

# **THE PAINTER**

**Jane Miller**

## **Characters:**

Helen  
Nina  
Michael

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**HELEN:** Discarded. No longer needed. Surplus to requirements. Then what do you do? Because everyone you know pities you and you're sure everyone you don't know knows

It's not like I had any idea. I was clueless. He could've come in from work and said "Helen, I'm flying to the moon today" and I would have been less shocked.

He didn't come in and say he was flying to the moon.

**MICHAEL:** Helen, I've had an epiphany. I feel like my eyes have been opened. For the first time. And it's not that I don't love you. You've been my first love.

It's just that Nina is just this whirl of fantastic frigging energy and I can't ignore that. It's turned my whole life upside down. Can you sort of see that? That it's not a plan. My plan was for us to grow old together. But Nina....

And the things is....Helen, I feel like a real bastard because you're the first...My first great love...

**HELEN:** I just wanted to say "Who is she? What did you say her name is?" I was standing in the kitchen with a box of rat poison in my hand. I'd found a dead rat in the laundry. I wanted to say "How can you leave me? I think we've got rats. And what did you say her name is?"

If you're going to be left, it can't be at a more pathetic moment than when you've just found a rat in your laundry. I would have preferred him coming to me after I'd won a Nobel prize. Then I could've said "Piss off you deceitful bastard. I have my Nobel prize".

But I didn't have a Nobel Prize. I had a dead rat in the laundry and a husband leaving me.

**MICHAEL:** I just can't get her out of my head. I think I'm a bit obsessed with her. Not in a strange way. It's like she's enslaved me. It sounds like bullshit but...Do you think that happens?

She's doing a Masters. She's not stupid. Helen, she's really fascinating.

I can't think about anything else and that's why I'm behaving like such a shit. There's no question that's how you'd feel about me.... There's no chance you could see where I'm coming from? Is there?

It's just that I've been overpowered. By this amazing force of nature.

**HELEN:** Nina.

Michael and Nina.

Nina and Michael.

I said it so many times I forgot what Helen and Michael had sounded like. All those years ago.

When I was a "frigging whirl of fantastic energy".

Before a rat died in my laundry.

I assumed she was younger. I was wrong. She's the same age. For some reason that offended me more than anything.

Why couldn't she have been younger?

**MICHAEL:** None of this is you. You're a victim. Like me.  
A victim of Nina. We're in the same boat.  
And if you met her, Helen, I think you'd see that.  
You'd see that I'm just...Powerless. You can see that ...Can't you?

**HELEN:** Not really.

**NINA:** We met at a party. He told me he was a painter. I could see it straight away. He was everything an artist should be. Sensitive. Strong He was so physical.

We were caught up.

Lured in.

Overexcited.

I told him "Don't leave her". But I wanted him to.

I wanted him to have no choice. Because meeting me had changed everything. Nothing could ever be the same. It was fate...And forever.