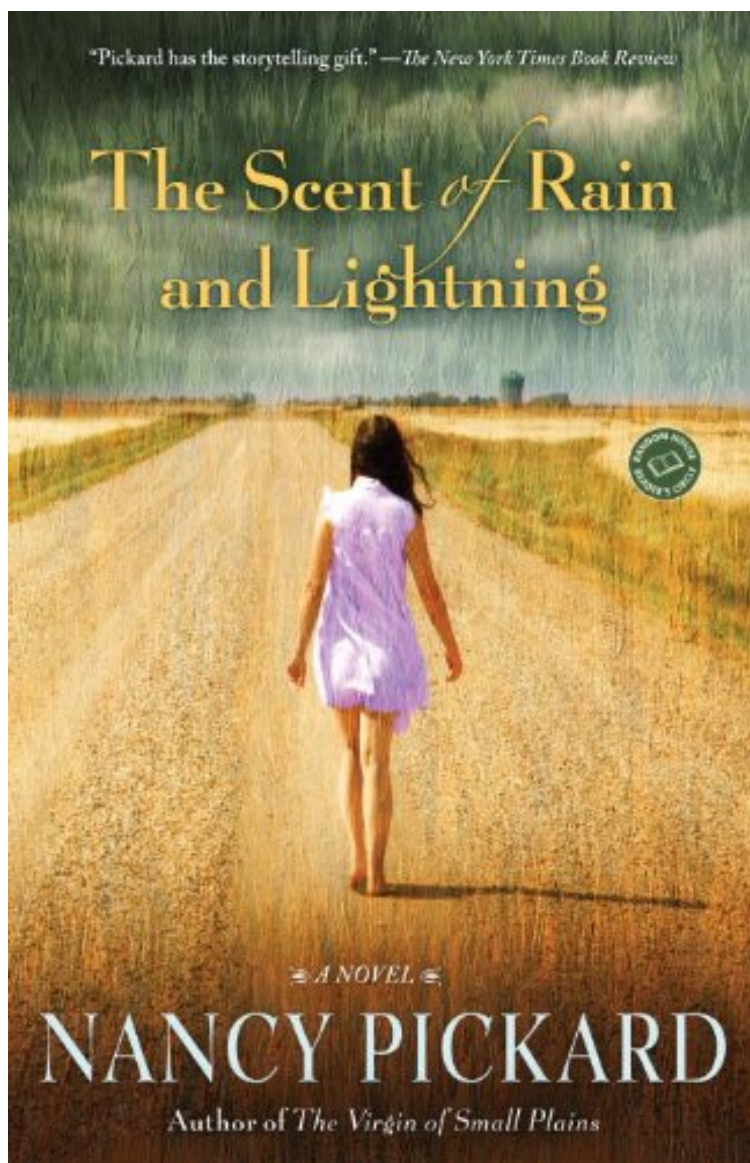


[Online library] File size: 76.Mb

The Scent of Rain and Lightning: A Novel



Par Nancy Pickard
audiobook / *ebooks / Download PDF
/ ePub / DOC

Dtails sur le produit Publi le: 2010-04-15
Sorti le: 2010-05-04
Format: Ebook
Kindle

[Online library] The Scent of Rain and
Lightning: A Novel

Par Nancy Pickard : The Scent of Rain and Lightning: A Novel before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Scent of Rain and Lightning: A Novel:

 Download

 Read Online

Description :

Prsentation de l'diteurBONUS: This edition contains a The Scent of Rain and Lightning discussion guide. One beautiful summer afternoon, Jody Linder receives shocking news: The man convicted of murdering her father is being released from prison and returning to the small town of Rose, Kansas. It has been twenty-three years since that stormy night when her father was shot and killed and her mother disappeared, presumed dead. Neither the protective embrace of Jody's three uncles nor the safe haven of her grandparents ranch could erase the pain caused by Billy Crosby on that catastrophic night. Now Billy Crosby is free, thanks to the efforts of his son, Collin, a lawyer who has spent most of his life trying to prove his father's innocence. Despite their long history of carefully avoiding each other in such an insular community,

Jody and Collin find that they share an exclusive sense of loss. As Jody revisits old wounds, startling truths emerge about her family's tragic past. But even through struggle and hardship, she still dares to hope for a better future and maybe even love. Look for special features inside. Join the Circle for author chats and more.

