

“A Canvas Of Lies” Sample Page #2

(Continues...)

(Pam moves to talk to Chuck,--or scold him-- and they converse silently as B.L. speaks to the customer.)

B.L. Welcome to my exhibition, "the Beauty of Sin." May I help you?

Man: Yes, I saw your paintings on TV in my loan office next door and had to run over here before someone beat me to it. I've got to have one!

B.L.: Of course. Which one were you interested in buying?

Man: *(Motioning to the imaginary painting.)* This one! It's a beaut!

B.L.: Ah, "Greed!" A wonderful selection.

Man: *(Rubbing his hands together.)* I must have it hanging in my office. How much is it?

B.L. This one is a steal... at a paltry \$3,000 dollars.

Man: No problem! I consider it a good investment. *(He takes out a wad of money and hands it to him.)* I'm sure it will encourage my customers to take out even bigger loans. Can I take it with me right now?

B.L. Certainly! I'll even help you with it. *(He mimes taking down the painting from the wall and holding it. His voice is slightly strained with the effort.)* Here you go, sir!

(As he takes it down, he holds it for a moment between himself and Pam. She glimpses the back of the painting as he holds it, and she SCREAMS.)

Everyone pauses and looks at her as she covers her mouth in horror. She is wide-eyed and seemingly in shock.)

Man: *(As he is taking the picture.)* What's bugging her?

B.L. *(Hurriedly handing it off to the man and hustling him toward the entrance, somewhat nervously.)* I think she saw a small spider behind the picture when I removed it. You know women!

Man: *(Shrugging.)* Huh. I should, I've been married six times! The alimony payments are killin' me. *(He leaves, pantomiming carrying the large frame.)*

(Pam is shaking and Chuck is supporting her by holding her arm, concerned.)

Chuck: What's wrong, Pam?

B.L.: Yes, my dear, whatever is the matter? You look as if you saw something terribly frightening.

Pam: *(Pointing with a shaking finger in the direction of the departed man and painting.)* The back... the back...

Chuck: *(Helpfully.)* The Backstreet Boys?

B.L.: That *would* be frightening.

Pam: *(Getting her breath.)* The back... of the painting! I saw... the backside of the painting he just bought! It was... ghastly! It was gruesome! It was gory!

B.L.: Oh, that's all. *(Pulls up a chair for her.)* Here, sit down, my dear, you seem rather rattled.

Pam: *(Sitting down shakily and passing a hand across her eyes.)* I've never seen anything so nightmarish in all my life! *(Looking up at Mr. Zee.)* Why would there be another painting on the back, hidden from view? And why so horrible?

B.L.: (*Kneeling down, he takes her hand and pats it comfortingly.*) That's simply the other part of the picture, my dear. You see, when I work with manipulating light as much as I do, the dark side must be hidden. I do paint a pretty picture, as you said, but sin, in reality, is quite horrible. I merely cover it up with a bright disguise, but the ugliness can't be hidden totally, or for long. So I put in on the opposite side, the one you don't see, until you have bought it. By the time the customer discovers the ugly side, he's so attached to the loveliness on the other side that he can't get rid of it!

Pam: (*Pulling away her hand.*) But, that's deceptive!

B.L.: (*Standing up again.*) Yes... well, that's my nature, and to my advantage. I *do* paint sin as lovely as I can, but those viewing it *want* to find it attractive. It appeals to what is already inside a person. I merely give them what they want to see. The flip side of sin is the part you don't want people to see. But it's inseparable... it comes with it, along with the consequences, unfortunately.

Chuck: (*Suspiciously.*) Consequences? What do you mean?

B.L.: (*Shrugging.*) Once you own a sin, it owns you. You never stop paying for it. It can get quite expensive! In fact, you might say there's hell to pay.

Pam: I'm beginning to think that your paintings have a corrupting influence on those that view them. I don't think they should be allowed to be displayed.

B.L.: Oh, but this is a free country, my dear. You can't censor art. You have a responsibility to inform the public, and let them make up their own minds.

Pam: (*Standing, her ire is rising as well.*) I feel used. I've betrayed my viewers by exposing them to this garbage posing as art. (*She pokes Mr. Zee in the chest with a finger.*) I don't like you, Mr. Zeebub. You bring out the worst in people instead of encouraging the good and inspiring them!

B.L.: (*Laughing.*) Goodness, my pouty Miss Parfay, you *are* beginning to sound like a preacher.

Chuck: (*Defensively.*) Ain't nothing wrong with that, Zeebub. My daddy was a preacher. And he used to say...

B.L.: (*Interrupting rudely.*) If you start spouting Bible verses, I'm afraid I shall have to evict you, and press charges against you for using hate language.

Chuck: Oh, so *you're* entitled to "free speech," but not people who oppose you?

B.L.: (*Getting angry also.*) When I have my way, you won't be able to so much as *possess* a Bible, much less quote it!

Pam: (*She is now getting really angry.*) Come on, Chuck. Let's get out of here, I've seen enough.

Chuck: I think I've seen *too much!* (*He picks up his camera as they head out of the gallery.*)

B.L.: (*Contritely.*) I'm sorry. The media is important to me. (*Lightly again.*) Don't hurry off, stay and have some refreshments with everyone!

Pam: No thanks, I'm feeling a bit sick to my stomach right now.

B.L.: (*Calling after them.*) I'm having a grand opening party after the show later tonight. Won't you come as my special guests?

Pam: (*Stopping briefly.*) That's one guest list we don't want to be on. Count us out. Right, Chuck?

Chuck: (*Snorts disdainfully.*) Yeah. One "brush" with this guy's paintings is enough. (*They leave.*)

B.L.: (*Darkly, to himself.*) Everyone's a critic. (*Continues...*)