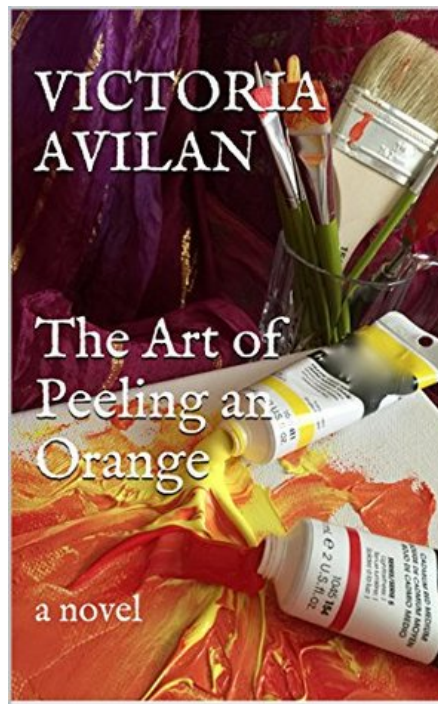




The Art of Peeling an Orange

Victoria Avilan

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Excerpt from chapter 46:

She stepped into that huge hollowness, imperial and fearless in her bare feet, a beautiful, wild creature in its natural habitat. This basement was as familiar to her as the insides of her mind. She reached out, aware of everything in its place, and pulled on the edge of one ghostly sheet. The sheet slid off, sending clouds of dust into the already dusty air.

"Welcome to the Land of the Dead," she announced.

Dead, dead, dead . . . answered the echo.

The Art of Peeling an Orange, set in sizzling, contemporary West Hollywood, California, is the art of glorifying and eroticizing color. It is a gender-bending, risqué take on the myth of Orpheus and Eurydice. The story's powerful structure, colorful characters, and magical themes echo the ancient Greek myth of the lovers in the Underworld.

What do you do when your lover has eloped with another woman on the eve of your wedding? The other woman is a famous beauty and their love story is splashed all over the tabloids, making you die inside. To add insult to injury, the one who has abandoned you is suddenly bursting with unusual creativity. And when the one you love dies unexpectedly, having left you a cryptic text message suggesting that you were always the one and only, where do you go?

If you are Carly Rosen, a portrait artist with huge imagination, you use your art to charm your way across the inky River Styx and down to the Land of the Dead. There, faced with your greatest fear, you beg the powerful Hades for the life of your beloved.

The Art of Peeling an Orange Details

Date : Published January 23rd 2015 by Shaggy Dog Stories

ISBN :

Author : Victoria Avilan

Format : Kindle Edition 334 pages

Genre : Fiction, Lgbt, Romance, Mystery, Adult Fiction, Erotica



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From Reader Review The Art of Peeling an Orange for online ebook

Sherilyn says

Had this not been free I would not have read it. It started strong and I had high hopes but then it turned into a Mills and Boon hot mess. A fictional nightmare and totally unrealistic to boot.

Jill says

Got this for free (\$0) through the Amazon monthly offer, and I have to say: it was worth every cent. I am seriously glad I didn't have to pay for this. Aside from the overwrought writing, melodramatic plotting and cheesy characters, the book was full of unfortunate typos ("dosing," instead of "dozing"), which just added to the misery. I mean, come on. It's 2015: can we please finally dispense with the fat-but-lesbian-in-bar stereotype? I trudged all the way through this--I have insomnia and I thought it might work better than Advil pm--but alas, no rest for the discriminating reader. I have no clue what book those other reviews are referring to...

Valyssia Leigh says

The art of overwriting.

Ameliah Faith says

A new love for Orange Where Not All is at it Seems

This book was incredible! I was hooked from the start and did not put it down till I was finished, I simply could not! After a night dreaming of these women, this story, I then read it again. This book ran the gamut of emotions and senses. The story's sustenance was hypnotic, addicting, breathtaking, mysterious, sensual and so full of nuances, apprehension and twists that you never saw coming. Even with the sweet release the drama ceased to end. By books end I was well and truly spent. This is one of those books that when you finish and surface to face the real world you can not believe it has not changed. Surely the world can not be the same after such an experience.

Thank you so very much for this wonderful encounter.

Megan EM says

4.5 stars rounded up! This is not your usual romance. I hazard to say more of a drama with a constantly unfolding story. Luckily, I went into the story only knowing the most cursory of things about the plot, which really enhanced the read for me. Thank you to a GR poster letting me know this was free a little while ago on Amazon or I likely never would have picked it up. I'm glad I took the chance on it. I will say it's quite unrealistic. But I tend to expect that when reading about celebrities. It's also unrealistic in ways I would not have anticipated. In a good way.

Emma Sterner-Radley says

I took a while to finish this book. Mainly because I was reading it incorrectly at first. I was reading it in a too cerebral and logical way and if you do that with this book, you see inconsistencies, repetition and unrealistic writing. This book circles around art and that should have warned me that I should read this book with my heart and spirit not my brain. Does that make sense? The creativity, passion and lust in this book is amazing and I think readers should enjoy that instead of thinking too much while reading. There is a lot lurking behind the words, lots of cultural references and lots of emotion. I enjoyed that and it made me get back to my own writing with increased creativity and for that I give it four stars.

Dannica Zulestin says

When I read Avilian's second novel, *A Small Country About to Vanish*, I liked it so much that I procrastinated reading her first even though I already had a copy. Unfortunately it was not worth the wait.

