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CLARION REVIEW ★★★★☆ GENERAL FICTION

My Angel

Denise Skelton
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If Simone the main character in this thrilling romance is an angel then her overbearing mother could surely be the devil—a lady so controlling that she stands over her husband at the barbeque making sure the grill marks on the burgers come out right. Or maybe the devil's shady Adrian who respects nobody but himself. Or the borderline abusive Jamison who has Simone's new flame Matt's ex-wife Wendy running scared. One thing is certain: there are plenty of tough characters and tense situations for Simone to test herself against in this page-turner.

When Simone Porter an inner city youth-center director rescues stranger Matt Turner from a near-fatal car wreck then visits him in the hospital for months afterwards the newly-awakened man names her as his *angel*. Thereafter however life is anything but heavenly for the two of them as they battle the racism of certain members of both their families their own relationship hang-ups and the machinations of Matt's ex-wife and Simone's mother—who knows exactly how Simone should run her life including a diet a career change and a "suitable" man named Alan to marry!

It's Simone's father Joe who points out that Alan criticizes Simone just like her mother does while Matt stands up for her. This however only makes the situation with Debra—Simone's mother—worse in a fashion that's bad for the character but pleasing to the reader.

'I don't see where there is a problem' [Joe said.]

'That's absurd! How can you not see?' [Debra said.]

'Well they seem to understand and care about each other. Those are important things in a friendship.'

'If he were a female it would be different but his being a male' she said as she shook her head 'I don't know it's just not right.'

'Simone had several male friends over the years and you didn't seem to have a problem with any of them.'

'This isn't the same. No I don't like it. Not at all.'

'Why? Because he's a different race?'

'Well as a matter of fact yes.'

Although a plot point involving a teenage girl at Simone's youth center is mysteriously dropped toward the end of the book the story's ending is satisfying and believable. A scene in which Simone goes out to the bars with her girlfriends and rapidly loses all inhibitions is delightfully funny as are the situations involving the (unknowingly) pompous Alan's attempts to fit in with Simone's friends many of whom are too polite to let their distaste show. Matt of course is not one of these. And as things heat up between Matt and Alan Matt and Simone the reader is sure to vicariously experience the pleasant flush of an exciting romantic adventure. A gem of a book.

Denise Skelton is the author of a previous novel *My Everything*. She lives in Maryland with her family. (August 21, 2009)

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