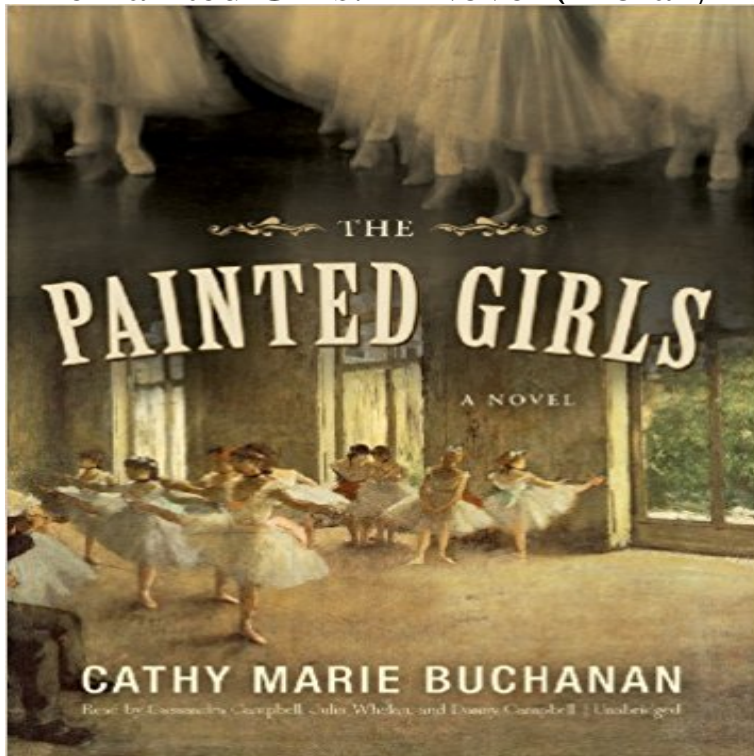


The Painted Girls: A Novel (Library Edition)



[Library Edition Audiobook CD in vinyl case.] Paris, 1878. Following the death of their father from overwork, the three Van Goethem sisters find their lives upended. Without their father's wages, and with what little their mother earns as a laundress disappearing down the absinthe bottle, eviction from their single boarding room seems imminent. With few options for work available for a girl, bookish fourteen-year-old Marie and her younger sister Charlotte are dispatched to the Paris Opera, where for a scant seven francs a week, the girls will be trained to enter its famous ballet. Their older sister, stubborn and insolent seventeen-year-old Antoinette, dismissed from the ballet, finds herself launched into the orbit of Emile Zola and the influence of his notorious naturalist masterpiece *L'Assommoir* -- and into the arms of a young man who may turn out to be a murderer. Marie throws herself into dance, hoping her natural gift and hard work will enable her to escape her circumstances, but the competition to become one of the famous *etoiles* at whose feet flowers are thrown nightly is fierce, and Marie is forced to turn elsewhere to make money. Cripplingly self-conscious about her low-class appearance, she nonetheless finds herself modeling in the studio of Edgar Degas, where her image will forever be immortalized in his controversial sculpture *Little Dancer, Aged 14*. Antoinette, meanwhile, descends lower and lower in society and must make the choice between honest labor as a laundress and the more profitable avenues available to a young woman in the Paris *demimonde* -- that is unless her love for the dangerous Emile Abadie derails her completely. Set at a moment of profound artistic, cultural, and societal change, *The Painted Girls* is ultimately a tale of two remarkable girls rendered uniquely vulnerable to the darker impulses of civilized society. In the end, each will come to realize that her

individual salvation, if not survival, lies with the other.

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