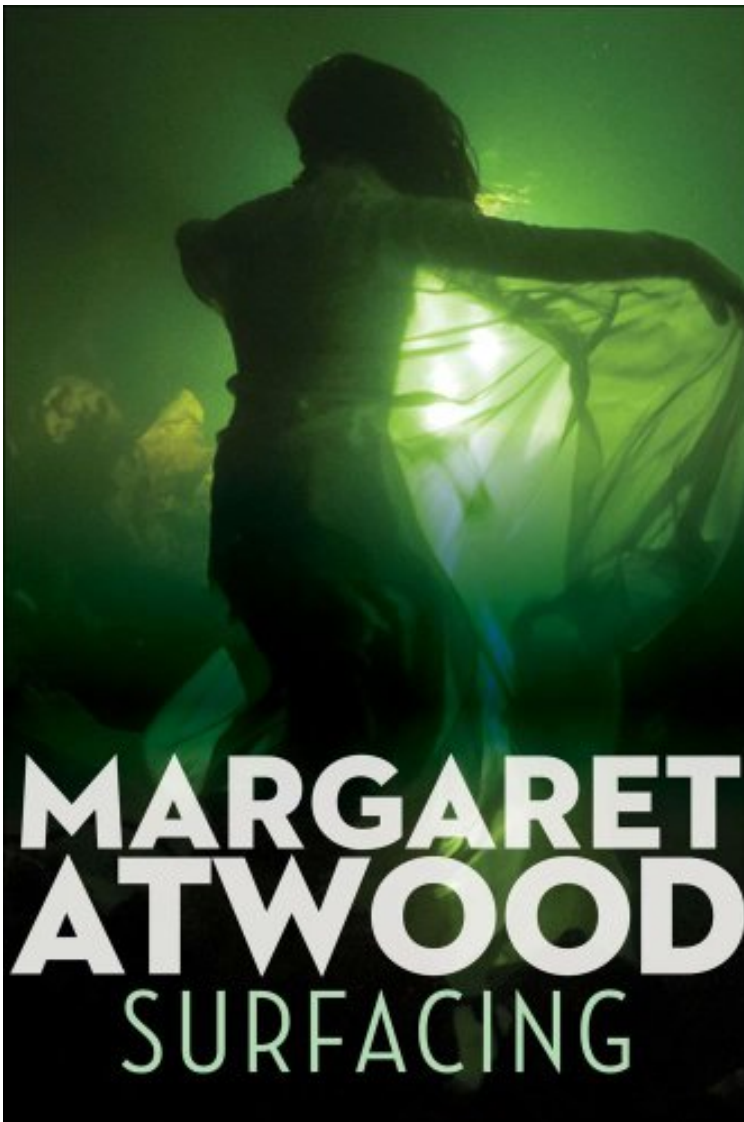


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Surfacing (English Edition)



Par Margaret Atwood
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Description :

Prsentation de l'diteurPart detective novel, part psychological thriller, Surfacing is the story of a talented woman artist who goes in search of her missing father on a remote island in northern Quebec. Setting out with her lover and another young couple, she soon finds herself captivated by the isolated setting, where a marriage begins to fall apart, violence and death lurk just beneath the surface, and sex becomes a catalyst for conflict and dangerous choices. Surfacing is a work permeated with an aura of suspense, complex with layered meanings, and written in brilliant, diamond-sharp prose. Here is a rich mine of ideas from an extraordinary writer about contemporary life and nature, families and marriage, and about women fragmented...and becoming whole.ExtraitCHAPTER ONEI cant believe Im on this road again, twisting along past the lake where the white birches are dying, the disease is spreading up from the south, and I

