

Gypsy T AND THE AMAZING VEIL



JACQUI K SPENCER

WISDOM FRONTIER SERIES

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This book is dedicated to my wonderful family and friends.
I have truly appreciated your love and support through this
fabulous adventure.



CHAPTER 1

MISFORTUNE, MISERY AND MOVING ON



Gypsy gazed past the heads of her classmates, mesmerised for a moment by the pulsing waves of the Friday afternoon heat. She grinned as Hester, her golden retriever, wandered into view and flopped at the gate; artist's paintbrush hanging from her mouth. *Oh my God, that dog is obsessed! It's okay, Hester, I've finished my folio.*

She was about to refocus on class when a woman caught her attention. Gypsy felt her senses tingle, as if something important was about to happen. She'd noticed this woman before, on the banks of the river, painting. There was something about her; something otherworldly that roused Gypsy's curiosity. The sun hat she wore was draped with a

long, shimmering veil that concealed most of her face; yet she seemed mysteriously familiar.

The aura of the woman with the fascinating veil intrigued Gypsy; she felt strangely drawn to her. *I wonder if I'll ever find out.*

A tribal roar shattered Gypsy's dream-like stillness. Every face turned to the sound of frenzied yelling and feet belting along the corridor. The door smashed into their classroom wall. Three guys tumbled in, wrestling. One hurled a bucket of water, dousing everything in its path. Everyone gasped.

"My paintings!" shrieked Gypsy, bolting off her chair. She stared in disbelief at her precious art folio, now drenched. "My paintings!" Her legs buckled and she collapsed on her knees. She grabbed the dripping cardboard folio, peered inside at the sodden work and flung it across the floor.

She didn't see the boys being escorted from the room. The spitting and crackling of the school's media system heralded the arrival of a bitter message for her.

"All students entering the Shire's Art Quest are reminded that folios are due in next Friday."

Gypsy slumped onto the floor, cradling her forehead in one hand as she felt her head spin and the ground shift under her. "No! This can't be happening." The greatest opportunity of her fourteen years was being cruelly wrenched away.

The bell rang. Her Year Ten classmates raced for the door, chattering about the incident, and she was left totally alone.

“Go on then; just leave me,” she seethed, shoving the closest chair. She snatched her folio, shook it, sank into her chair and sobbed.

Why is this happening?

Minutes later, she blew her nose; rested her cheek on her fist and stared out of the window. Her dog was still sitting at the gate. *It’s all over, Hester; it’s all ruined.*

“Come on, Gypsy T,” the teacher said as he picked up her folio and school bag and waved her towards the office.

* * *

Gypsy sighed as she sat outside the principal’s office and watched the hands of the clock strike four. *Why is no one around when I need them? Where’s Natalie? Why wasn’t she at school today?* A creaking noise, a shaft of bright sunlight across the floor and a high-pitched whine brought a weak smile to her face.

“Hester, come on,” said Gypsy, patting her knees. Gypsy’s dog padded up the corridor and dropped the paintbrush into her lap.

The door of the principal’s office opened and Mr Johnson stood sternly as the three boys slunk out.

“Ah, Miss Williams,” said the principal, rolling his eyes at the dog, “I’ll see you now, but I think Mr James, Mr Carter and Mr Lorenzo have something to say to you before they leave.”

“I’m truly sorry, GT,” said Joey Lorenzo, his face turning bright red. “It wasn’t intentional.”

Gypsy held her face in her hands and shook her head. *What do I do? I like him; well, I thought I did.* She found herself going to say *that’s okay*, but stopped herself. She barely heard the other two apologise and blurted, “It’s not okay; my life is ruined!” She slashed the air with one arm and swivelled to face the wall. “Now what am I going to do? Huh?” she turned and glared at Brendan, her arms gripped tightly to her chest. “Did you think about that before you started your stupid game? You’ve wrecked my paintings!”

She snapped back to attention with Mr Johnson dismissing the boys and inviting her into his office.

“Mr Johnson, the Art Quest. Those paintings were for the Art Quest. Now I can’t compete for the scholarship! How am I going to get to Shelton next year?”

“Yes, I understand how upsetting this is. I can inform the judges of what’s happened but I doubt if anything can be done. Do you think you can prepare other pieces in a week?”

