ForeWord Reviews

JUVENILE FICTION

Secrets Beyond The Door: The Story of Bluebeard and His Wives
Maria Tatar
Princeton University Press
978-0-691-11707-2
(Oct 25, 2004)

Horrorscope Highlights: After a month of being married, the husband announces to his bride that he is going on a journey. He hands over the keys to the mansion's rooms that hold gold, silver, and jewels. Pointing to one key that opens a room in the remote part of the house, he warns her absolutely not to open that door. That's the first door she opens.

In *Secrets Beyond The Door: The Story of Bluebeard and His Wives* (Princeton University Press, 28 halftones, 248 pages, hardcover, $24.95, 0-691-11707-1), Maria Tatar, John L. Loeb Professor of Germanic Languages and Literatures at Harvard University, writes about the temptation and fascination of the forbidden. Using Charles Perrault's 1697 folk tale *Bluebeard and His Wives*, she discusses the pervasion of the story and its gothic antecedents and literary descendants in film, music, and literature. She references early women who succumbed to the sway of curiosity (such as Eve and Pandora), and continues with examples of the fascinating in such classics as Brontë's *Jane Eyre* (discovering the mad wife behind the chamber door), Leroux's *Phantom of the Opera* (desiring to know what is behind the mask), and Alfred Hitchcock's film *Spellbound* (unlocking the door to a childhood memory). The "Locked Door," says J.R.R. Tolkien, represents "eternal Temptation." Tatar mentions that "Even Peter Rabbit enters a forbidden garden."

A book that unlocks the reasons of transgression in the chambers of the mind.