

Leeching the Sirens

T. M. Prince

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This engaging, eerie, and art-infused novel proves to be a great thriller.

In this creepy thriller by author and artist T. M. Prince, an unsuspecting young college student is taken captive by a disturbed artist whose preferred medium is the blood of those that he keeps as his prisoners. *Leeching the Sirens* follows Jessica Shawsen in the journey she is forced to take by the deranged man whose art means death for his subjects, and the fight she must wage to save both herself and the victims who would come after her.

Jessica's life, on the surface, appears to be typical of a middle-class young woman on the verge of independence. Adored (perhaps too much by her parents), attending college, dealing with relationships with friends and potential romantic partners alike, her story resembles that of thousands of others her age. Under the surface, tensions simmer, just ready to boil. Jessica's mother continues to try to rule her life, making suggestions regarding what she should eat, how she should look, and what she should do. A not-so-positive history with relationships still haunts her. The one thing she's looking forward to, spending a weekend with a friend, devolves into madness when she's kidnapped by a masked man. When she wakes up and finds herself being drained of her blood, the man keeping her in this terrifying state still wearing his mask, she realizes quickly that she must use everything she has to offer if she has even a chance of surviving this nightmare scenario. She sees the man is using her blood to paint her and realizes that the ultimate painting will be the one that culminates in her death, as it has for those he tells her have come before.

Prince clearly knows art. The gorgeous cover of this novel is, in fact, his own work. His knowledge of both technique and the art world itself comes through clearly in this book. Critiques of student artists' work, such as, "If the application and composition were any more lethargic then it might as well hang over a matching sofa in a warehouse store," and "Something that artist could try ... is to experiment with just some monochromatic paintings and get a better feel for the contrast of the piece," come across as legitimate statements that could be heard in a college level course for serious students of art.

The unique shift in point of view, from Jessica to her captor, both in the present and past, is an interesting way to move the story forward and also to explain the complicated history that these two characters share. The relationship that develops between the two is both understandable and reminiscent of Stockholm syndrome at the same time.

Jessica's parents are called very formally Mr. and Mrs. Shawsen throughout most of the novel, with their first names used only once. No other characters are granted this level of formality and it's not clear why the Shawsens are. References to Jessica's father as Dr. Shawsen at the end of the book confuse.

Leeching the Sirens is an engaging, eerie, and art-infused novel with an intriguing plot and fulfilling conclusion. This is a great and thrilling read and is sure to find a wide-ranging, approving audience.

TRACY FISCHER (October 5, 2015)

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