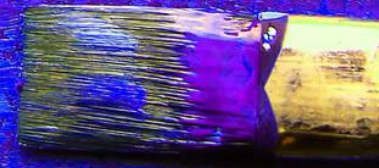


The Girl With The Paintbrush



After the sudden loss of her mother, a young woman with Down syndrome goes to live with her estranged and reclusive aunt, leading to upheaval and a family secret.

Written By Christie Allen



Synopsis



This dramatic feature begins when **Emilia** goes to live with her aunt, a woman mysteriously estranged from the family—and someone she's never met. Emilia is a vibrant young woman with Down syndrome who is a passionate and talented artist. After losing both her parents, she's forced to say goodbye to all she's ever known in her happy city-life to move to her aunt's cottage in the country. After hearing a lifetime of stories about her social and fun aunt, the Aunt **Cilia** that Emilia meets is a reserved, recluse who spends her days and nights in ritualistic solitude.

Cilia may have opened her home to Emilia, but not her heart. Impassive and aloof, Cilia offers no more than requisite politeness to her niece. Mercifully, Aunt Cilia's live-in housekeeper, **Franny**, is a welcoming and witty presence. Tender-hearted, she and Emilia quickly form a sweet and special bond—cooking and baking, together. Still Emilia struggles to adapt and stay connected with the friends she misses back home—especially since the cottage has no Wi-Fi.

Rejected and baffled by her aunt, Emilia decides Aunt Cilia needs rescuing from her solitude. Emilia becomes determined and hellbent on saving her aunt, believing all she needs is love. Emilia's well-intended but misguided steps are rebuffed time and again, and even threaten Cilia and Franny's relationship. Things go from bad to worse when Emilia stumbles upon private mementos that are her aunt's most fiercely guarded secrets: a tricycle and baby furniture that belonged to a child Cilia lost years ago, also mysteriously a painting done by Emilia's father, James.

The culminating sequence of events lead to shocking revelations—the secrets Cilia's kept hidden for decades to protect herself—and her family. Cilia reveals the truth that drove her from home and the sister she loved—and his name was James. Love and life are complicated, and not always what they seem. During the story, we learn that the cottage which would seem a sanctuary actually serves as Franny's fortress and Cilia's prison. Emilia is the reason that old and deep wounds are unearthed, but she also becomes the remedy that heals. Walls eventually come tumbling down as Franny and Cilia are both inspired by Emilia to once again embrace the beauty of life—and let love in.

Emilia



Jamie Brewer
(attached)

An artist through and through. Inquisitive, sensitive and bright. With unbounded spirit, Emilia is ever the loyal and loving friend and devoted daughter. She is a compassionate and inspiring woman, and one who simply refuses to let her Down syndrome define her. All her insight and strength can't save her from heartbreak, though. After losing both her beloved parents, Emilia leaves behind all she's ever known and loved - her friends, job and art studio - moving in with her enigmatic aunt who lives out in the middle of what seems like—nowhere.



Cilia

A poised, proud and fiercely, secretive woman. Reclusive, she talks to and sees no one, except her trusted housekeeper she's employed for 20+ years. Still, even that lone confidant doesn't know the truth or extent of Cilia's past and pain. No one does. Broken, Cilia retreated within years ago after the tragic loss of her young son. Now she lives life content to spend her days and nights in ritualistic, virtual solitude: gardening and reading. She moves through life with clockwork-like, precision. A punctual, predictable pillar of propriety. It is not shocking to believe she is the eldest hailing from a wealthy family. It begs the imagination to know she was once an accomplished pianist and passionate, free spirit; the "it girl" beloved by all.



Patricia
Clarkson



Miranda
Otto



Janet
McTeer



Franny



A hardy, steady woman who is as tender-hearted as she is tough. Trustworthy and loyal, she is irreplaceable as Cilia's longtime, live-in house-keeper. She is literally Cilia's only "friend." Managing the cottage and Cilia requires skills and diplomacy that belies this common woman's uncomplicated appearance. With no frills or fanfare, she takes life one day at a time. With wit and wisdom, she offers much needed levity and warmth to an austere household. She's had a sorrowful life, but keeps her pain well-hidden. Only in quiet moments, looking closely might one see cracks in the surface. Never one to complain or make a fuss, she lives each day with tacit gratitude and optimism.



**Margo
Martindale**



**Ann
Dowd**



**Kathy
Bates**



Why I Wrote It



My youngest daughter has Down syndrome. She inspires and amazes me, always. Sharing in my daughter's daily challenges, triumphs and just rejoicing in the mundane inspired the premise of this story. It came to me as a profound way to juxtapose a person with disabilities, persevering and choosing to live life to its fullest, while a person born with every advantage and no disabilities chooses to opt out, merely surviving. Then, having those two life forces come together, and ultimately see the individual with disabilities show the non-disabled person how to truly live. The character, Emilia, embodies gratitude, perseverance and embracing life—choosing love—always.



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