of all this stuff that has nothing to do with her? He picks up the file, stares. He cannot think how it got here. Everything of hers was cleared out. Back then. When she. When. Hang on, though. Here underneath it are a couple of folders, also with her handwriting: *Recipes*. Since when did Kath go in for serious cooking, for heaven's sake? He opens the folder, flicks through the contents. Indeed, yes - cuttings from newspapers and magazines in the late 1980s, but petering out fairly rapidly, which signifies. He investigates the second folder, which contains receipted bills, many of them red-flagged second demands, which signifies also, and an incomplete series of bank statements, indicating a mounting overdraft. It would seem that this assortment of her things got pushed in with his papers by mistake during the big clearing-out operation. The hurried, distracted clearing-out operation. Elaine had volunteered to sort out and dispose of Kath's possessions. She missed this lot. And here they have lain ever since, festering. Well no, not exactly festering, but turning a little brown at the edges, doggedly degrading away as is everything else in here, doing what inanimate objects do as time passes, preparing to give pause for thought to those whose business is the interpretation of vanished landscapes. The wallet file is brown anyway, so degradation is not much apparent. He dumps the folders on the floor and goes to sit on the top step of the stairs, holding the file. He opens it. Not much inside. Various documents, and a sealed brown envelope containing something stiff. Glyn sets this aside and goes through the rest. A jeweller's valuation for a two-strand pearl necklace and a pair of drop pearl earrings. Originally her mother's, he seems to remember. Kath wore the earrings a lot. Her medical card. And her birth certificate. Aha! So this is where that was, the absence of which caused considerable nuisance back then, necessitating a visit to Somerset House. No marriage certificate, one notes. That too had gone missing, making difficulties. And is still lost, it would seem. Not that that is, now, a problem. Her O-level certificate. Seven subjects. A grades in all but one. Glyn scans this with some surprise. Well, well. Who'd have thought it? The injunction on the file's flap was presumably to herself. This was the repository for items she knew that she must hang on to, but - knowing herself - that she knew she was only too likely to lose. He experiences a stir of fondness, which disconcerts him. And he has been entirely diverted from the hunt for that offprint, which is a matter of some urgency. Fondness is overtaken by annoyance; Kath is getting in the

way of his work, which was not allowed, as she well understood. There is also a National Savings Certificate for 5, bearing a date in the mid 1950s. When she was about eight, for heaven's sake. And some chequebook stubs and a Post Office savings book showing a balance of 14.58, and a clutch of letters, at which he glances.

The letters are from Kath's mother, the mother who died when she was sixteen. Glyn sees no reason to be interested in these and pushes them back into the file unread. He is left with a semi-opaque folder, which turns out to hold a sequence of studio portraits of Kath. She is looking at him in glossy black and white, now made entirely manifest. Young Kath. A backlit Kath with bare shoulders, head turned this way or that, eyes to camera or demurely lowered, provocative smile, contemplative sideways gaze. These would date from the aspiring actress days, long before he knew her. Very young Kath. Glyn studies these photos for quite a while. Kath. He returns everything to the file. There is now just this brown envelope. He notices for the first time that something is written on it. In her hand. Lightly pencilled. DON'T OPEN-DESTROY. And for whom is this second instruction intended? He opens the envelope. Within are a photograph and a folded sheet of paper. He looks first at the photograph. A group of five people; grass beneath their feet, a backdrop of trees. Two members of the group, a man and a woman, have their backs to the photographer. Of the other three, Elaine can be identified at once, visible between the two whose faces cannot be seen. Near to her stand another man and woman, whom Glyn does not recognize. One of the back-turned pair is Kath - he would know that outline anywhere, that stance. The someone else, the man, is at first a bit of a teaser. Familiar, surely - the rather long dark hair, the height, a good head taller than Kath. A slightly hunched way of standing. Glyn brings the photo closer to his face for more minute inspection. And then he sees. He sees the hands. He sees that Kath and this someone, this man, have their hands closely entwined, locked together, pushed behind them so that as they stand side by side in this moment of private intimacy, this interlocking of hands would be invisible to the rest of the group. Except to the photographer, who may or may not have been aware of what had been immortalized - the freeze-frame revelation. And now Glyn recognizes the someone, the man. It is Nick. He turns to the folded piece of paper that accompanied the photograph. He feels as though gripped by the onset of some incapacitating disease, but this paper requires attention. Handwriting. A brief message. I can't resist sending you this. Negative destroyed, I'm told. Blessings, my love. No signature. None needed. Neither for Kath then, nor, now, for Glyn. Though confirmation is needed. Somewhere he will have an instance of Nick's handwriting. A signature. A letter from way back when he was a consultant, or some such nonsense, on that landscape history series Nick published and of which he endlessly and ignorantly enthused, as Nick always did. The disease now has him by the throat. The throat, the gut, the balls.

What he feels is ... well, what he experiences is the most appalling stomach-churning, head-spinning cauldron of emotion. Rage is the top-note - beneath that a seethe of jealousy and humiliation, the whole primed with some kind of furious drive and energy. Where? When? Who? Who took this photograph? Who presumably passed it on to Nick and destroyed the negative? The telephone rings, down in his study. Such is Glyn's powered state, his consuming purpose, that he is at once on his feet and halfway down the stairs to pick it up and snap: 'I am not available. Sorry.' I cannot be doing with you right now because I have just learned that the woman who was once my wife had an affair with her sister's husband apparently - at some time yet to be identified. I am evidently a dupe, a cuckold. My understanding of the past has been savagely undermined. You will appreciate that for the foreseeable future this requires all my attention. The phone stops. Of course. The answerphone is on. From Publishers Weekly Lively likes historians. Her most famous novel on this side of the Atlantic, the Booker Prize-winning *Moon Tiger*, told the story of a popular historian; her latest narrates the quest of a "landscape historian" in search of what Proust called "lost time": the living past of his dead wife. Glyn Peters, a famous British archeologist, discovers a compromising photograph of his wife, Katherine Targett, sealed in an envelope in a closet at home. Peters specializes in excavating the long defunct gardens, buried fields and covered-over roads of the British landscape. Reverting to professional habits, he treats Kath's infidelity as a sort of archeological dig. The photo depicts Kath and Nick Hammond, the husband of Kath's sister, Elaine, surreptitiously holding hands on some outing, with Elaine and Mary Packard, Kath's best friend, in the background. Glyn decides to interview this cloud of witnesses, beginning with Elaine. Elaine is a successful, and somewhat cold, landscaper; Nick, her polar opposite, is a man one degree away from being a Wodehouse dilettante. Lively, who is never shy of letting us know her opinion of her characters (like Trollope), makes her disapprobation of Nick plain. Elaine, after learning of the affair, kicks Nick out. He takes refuge with Polly, their daughter, in London, and goes rapidly downhill. Glyn, meanwhile, has searched out Nick's ex-business partner, Oliver Watson, who took the photograph, and Mary Packard. Lively is always a discerning, keenly intelligent writer. This, for

instance, is how she describes, in three irrevocable words, Elaine's pregnancy: "She is pregnant: heavy, hampered, irritable." Unfortunately, Kath, a demon-haunted beauty with little depth, remains unconjurable. Her insubstantiality and the much-foreshadowed nature of her death, not revealed until late in the novel, drains this story of its full emotional impact. Copyright 2003 Reed Business Information, Inc.