



The Disenchanted Widow

Christina McKenna

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It's 1981 and Belfast is burning. So, too, is freshly widowed Bessie Halstone: she burns with a desire to break with her troubled past. With her feckless husband gone, she leaves home hurriedly with her naughty nine-year-old son, Herkie, and not much else. The Dentist, an IRA enforcer, is on her tail. He's convinced that Bessie, with her "yella hair all puffed up like Merlin Monroe's," has absconded with the takings from a bank heist.

But car trouble strands mother and son in Tailorstown, a sleepy Ulster village. Bessie finds temporary work as housekeeper for the handsome and mysterious parish priest.

In the meantime, Lorcan Strong, an artist and a native of the village, is summoned home. He's been shanghaied into forging paintings for the IRA. It's work he cannot refuse; his mother and their business are under threat.

Yet things are not what they seem in quirky Tailorstown. There is a "sleeper" in the village. But who? Bizarrely, it is young Herkie, due to his childish curiosity, who unravels the mystery and saves the day.



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