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Paint It Black: A Novel

By Janet Fitch

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"A dark, crooked beauty that fulfills all the promise of *White Oleander* and confirms that Janet Fitch is an artist of the very highest order."--Los Angeles Times Book Review

Josie Tyrell, art model, runaway, and denizen of LA's rock scene finds a chance at real love with Michael Faraday, a Harvard dropout and son of a renowned pianist. But when she receives a call from the coroner, asking her to identify her lover's body, her bright dreams all turn to black.

As Josie struggles to understand Michael's death and to hold onto the world they shared, she is both attracted to and repelled by his pianist mother, Meredith, who blames Josie for her son's torment. Soon the two women are drawn into a twisted relationship that reflects equal parts distrust and blind need.

With the luxurious prose and fever pitch intensity that are her hallmarks, Janet Fitch weaves a spellbinding tale of love, betrayal, and the possibility of transcendence.

"Lushly written, dramatically plotted. . . Fitch's Los Angeles is so real it breathes." -*Atlantic Monthly*

"There is nothing less than a stellar sentence in this novel. Fitch's emotional honesty recalls the work of Joyce Carol Oates, her strychnine sentences the prose of Paula Fox." -*Cleveland Plain Dealer*

"A page-turning psychodrama. . . Fitch's prose penetrates the inner lives of [her characters] with immediacy and bite." -*Publishers Weekly* (starred review)

"Fitch wonderfully captures the abrasive appeal of punk music, the bohemian, sometimes squalid lifestyle, the performers, the drugs, the alienation. This is crackling fresh stuff you don't read every day." -*USA Today*

"In dysfunctional family narratives, Fitch is to fiction what Eugene O'Neill is to drama." -*Chicago Sun-Times*

"Riveting. . . . An uncommonly accomplished page-turner." -*Elle*

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

Following the huge success of *White Oleander*, where Janet Fitch portrayed the coming-of-age of Astrid, a young girl placed in foster care after her mother murders a former lover and goes to prison for life, she has once again created an indelible portrait of a young woman in *Paint it Black*. Josie Tyrell is a teenage runaway, an artist's model, and an habitu   of the '80s LA punk rock scene. She is a white trash escapee from Bakersfield, having left a going nowhere life there. Now, sex, drugs and rock n' roll inform her days and nights. *Paint it Black* is the perfect title choice because Josie's lover is never coming back, as the song says.

Josie meets Michael Faraday, son of concert pianist Meredith Loewy and writer Calvin Faraday, long divorced. He is everything that she is not: refined, wealthy, well-traveled, brilliant by fits and starts. He is also a Harvard dropout, leaving school so he can paint; his new obsession. He refuses help from his mother, who is furious about his decision to leave school, but it doesn't bother him to have Josie working three jobs to support them. He is given to black moods, frozen in amber by his perfectionism, contemptuous of those who do not agree with him about art and life. Josie adores him. One day much like any other, he leaves their house, saying that he is going to his mother's so that he can paint in solitude. Instead, he goes to a motel in 29 Palms and shoots himself in the head.

What follows is days of watching Josie in a near fugue state from grief, drugs, booze, and going over and over her love for Michael, trying to grasp how he could do what he did. After all, didn't they share the "true world," Michael's characterization of their cocoon of love and exclusivity?

Meredith calls her and says, "Why are you alive? What is the excuse for Josie Tyrell? I ask you." Ultimately, they form a tenuous relationship, because all that is left of Michael lives in the two women. Josie even lives with Meredith for a while. When Meredith is ready to go on tour again, she asks Josie to go to Europe with her. Before she can do that, she must go to 29 Palms and try to understand, finally, why Michael's depression pushed him over the edge. That puzzle is not solved, nor can it be, but the end of the story is a hopeful, upbeat, new beginning. Janet Fitch has beaten the curse of the sophomore slump with this dynamite second novel. --Valerie Ryan

From Publishers Weekly

Leigh's nuanced, intuitive narration makes Fitch's novel even more powerful. Leigh's narration brings out all the conflicting emotions and undercurrents of teenage punk rocker Josie as she struggles to deal with the suicide of her talented but emotionally tormented lover Michael. Leigh invests simple repeated lines like "Michael was never coming back" with different emotions each time: first she's trying to wrap her mind around the unthinkable, an urgent sense of panic, a burst of anger at the unfairness of life and at Michael for abandoning her, and finally a desolate sob of despair and loss. She ably evokes all the emotions of grief—the numbness and feeling of unreality, the rage, the sense of hopelessness, the longing for solace and normalcy. When reading Josie's dialogue, Leigh speaks in the low, wary tone of a girl who's been kicked around by life too many times. In contrast, she reads Michael's mother, Meredith, in confident, melodramatic, upper-class tones, her voice turning sinuous and seductive as she tries to manipulate Josie. In Leigh's capable hands, Fitch's compelling psychological character study resonates even more strongly on audio.

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From [Bookmarks Magazine](#)

Critics can't help comparing Janet Fitch's highly anticipated second novel with her best-selling debut and

Oprah's Book Club selection, *White Oleander* (1999). Comparisons seem apt; both novels feature an intriguing young woman dealt a bad hand; vivid portraits of Los Angeles; depressing themes; and raw, lush writing. However, the similarities end here, since reviewers agree that *Paint It Black* almost—but perhaps not quite—measures up to *White Oleander*. Fitch does an admirable job of exploring Michael's questioning of his life, Josie's despair, and the pair's ambivalent relationship with his domineering mother. Most lauded Fitch's exceptional depiction of the city's "high" and "low" life. A few critics cited sagging plots and poor secondary character development. In the end, however, *Paint It Black* exhibits Fitch's ample talents.

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Users Review

From reader reviews:

Minerva Gagliano:

Do you considered one of people who can't read pleasant if the sentence chained within the straightway, hold on guys this kind of aren't like that. This Paint It Black: A Novel book is readable by means of you who hate those straight word style. You will find the data here are arrange for enjoyable studying experience without leaving even decrease the knowledge that want to provide to you. The writer involving Paint It Black: A Novel content conveys thinking easily to understand by a lot of people. The printed and e-book are not different in the content material but it just different such as it. So , do you still thinking Paint It Black: A Novel is not loveable to be your top list reading book?

William Reeves:

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