



The Painted Lady of Shallot

Jeannie McKinney

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When a young woman sells her father's masterpiece but delivers what is discovered to be a copy instead, the art collector's retribution has tornadic consequences.

As a child, Crystal was made famous and portrayed somewhat mystically in her late father's paintings. Now a reclusive but hardworking young woman, it has become necessary to sell his masterpiece in order to remain in her family home, which others refer to as her ivory tower, and to support her mother, a former Miss Mississippi, who has always resented Crystal's importance to her father and to his paintings.

When the art collector who bought the portrait learns it is only a copy that Crystal has unknowingly delivered, she takes retribution, setting in motion events that open Crystal's world. She finds she must shelter a young mixed-race family, strive to understand her parent's inability to live together so long ago, and survive three men slung into her life who have every intention of not hurting her . . .

Also, Crystal will learn from the one person who always has had her best interests at heart - the lady in the fairy-tale house next door - of a secret she never knew existed, and which will affect her from that moment on.

Crystal will end up fighting for her life. And she will have more reason to do that than she could have suspected or hoped for.

.....

"Sarah, tell me about you and Dad." Crystal was surprised by her own request, and as she looked at Sarah, she understood there had always been something that needed to be said, and marveled that she had not asked.

.....

"Every time I see you, you're wearing one of my old departed's," Willette said. "Are you trying to look like me?"

Look like her mother? No. That would be the last thing Crystal wanted. Wouldn't it?

.....

His hug made her feel welcome to his body. She was ashamed of the things she wanted to do to it, like a welcomed guest who would instead plunder and vandalize and leave nothing worth having.

.....

It was quiet now except for the storm, so Horace was gone. This new man was the boss. His ruthlessness had crept up the stairs with his voice as he gave the orders. She must get out of this house! Lightning struck just outside and she felt the vibration as a tree fell. She clamped her teeth but she knew the man had heard her cut-off outcry. He'd honed his hearing for such as this.

.....

As in Tennyson's poem, "The Lady of Shalott," whose curse was unknown and who risked all to find a true knight, Crystal will emerge from her bower and be forced to reconcile with the outside world.

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