Extrait Chapter One June 9, 2009

Until she was twenty-six, Jody Linder felt suspicious of happiness. She hated that about herself, because it tended to sour some otherwise pretty damn fine moments, but this was Rose, Kansas, after all. Only the year before, a pencil tornado had dropped down and killed three people only a few miles from her hometown. A tornado, when the sun was shining! In the winter, there were ice storms. In the summer, there were grass fires. At all times, people she knew went bankrupt, lost their homes, their ranches, their jobs. Or, they died just when you least expected them to. A person could, for instance, belong to a nice family living an ordinary life in a small town in the middle of nowhere, and on some innocent Saturday night, violent men could drop in like those tornadoes and turn those nice people into the dead stars of a Truman Capote book. Such things happened. That wasn't paranoia. It was a terrible fact that Jody knew better than anybody--or at least better than anybody whose father had not been murdered when she was three years old and whose mother had not disappeared the same night. Such things happened, and she was proof of it. Therefore--the past having proved to her the unreliability of the present--happiness made Jody Linder anxious. Feelings of safety and security got her checking around corners, lifting lids off bins, and parting shower curtains for fear of what might be hiding there, because you just never knew. A killer could hide in the corner, bugs lurked in bins, spiders jumped out of bathtubs. Happiness was fragile, precious, and suspect. "No peak not followed by a fall," she believed, which explained her flutter of worry as she lay naked on top of her bed with Red Bosch in the middle of a suspiciously beautiful Kansas afternoon. The air smelled too good for such a hot day, the light penetrating her eyelet curtains looked too delicate for noon. Most foreboding of all, the sex with this man she didn't love had been too damned good to be trusted beyond the (admittedly fine) moments of her satisfaction and his. She'd kept her eyes open during the finale, which meant she'd caught Red smirking down at her, looking pleased with himself. Don't flatter yourself, she'd nearly blurted, but then she thought, first of all, that wasn't kind and he didn't deserve it, and second of all, why shouldn't he flatter himself? Red was good at riding horses, rounding up cattle, baling hay, and this. She could hardly think of better talents in a man. "Pretty girl," Red murmured, tracing a lazy finger down her sternum. "Sweaty girl," Jody said, lifting his hand off and laying it back on his own damp belly. He laughed, a self-satisfied growl, deep in his chest. A hot, pollen-scented breeze blew through the open windows. She smelled honeysuckle, which wasn't blooming yet, and lilac, which had already bloomed and gone. These things were impossible, they were all in her imagination, she knew, and they were just the sort of deceptions that the smallest feeling of contentment might spring on her. She and Red lay sprawled on their backs like sated puppies who'd just had their bellies scratched for half an hour. Lying a few inches away from him, so their limbs couldn't touch and stick, Jody let out an irrepressible sigh of pleasure. Immediately, she wanted to take it back, suck the breath right back into her lungs, because God knew she couldn't let the universe be hearing any of that. No peak not followed by a fall . . . The sound of a vehicle turning onto her street made her turn her face toward the windows, alert to the possibility of unpleasant surprise. "Did you hear that, Red?" "What?" "Shh!" The sound of the single vehicle turned into the sound of a second truck and then another, which multiplied her alertness exponentially. Jody pressed her elbows into the bottom sheet and raised her head and shoulders to get a better listen. Traffic might not have been worth noticing in a place like Kansas City, 350 miles to the east, or in Denver, 250 miles to the west. But this was one of the quietest streets in a town so small she could hear people she knew start their cars in their garages on the other side of Main Street and know if they were late to work. "Somebody just pulled up outside." "Who?" She threw him a look. Sometimes she wondered if Red was one post short of a fence. "What?" he repeated, half laughing. He was thirteen years older than she, but sometimes Jody felt as if she were the more mature one. Abandoning him as he lay naked and limp on her bed, she peeled herself off her new white sheets. She slid down off the high old walnut bed with its new pillows and mattress cover and its new mattress and box springs. Once her bare feet landed on the equally bare walnut floorboards that she had polished and buffed until they glowed in the sunshine, she bounded to the windows--much taller than her own five feet four inches, their panes shining and cleaned, their borders rimmed in polished walnut--to check what was up. A road crew? Unlikely, given that Rose barely had the budget to keep its half dozen traffic lights changing colors. Jody peeked outside and got a shock that panicked her. "Oh my god. Red! Get up! Get dressed! You've got to leave now!" What she saw from two stories up was the unnerving sight of her three uncles parking their pickup trucks in front of her parents' house, when she hadn't even known that two of the uncles were in town. She

