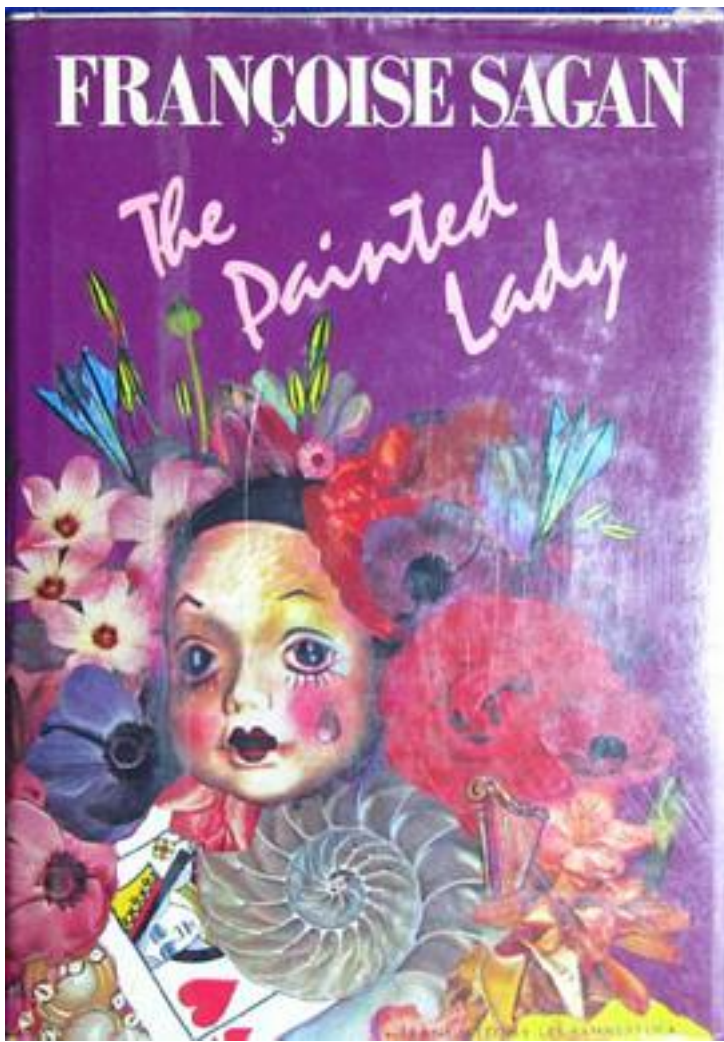


The Painted Lady



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出版者:

出版时间:2008-3

装帧:

isbn:9780749080778

Araminta Jewell is one of the beauties of her day; a witty, resourceful, dazzling young

lady who manages to resist all the blandishments that come her way. Even her marriage to the staid and ugly Sir Martin Culthorpe has not discouraged the rakes of London; for them she has assumed an almost iconic status. Before she wed, a special club had been set up - the Society for the Capture of Araminta's Maidenhood - with the first man to bed her standing to win a sizeable wager. Though she is now a wife, she is still pursued with unflagging zeal. It is during her first sitting for a portrait painted by the fashionable French artist Jean-Paul Villemot that the architect Christopher Redmayne meets the lovely Lady Culthorpe, although he has heard much about her through his dissipated brother Henry, one of her most ardent pursuers. Before the portrait can be finished and revealed, however, Sir Martin is murdered. Joining forces with Henry and his good friend the puritan Constable Jonathan Bale, Christopher embarks on a quest to discover the killer's identity. But with each new day bringing a fresh batch of suspects, and the matter of whether Sir Martin was killed because of his shady business dealings or for the exquisite prize of his wife still unclear, Christopher knows this will be far from an easy case to crack.

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