



Cause and Conscience: A Milford-Haven Novel

Mara Purl

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First-time readers need not fear trying this the fourth volume of author Purl's BBC Radio drama converted into a series of engaging novels. There's a directory to the (large) cast of characters in the back of the book. And although there's a lot of backstory as in all soap operas readers will be drawn in and hooked by the ongoing saga.

Artist Miranda Jones broke up with oil heir Zack Calvin after learning she was not the only woman in his life. When offered a last-minute opportunity to teach in Alaska she goes resolving to use the time to clear her head about him. She's not the only one whose head needs clearing; Zack isn't happy with Cynthia Radcliffe the "other woman" who's been stifling him with attention since his near-fatal oil rig accident months ago. He needs to think things over.

Cynthia herself seems to have mellowed—at least until Zack boots her out. Used to manipulating people Cynthia had been pushing Zack into the relationship but when Zack pushes back she realizes her heart is truly involved. Mellow however does not describe Zelda McIntyre Miranda's agent. What soap would be complete without a romantic "villain"? Zelda is a professional manipulator with a heady goal of her own—to woo oil magnate Joseph Calvin Zack's father and secure her future in society.

Meanwhile Sally O'Mally reunited with her high school sweetheart the disabled vet Tony Fiorentino wonders if she's up to the challenge of loving a man with a severe physical handicap. Tony wonders too—and is afraid of losing her even if she is carrying another man's child.

In true soap opera style dark threads are woven into this tapestry of complicated romance. Missing reporter Chris Christian's car has been found pointing toward foul play. Stacy Chernak's abusive husband is about to ratchet up the pain. And Jack Sawyer father of Sally's baby is playing a dangerous game with the construction of the Clarke mansion taking short cuts that could kill: "It was only the tiny infinity mark that distinguished the real from the phony set of plans to the Clarke house and he could ill afford to confuse the two."

With plenty of cliffhangers and red herrings to woo them readers will be captivated by this small-town romp that will leave them ready for more.

MARLENE SATTER (December 4, 2008)

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