still called it her parents' house even though Hugh-Jay and Laurie Jo Linder had been gone almost all of her life. It was still their home to their only child--the descendent of a famous, violent night twenty-three years earlier--and it was still their home to everybody else in Henderson County, which was named for Jody's great-great-grandfather on her father's mother's side of the family. "What is this fearsome thing I see?" she whispered at the high windows, mimicking Shakespeare. Her master's degree in English literature was a happy achievement, which, upon attainment, she had automatically shaded with doubts that she could ever find a job for teaching it. "Who is it, your other boyfriend?" Red's tone was joking, with an insecure edge to it. "I don't have another one. I don't even have one." That was blunt enough to be mean, and she immediately regretted it. "What am I?" Red asked quietly. Convenient was the adjective that popped into Jody's head but which she didn't say aloud. He was that, along with being the only available male for miles around who wasn't a child or a grandfather. Or a relative. She glanced back at her current lover-not-boyfriend, at his wiry cowboy self sprawled across her sheets. Her fingers knew that his long frame was checkered and slashed with scars, bruises, odd bumps where bones had healed awkwardly, and fresh little wounds. Red wasn't the most careful of cowboys. He tended to get bucked, bounced, and "rode over," more than your average rodeo rider, and he wasn't even one of those anymore, he was just an ordinary ranch hand. Maybe that's why she liked him, she sometimes thought, because that's all and everything Red was--just a cowboy, with no pretense of anything else, or more. It was also true that other men's bodies--the bodies of accountants, for instance, or lawyers, not that she'd ever been with such and really knew--were boring to her compared to the interesting terrain of cowboy skin. "Well?" he challenged her. She gave him an exasperated look--because the question irritated her and she couldn't think of any answer that was true without also being hurtful. She turned her bare back on him, returning her attention to the disturbing view from her window, hiding her naked self behind the new white eyelet curtains. The hot breeze coming through the open window blew dangerously around her, threatening to expose her nakedness to the street and to any uncle who happened to look up. Jody sucked in her upper lip and held it between her teeth. Red had sucked on a breath mint after lunch at the Rose Cafe, right before slipping into her house, her bedroom, and her. She could still taste peppermint in her own mouth, along with a tangy hint of hot sauce and an even tangier taste of him. She could still feel his callused touch on her skin, too, a feeling so real she would have sworn his rough hands had followed her to the window. They were not sensations she wanted to have with her uncles arriving. They were also not activities the local high school had looked for on her resume when they hired her to be their new English teacher in two and a half months. She had whooped with joy upon landing that job, but immediately tamped down her exuberance, because who knew how long she could stay employed in such an iffy economy? And what if she wasn't a good teacher, or the kids hated her, or their parents objected to *Catcher in the Rye*? There were so many things that could go wrong after something went right. Tense as fresh-strung barbed wire, she watched from the second floor. Three truck doors slammed, bang, bang, bang, with the solid thud of well-built vehicles. Now her uncles were walking toward each other. What were they doing here, and why didn't she know anything about it? Uncle Chase was supposed to be in Colorado, running the family's ranch on the high plains east of the Rockies; Uncle Bobby was supposed to be in Nebraska, where he ran a third ranch the family owned, in the Sand Hills. Uncle Meryl was supposed to be at his law office in Henderson City, the county seat, twenty-five miles away. "Hey," Red said, in the tone of a man feeling ignored. "Shh!" From her hidden vantage point, she watched with growing alarm. Now her uncles were meeting in a tall, wide-shouldered trio on the sidewalk in front of her porch, and now her uncle Chase was grinding out a cigarette on the cement, and now he picked it up and put it in his shirt pocket--not because he was so thoughtful, but because every rancher and farmer was wary of fire. And now her uncles were coming toward her front door together--big men dressed in cowboy boots, pressed pants, cotton shirts, and wearing their best straw cowboy hats for summer. The hats, alone, were a disturbing sign. The uncles usually wore their best hats only to weddings, funerals, and cattlemen conventions, preferring brimmed caps for everyday. Meryl even wore a bolo tie and one of the hideous plaid suit coats that her aunt Belle had never been able to excise from his wardrobe. He had matched it with a reddish-brown pair of polyester trousers that made Jody, even two stories up, wrinkle her nose. She knew what Meryl would say if she mocked his wardrobe: he'd say it fooled out-of-town lawyers into mistaking him for a bumpkin--to their sorrow and his clients' gain. Their trucks also looked suspiciously clean, as for making formal calls. They wouldn't have done all this for just any casual visit. When her uncles went formal-visiting, they showered first and changed into clean clothes. Jody's grandmother, who was the mother of two of these men and a near-mother to the third one, wouldn't stand for any less. If a male in Jody's family stepped into somebody's

