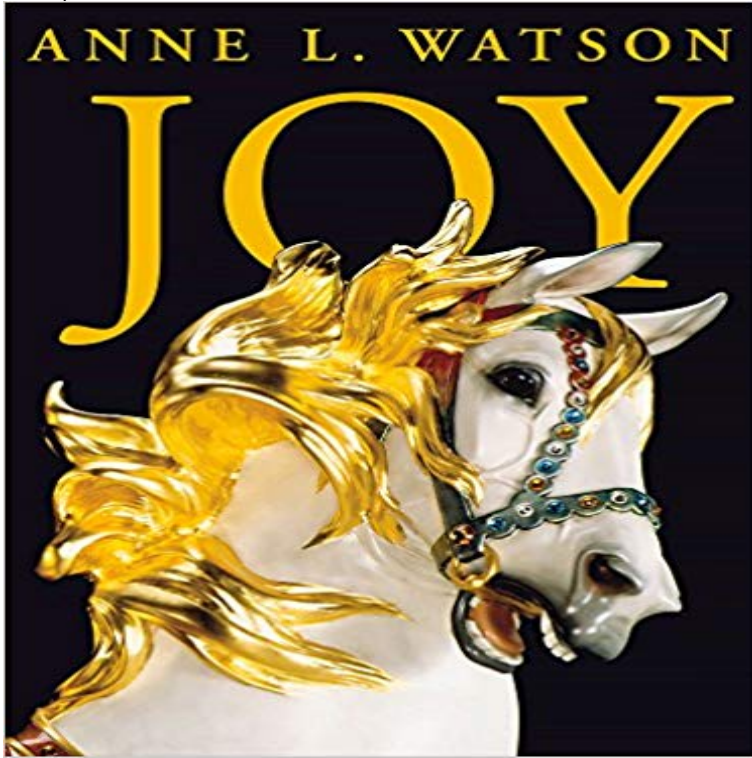


Joy



In the Oakland, California, of 1989, Mirai San Julian is a young woman with a fascinating life and a rich past. She restores historic carousels -- her dream career -- working from her own studio in a former roller skating rink. Though black herself, she spent her first years in a Basque immigrant community in Nevada, the adopted child of a single mother. And after the mother's death, she was raised by her Aunt Joy in a Catholic Worker house.

Mirai has a lot going for her -- but then, why is everything suddenly falling apart? Her current, year-long carousel project is veering crazily out of control, in both schedule and budget. The guy who dumped her only months before has shown up married and -- as far as Mirai is concerned -- to the worst possible person. Her mother's death long ago is looking less and less like an accident. And Joy, the one person who has had her complete trust, may know more about that death than she has let Mirai believe. Mirai knows how to restore a carousel, but can she restore relationships with those she loves? Can she strip the old paint of past wrongs to prepare her life for new, more vibrant colors? And will her eyes be clear enough to spot the brass ring when it finally comes within reach? //

Anne L. Watson, a retired historic preservation architecture consultant, is the author of several novels, plus books on such diverse subjects as soapmaking and baking with cookie molds. She currently lives in Friday Harbor, Washington, in the San Juan Islands, with her husband and fellow author, Aaron Shepard, and their cat, Skeeter.

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SAMPLE Next morning, I picked out Wills' car parked on the street in front of the coffee shop. No room for doubt -- Will had a real screamer of a car, an old red Mustang convertible. Not that he described it that way. His version started

off with 1964-1/2 for the model year and poppy red for the color, then veered into details about the color of certain key engine parts -- at which point I had always zoned out so far, I didnt hear the rest of the speech. There it sat, parked at the curb in Peregrine Falls, Idaho, already collecting a few admirers. Not even counting the vanity plate -- ORGAN4U -- the car had so much of Wills personality attached to it, I felt mildly nauseated. As an alternative to kicking a fender, I slammed into the coffee shop. Whoa, Mirai! Remember us? The crew had gathered at the only big table in the Clearwater Cafe. Id been so wrapped up in my own problems, I hadnt even seen them. They were all there -- Evangeline, Harvey, Mr. Papadakis. And Will. Neither fight nor flight was practical. I sat down at the table. The waitress hurried to me with a coffeepot and mug. I ordered the special and sipped my coffee. Clearwater was certainly the word for that coffee -- they must have named the restaurant after it. I glanced around the table, skipping over Will. Mr. Papadakis caught my eye. Whats the agenda? he asked. Well go to the park as soon as were done here. Check out the carousel, then have lunch with the committee. We have to give the owners a preliminary report tomorrow morning. Evangeline smiled. How long are you staying? she asked me. All week. You? Ill stay awhile. I may want to work on things in place. In Evangelines case, awhile could mean several months. She had an answering service, but no permanent address. At the moment, I envied her. Harvey shook his head. Im leaving tomorrow night. Ill come back later, when the work on the building starts. For now, a couple of days will do it. It was Wills turn, so I had to look toward him then. He sat quietly, holding a coffee cup. Will had never worn jewelry, but now a ring glinted on his finger. A plain gold ring on the fourth finger of his left hand. A wedding ring.

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