“How can I?” She grabbed the edge of the desk, her knuckles tense and white. “That was my best work. And those guys just say sorry and walk away.” She pushed herself away from the desk.

“I realise nothing can replace your art, Gypsy; or are you Tucker Williams today?” The principal shoved his hands into his pockets as he tried, unsuccessfully, to

diffuse the stress. "I am taking this incident seriously," he said. "Carter, James and Lorenzo are meeting with me at nine-thirty on Monday. Will you see me at nine o'clock for a preliminary mediation?"

"I suppose, but what's that?"

"Well, while nothing can restore your paintings, it will be a meeting where we try to bring about a satisfactory outcome; where the boys make amends. Over the weekend, have a think about anything that may help you to produce another folio."

Gypsy stared at the ceiling and shook her head as she closed the principal's door behind her, patted Hester and scuttled out of the school grounds and into the park. *What will help me produce another folio? A bloody miracle, that's what—*

"Hey, sister, smile," a guy on a bike yelled out as he whizzed past.

Jerk! Just because he's on top of the world and I'm on the bottom.

Gypsy's mobile rang and her hands shook as she answered it.

"I'm soooo sorry to hear about your paintings," said Isobelle. "What a disaster!"

Gypsy leant on a tree and crumpled the hem of her skirt in her hands. *How much more can I take?* "Obviously you don't mean that," she said, "so what do you want?"

"Oh, just to hear your sad little voice and to wonder how a goody-goody like you could possibly have anything bad happen. Ha! Bring it on."

Gypsy gulped, “That’s really nasty. You know you’re only building up bad karma.”

“Oh for God’s sake, save your self-righteous, insufferable lifestyle for somebody else, will you!”

“At least I’m not a slave to popular culture like you. You wouldn’t even know what to think unless you read it on Facebook or heard it on a soap.”

“Yeah? Well, your life is boring, you’re so not cool.”

“No, my life is what I make of it, not what someone else tells me to.”

“Oh, what! You know what your problem is? You’re such a pain, Gypsy— a—”

“Look, you’re wasting my time. Right now I know exactly what my problem is. You, on the other hand, have no idea that your problem is you!”

“Oh, really? Well at least I’m enjoying my life, not wasting it on some stupid spiritual quest.”

“You know what, Isobelle? A wise man once said not to bother casting pearls before swine. You just don’t get it. Wake up Issy, you’re sleep-walking!”

Gypsy chucked her phone in her bag and cried. *No one understands and nothing can be done. It’s hopeless.*

Lost in her thoughts she picked her way through the long grass, bushes and trees. Dazzled by the glaring sunshine that marked the edge of the bush and the park, she walked right into a gossamer veil draped over a branch. Through the veil

she recognised the woman. It was her; the woman she'd seen twice before.

The woman looked up from her sketchbook, wisps of long, auburn hair framing her face. Smiling quizzically she said, "You look like the child in Frederick McCubbin's 'Lost'."

"Oh. Hello, sorry, actually that's one of my favourite paintings."

"No need to apologise. I'm Janna. You seem a bit distracted or upset, maybe."

"Yeah." She flicked her eyes around the scene. People were walking close by and children were playing. It seemed safe. "I mean, I'm Gypsy, I mean Tucker, er, actually, it's Gypsy and Tucker's my middle name which I like a lot and this is my dog, Hester. And yes, I've got a lot on my mind. I've had the worst day anyone could ever imagine! I swear you just couldn't make it up!"

"Tucker and Hester, they're famous names in the art world," said Janna, glancing at Gypsy's folio. "Are you an artist?"

"Er, yes, well that's what I wanted to be, but now my pieces are ruined and so is my life." Gypsy blushed. "Not many people know who Hester and I are named after," she said, trying to change the subject. "Um, my middle name, that is."

"Well, it looks like you make a great duo," said Janna, laughing at the dog that flopped on the grass next to her and dropped the paintbrush at her feet. "But I'm sorry to hear

you're upset. Do you want to show me your work? It always helps to talk about disappointments and catastrophes."

Gypsy sat and looked into Janna's calm, crystal blue eyes. *This feels so weird and so right at the same time. I suppose there's no harm in talking to her and Hester seems very relaxed.*

She recounted the events of the afternoon. Once started she just kept going, blurting out everything about her dream of going to college, the scholarship she hoped to win at the Art Quest, the boys throwing water over her paintings...

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