

Becoming Delilah

Sara Marchant

Fairlight Books (Jun 15, 2023)

Softcover \$15.95 (256pp)

978-1-914148-26-2

In Sara Marchant's novel *Becoming Delilah*, a pragmatic woman flees the trauma of her old life to build a new one.

On a quiet, windswept island, beautiful Delilah, née Dolores, works to restore a cottage that was purchased for her by her married boyfriend and benefactor. She was orphaned by domestic violence and raised by a vengeful, fearful grandmother—pieces of a past story that's related in chapters that alternate with present-set ones until both converge.

This is the story of a woman forever being perceived—perceived as beautiful by predatory men, perceived as pitiful by those who know about her awful origins. The narrative unpacks the ways in which such constant perception defines her life, wondering how, if at all, it can be overcome.

Delilah finds solace in manual work. When she moves into her cottage, she has plenty of it. Taught by her grandmother to be practical in every way, Delilah sands, paints, destroys, and replaces until a home is made. Then, she begins to work on her true passion, the garden. The novel focuses on the comfort of working with one's hands and the capacity of such efforts to heal—or, at the very least, to lessen pain. With the island's widowed sheriff, Delilah finds physical comfort and gardening guidance; with Anton, an exiled chef, Delilah finds other, more complex emotions.

The prose is like Delilah herself: not showy, but methodical and mesmerizing. The descriptions of her work operate with a quiet beauty that soothes. Delilah's desire to always return to the work is thus infectious, but it breeds a haunting question: what happens when the work is finished?

Becoming Delilah is a meditative novel about trauma, healing, and what comes next.

SEB FLATAU (May / June 2023)

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