



The Painters of Lexieville

Sharon Darrow

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Sharon Darrow's harrowing coming-of-age tale, told from the points of view of mother, son, and daughter, is rich with metaphorical significance and - like its small-town heroine - is obstinately, everlastingly hopeful.

Lexieville, Arkansas, can hardly be called a town - it's just a handful of shotgun houses squatting at the end of a gravel road off the two-lane highway out of Sardis. For many in the Lexie clan, this is the only place they've ever been, the only home they'll ever know. Truly Lexie's dreams of a better life, if she had them once upon a time, have worn threadbare and frail as an ancient quilt. Her devoted but hapless husband, John, long ago accepted his lot in life but hasn't given up hope that their two children, Jobe and Pert, might lead the lives they've only imagined.

But Jobe has already dropped out of high school and looks to be marrying young. Only Pert still harbors a youthful and fierce determination to get out, and get out as fast as she can. She aims to wipe the detested red dust of Lexieville off her feet and put on a new life like a bright, clean, fresh coat of paint. The weight of history is hard to shrug off, however, and seems to grow heavier as Pert moves closer to independence. With little support and no role models to follow, will she have the strength to fend off generations' worth of fatalism, and the confidence to defend her dreams?



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