



A Painted House

By John Grisham

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Until that September of 1952, Luke Chandler had never kept a secret or told a single lie. But in the long, hot summer of his seventh year, two groups of migrant workers — and two very dangerous men — came through the Arkansas Delta to work the Chandler cotton farm. And suddenly mysteries are flooding Luke's world.

A brutal murder leaves the town seething in gossip and suspicion. A beautiful young woman ignites forbidden passions. A fatherless baby is born ... and someone has begun furtively painting the bare clapboards of the Chandler farmhouse, slowly, painstakingly, bathing the run-down structure in gleaming white. And as young Luke watches the world around him, he unravels secrets that could shatter lives — and change his family and his town forever....

From the Paperback edition.

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

Ever since he published *The Firm* in 1991, John Grisham has remained the undisputed champ of the legal thriller. With *A Painted House*, however, he strikes out in a new direction. As the author is quick to note, this novel includes "not a single lawyer, dead or alive," and readers will search in vain for the kind of lowlife machinations that have been his stock-in-trade. Instead, Grisham has delivered a quieter, more contemplative story, set in rural Arkansas in 1952. It's harvest time on the Chandler farm, and the family has hired a crew of migrant Mexicans and "hill people" to pick 80 acres of cotton. A certain camaraderie pervades this bucolic dream team. But it's backbreaking work, particularly for the 7-year-old narrator, Luke: "I would pick cotton, tearing the fluffy bolls from the stalks at a steady pace, stuffing them into the heavy sack, afraid to look down the row and be reminded of how endless it was, afraid to slow down because someone would notice."

What's more, tensions begin to simmer between the Mexicans and the hill people, one of whom has a penchant for bare-knuckles brawling. This leads to a brutal murder, which young Luke has the bad luck to witness. At this point--with secrets, lies, and at least one knife fight in the offing--the plot begins to take on that familiar, Grisham-style momentum. Still, such matters ultimately take a back seat in *A Painted House* to the author's evocation of time and place. This is, after all, the scene of his boyhood, and Grisham waxes nostalgic without ever succumbing to deep-fried sentimentality. Meanwhile, his account of Luke's Baptist upbringing occasions some sly (and telling) humor:

I'd been taught in Sunday school from the day I could walk that lying would send you straight to hell. No detours. No second chances. Straight into the fiery pit, where Satan was waiting with the likes of Hitler and Judas Iscariot and General Grant. Thou shalt not bear false witness, which, of course, didn't sound exactly like a strict prohibition against lying, but that was the way the Baptists interpreted it.

Whether Grisham will continue along these lines, or revert to the judicial shark tank for his next book, is anybody's guess. But *A Painted House* suggests that he's perfectly capable of telling an involving story with nary a subpoena in sight. --James Marcus

From Publishers Weekly

Grisham fans will not despair as they discover that this finely wrought tale includes no lawyers. Instead, the author presents an evocation of the life of a young boy growing up on a Southern farm in hard times during the fall 1952 cotton-picking season. Lansbury, an actor of stage and screens, both big and small, brings a sweet innocence to the voice of narrator, Luke Chandler. Luke, a curious, even nosy seven-year-old, witnesses a series of events that range from the dramatic to the profoundly disturbing including a birth, a flood and a couple of killings. Lansbury gives each character his or her own distinctive voice: low and gruff for Luke's grandfather, Pappy; tough and huffy for troublesome Hank, one of the "hill people" the Chandlers hire to help pick the cotton; soft and gentle for Luke's mother. The range of voices helps listeners as he enacts dialogue; but when switching between dialogue and his narration as Luke, Lansbury's performance is far less smooth. Still, Lansbury's is an effective reading of a provocative novel that will please and surprise Grisham's many fans. Simultaneous release with the Doubleday hardcover (Forecasts, Jan. 22).

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From Library Journal

Cotton and baseball fill the life of seven-year-old Luke Chandler, but in the harvest season of 1952, his world is transformed by a series of secrets. The promise of 80 acres of a good crop necessitates the hiring of Mexican migrant workers and the Sproul family from the Ozarks to help pick the cotton. As narrator, Luke provides a child's-eye view of innocence, wonder, and confusion that is also rich with hopes for his beloved St. Louis Cardinals and overwhelmed by row after row of cotton. Grisham here leaves his familiar genre to create a powerfully touching family story that David Lansbury's narration captures perfectly. There's not a lawyer in sight, but Grisham fans should be pleased with the well-defined characters and conflicts. Highly recommended. Joyce Kessel, Villa Maria Coll., Buffalo, NY

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Users Review

From reader reviews:

Cameron Trammell:

Exactly why? Because this A Painted House is an unordinary book that the inside of the book waiting for you to snap the idea but latter it will surprise you with the secret it inside. Reading this book beside it was fantastic author who write the book in such amazing way makes the content inside easier to understand, entertaining method but still convey the meaning totally. So , it is good for you for not hesitating having this any longer or you going to regret it. This unique book will give you a lot of rewards than the other book include such as help improving your expertise and your critical thinking approach. So , still want to delay having that book? If I had been you I will go to the book store hurriedly.

John Enriquez:

A Painted House can be one of your beginning books that are good idea. Many of us recommend that straight away because this reserve has good vocabulary which could increase your knowledge in terminology, easy to understand, bit entertaining but nonetheless delivering the information. The article writer giving his/her effort to set every word into enjoyment arrangement in writing A Painted House although doesn't forget the main level, giving the reader the hottest and based confirm resource data that maybe you can be one among it. This great information can drawn you into brand new stage of crucial imagining.

Gregory Holloman:

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