notice they now have sea-planes for hire. But this is still near the city limits; we didnt go through, its swelled enough to have a bypass, thats success. I never thought of it as a city but as the last or first outpost depending on which way we were going, an accumulation of sheds and boxes and one main street with a movie theatre, the itz, the oyal, red R burnt out, and two restaurants which served identical grey hamburger steaks plastered with mud gravy and canned peas, watery and pallid as fisheyes, and french fries bleary with lard. Order a poached egg, my mother said, you can tell if its fresh by the edges. In one of those restaurants before I was born my brother got under the table and slid his hands up and down the waitresses legs while she was bringing the food; it was during the war and she had on shiny orange rayon stockings, hed never seen them before, my mother didnt wear them. A different year there we ran through the snow across the sidewalk in our bare feet because we had no shoes, theyd worn out during the summer. In the car that time we sat with our feet wrapped in blankets, pretending we were wounded. My brother said the Germans shot our feet off. Now though Im in another car, Davids and Annas; its sharp-finned and striped with chrome, a lumbering monster left over from ten years ago, he has to reach under the instrument panel to turn on the lights. David says they cant afford a newer one, which probably isnt true. Hes a good driver, I realize that, I keep my outside hand on the door in spite of it. To brace myself and so I can get out quickly if I have to. Ive driven in the same car with them before but on this road it doesnt seem right, either the three of them are in the wrong place or I am. Im in the back seat with the packsacks; this one, Joe, is sitting beside me chewing gum and holding my hand, they both pass the time. I examine the hand: the palm is broad, the short fingers tighten and relax, fiddling with my gold ring, turning it, its a reflex of his. He has peasant hands, I have peasant feet, Anna told us that. Everyone now can do a little magic, she reads hands at parties, she says its a substitute for conversation. When she did mine she said Do you have a twin? I said No. Are you positive, she said, because some of your lines are double. Her index finger traced me: You had a good childhood but then theres this funny break. She puckered her forehead and I said I just wanted to know how long I was going to live, she could skip the rest. After that she told us Joes hands were dependable but not sensitive and I laughed, which was a mistake. From the side hes like the buffalo on the U.S. nickel, shaggy and blunt-snouted, with small clenched eyes and the defiant but insane look of a species once dominant, now threatened with extinction. Thats how he thinks of himself too: deposed, unjustly. Secretly he would like them to set up a kind of park for him, like a bird sanctuary. Beautiful Joe. He feels me watching him and lets go of my hand. Then he takes his gum out, bundling it in the silver wrapper, and sticks it in the ashtray and crosses his arms. That means Im not supposed to observe him; I face front. In the first few hours of driving we moved through flattened cow-sprinkled hills and leaf trees and dead elm skeletons, then into the needle trees and the cuttings dynamited in pink and grey granite and the flimsy tourist cabins, and the signs saying GATEWAY TO THE NORTH, at least four towns claim to be that. The future is in the North, that was a political slogan once; when my father heard it he said there was nothing in the North but the past and not much of that either. Wherever he is now, dead or alive and nobody knows which, hes no longer making epigrams. They have no right to get old. I envy people whose parents died when they were young, thats easier to remember, they stay unchanged. I was sure mine would anyway, I could leave and return much later and everything would be the same. I thought of them as living in some other time, going about their own concerns closed safe behind a wall as translucent as jello, mammoths frozen in a glacier. All I would have to do was come back when I was ready but I kept putting it off, there would be too many explanations. Now were passing the turnoff to the pit the Americans hollowed out. From here it looks like an innocent hill, spruce-covered, but the thick power lines running into the forest give it away. I heard theyd left, maybe that was a ruse, they could easily still be living in there, the generals in concrete bunkers and the ordinary soldiers in underground apartment buildings where the lights burn all the time. Theres no way of checking because we arent allowed in. The city invited them to stay, they were good for business, they drank a lot. Thats where the rockets are, I say. Were. I dont correct it. David says Bloody fascist pig Yanks, as though hes commenting on the weather. Anna says nothing. Her head rests on the back of the seat, the ends of her light hair whipping in the draft from the side window that wont close properly. Earlier she was singing, House of the Rising Sun and Lili Marlene, both of them several times, trying to make her voice go throaty and deep; but it came out like a hoarse childs. David turned on the radio, he couldnt get anything, we were between stations. When she was in the middle of St. Louis Blues he began to whistle and she stopped. Shes my best friend, my best woman friend; Ive known her two months. I lean forward and say to David, The bottle house is around this next curve and to the left, and he nods and slows the car. I told them about it earlier, I guessed it was the kind of object that would interest them. Theyre making a movie, Joe is doing the

camera work, hes never done it before but David says theyre the new Renaissance Men, you teach yourself what you need to learn. It was mostly Davids idea, he calls himself the director: they already have the credits worked out. He wants to get shots of things they come across, random samples he calls them, and that will be the name of the movie too: Random Samples. When theyve used up their supply of film (which was all they could afford; and the camera is rented) theyre going to look at what theyve collected and rearrange it. How can you tell what to put in if you dont already know what its about? I asked David when he was describing it. He gave me one of his initiate-to-novice stares. If you close your mind in advance like that you wreck it. What you need is flow. Anna, over by the stove measuring out the coffee, said everyone she knew was making a movie, and David said that was no fucking reason why he shouldnt. She said Youre right, sorry; but she laughs about it behind his back, she calls it Random Pimples. The bottle house is built of pop bottles cemented together with the bottoms facing out, green ones and brown ones in zig-zag patterns like the ones they taught us in school to draw on teepees; theres a wall around it made of bottles too, arranged in letters so the brown ones spell BOTTLE VILLA. Neat, David says, and they get out of the car with the camera. Anna and I climb out after them; we stretch our arms, and Anna has a cigarette. Shes wearing a purple tunic and white bellbottoms, they have a smear on them already, grease from the car. I told her she should wear jeans or something but she said she looks fat in them. Who made it, Christ, think of the work, she says, but I dont know anything about it except that its been there forever, the tangled black spruce swamp around it making it even more unlikely, a preposterous monument to some quirkish person exiled or perhaps a voluntary recluse like my father, choosing this swamp because it was the only place where he could fulfil his lifelong dream of living in a house of bottles. Inside the wall is an attempted lawn and a border with orange mattress-tuft marigolds. Great, says David, really neat, and he puts his arm around Anna and hugs her briefly to show hes pleased, as though she is somehow responsible for the Bottle Villa herself. We get back in the car. I watch the side windows as though its a T.V. screen. Theres nothing I can remember till we reach the border, marked by the sign that says BIENVENUE on one side and WELCOME on the other. The sign has bullet holes in it, rusting red around the edges. It always did, in the fall the hunters use it for target practice; no matter how many times they replace it or paint it the bullet holes reappear, as though they arent put there but grow by a kind of inner logic or infection, like mould or boils. Joe wants to film the sign but David says Naaa, what for? Now were on my home ground, foreign territory. My throat constricts, as it learned to do when I discovered people could say words that would go into my ears meaning nothing. To be deaf and dumb would be easier. The cards they poke at you when they want a quarter, with the hand alphabet on them. Even so, you would need to learn spelling. The first smell is the mill, sawdust, there are mounds of it in the yard with the stacked timber slabs. The pulpwood go...Revue de presse One of the most important novels of the twentieth century utterly remarkable. New York Times Book Atwood probes emotions with X-ray precision. All in all, its an exhilarating performance. 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