house, he would, by God, smell of soap. Her uncle Bobby might be forty-one years old, her uncle Chase might be forty-four, and Uncle Meryl might be forty-six and have married into the family instead of being born into it, but they lived by the laws that all Linders lived by, the commandments that Jody's grandparents, Hugh Senior and Annabelle Linder, set down. You didn't show up in church dirty and smelling of horse. You didn't take your cow-shitty work boots into other people's nice living rooms. Most important of all, you didn't show up at somebody's house without calling ahead first, even if that somebody was only your niece. They hadn't called first. She hadn't known they were coming. And then they really scared her, because they rang her doorbell. Only after that unprecedented announcement of their arrival did she hear her front door open, and a moment later her uncle Chase called out in his smoky baritone, "Josephus?" It wasn't her name, which was Laurie Jo, after her mother. Joe-see-fuss was her three uncles' nickname for her. She clutched a fist to her naked breasts: had something happened at the ranch? Was it her grandfather Hugh Senior, was it her grandmother Annabelle? She didn't know what she would do without either of them; they had been the rocks of her life since her parents had gone. "Jody?" Chase called, louder this time. "Honey? You home?" He sounded tense, which wasn't like her coolest uncle. In a flash Jody thought of their various wives and ex-wives, their assorted children and stepchildren who were her cousins and sort-of cousins. There were so many disasters that could happen on a cattle outfit. So many ways to get hurt, so many ways to end up in hospitals or funeral homes, so many ways to break hearts and families. She couldn't think of any minor calamities that would prompt her uncles to pay a special visit like this to her. They wouldn't do this unless there was something serious, something they couldn't just make a phone call to tell her, and worse-- something that made them decide they had to tell her en masse. "Jesus," she whispered, a half prayer, hurrying to pick up clothes to cover her naked body. She felt shocked, albeit without being surprised at all, since she believed that bad events followed good as inevitably as death followed life, and as frequently. The secret, she had decided when she was younger, was to try to anticipate it, so as to mitigate the blow. The problem with that philosophy was that it never worked; she was always surprised; no matter how far ahead she tried to look, bad news still hurt, shock still left her shaken. With a start, she realized she hadn't answered, so she yelled in a high voice, "I'm home, Uncle Chase! I'm upstairs, I'll be right there!" "You want us to come up?" he yelled back. "No!" she screamed. God, no. On the bed, Red had bolted up to a sitting position at the first sound of that voice, which was the voice of one of the members of his extended family of employers. He also heard the terrifying offer to climb the stairs, and now he was trying to scurry out of bed and get dressed fast and silently. "Go down the back stairs!" she whispered to him, unnecessarily. From the Hardcover edition.

Revue de presse Pickard has the storytelling gift. The New York Times Book [Nancy] Pickard writes richly textured fiction about families and relationships, about hatred and lust and love, about loyalty and betrayal, and most of all about the corrosive power of secrets. The Boston Globe A novel that simultaneously qualifies as a gripping read, a master character study and as literary . . . exceedingly rare. The Kansas City Star Pickard's tales of Kansas life are filled with gravitas and small-town drama. . . . The Scent of Rain and Lightning seems certain to earn her a much-deserved larger audience. The Denver Post