The Premise

Carly Rosen lost her fiancé when he left her for the celebrity and genius Anna Garibaldi. Now he's dead, and Carly wants revenge on Anna, or possibly just to get some of him back. But when she confronts Anna over their relationship, she falls for Anna herself, and then discovers that there are many things Anna is hiding.

Things That Were Good

- The initial premise was interesting. Carly's obsession with Anna after her fiancé's death was compellingly dark, and I was on the edge of my seat for their confrontation.
- There's a lot of good prose.
- Jewish MC, though her ethnicity is not as major as that of the protagonist of *A Small Country About to Vanish*.
- Various secrets, twists and turns I could not have guessed on my own.

Things That Were Bad

- Most mild, the imagery can get overwhelming and overblown. So much artsiness and idolization of Anna that I could gag. But more importantly...
- Elements of ableism. (view spoiler)
- Instalove--to be fair, Carly was obsessed with Anna before meeting her, but literally, they have sex the day they meet and from then on they're supposed to be in deep love with each other.
- Elements of racism: The one black character (that I can remember, anyway) is a kleptomaniac obsessed with Anna, and a major character in a romantic relationship with her nicknames her Lady Godiva and keeps on making chocolate remarks. Also a minor exoticized Asian character.
- WTF ending (view spoiler)

Overall

Damn it. I really wanted to like this one.

Still would probably read Avilian's next book (if/when it comes out) because judging by her second novel she's improved now but I don't think I can recommend this.

T.T. Thomas says

High-Camp Literary Mashup Is A Page-Turner Super-Deluxe Suite on the Top Floor of a 5-Star Hotel!!!

If you want the lure of obsession fueled by the madness of lust right before it collides with the creativity of a wild woman and the finesse of a Courtly scribe, Victoria Avilan's your girl and *The Art of Peeling An Orange* is your Book of the Year!

In this anything-but-staid re-imagining of the mythic trope of those lusty would-be Greek lovers, Orpheus and Eurydice, *The Art of Peeling An Orange* by debut author Victoria Avilan is true to the spirit of the Greek drama—except it's West Hollywood, and it's two, maybe four, hot lesbians!

It's the higher (rather than merely high) drama befitting lesbian caricature mixed with a laser-precision counterpoint rendering of real lesbian sensitivities, intelligence and charms. It's a ton of great lines, wonderful writing and a tense, taut and trail-blazing page-turner of genre-busting amusement and, at times, hilarity of insight and circumstance.

It doesn't matter whether you like your vodka straight up, or not at all: You'll be soused 'by association' on something you've never heard of by the end of Chapter 5. If this copious amount of alcoholic concoction is the modern nectar of the Gods, then West Hollywood is the local distillery!

The Art of Peeling an Orange (TAOPAN) has an amazing, erotically charged and frankly exhausting amount of pretty frank sex. If you prefer that your sex scenes allude to the metaphorical equivalent of saying a slow rosary in the presence of a few dozen chaste but pretty 'sisters of charity' in a stained-glass-windowed room with the scent of incense hovering over your penance, then back away from your Ereader. Now! TAOPAN is nothing if not full of irony posing in drag as a kind of erotica but you could miss the subtle ironies for the up-front erotica!

Avilan is a masterful storyteller, and this debut novel reveals a complete grasp of adventurous fiction writing. Avilan knows how to hook the reader with brilliant pacing, wonderful dialog, an oh-my-God-moment at the end of every chapter, a combination of literary and pedestrian hooks that keeps one swiping screens or turning pages in a marathon of forward movement to find out what happens and why. Six different times I thought the end of the book was near, but Avilan was just getting warmed up. Two dozen times, I said "You've got to be kidding!" and then I realized the author was, and a dozen times or more, I said, "I can't believe she's got me hooked!"

Woven throughout the deliberately, if somewhat incredible, multi-dimensional characteristics of Avila's lesbians—lesbians we've all met (or been—briefly, of course!) is the avoidance of mere caricature as Avilan deftly infuses her main characters with equal parts parody and purpose. She has created a delicate balance of real and surreal but never unreal. Sure, much of their existence is over-the-top, but, honestly? That's what we like about them! In this regard, she pays much tribute to the antecedent referent of Greek mythology as fiction's proverbial drama queen. If lesbians (and all mankind) be ludicrous, and willful, then may they at least be gorgeous, talented and rich!

Despite and perhaps because of the messes they make, Avilan's characters still have some indefinable allure, some palpable vulnerability and near holiness. We cannot avert our eyes from a beautiful mess. We've all been there. When they call out, we turn and look back even as we stride forward in the glow of chic certainty and au courant confidence. "I've got this," too soon becomes a lament, of sorts, that most resembles "Oh, shit!"

We are so very cool; we haughtily turn around and look back, despite being warned against doing so. We are

sure that we have positively got her or absolutely quit her or —or whatever our goal was that sent us storming into Hell in search of the one we want or the one who got away or the one we're running from, or to. Avilan seems to sense that the difference between "I'm leaving you" and "I'm going to have you," is a universal cocktail of emotions, thoughts, strengths and weaknesses that offers one of two variations: 'Straight up or on the rocks.' Choose your poison wisely as you contemplate if it was the calling out or the turning back around that was one's undoing.

Beyond that, everything is pretty much everything else. But is it? Avilan toys with our concepts of human sameness while entertaining a flirtation with originality, difference and personal brilliance; in the end...well, you'd have to be there, so just read it!

In another bow to the Greeks, or to the many and varied interpretations of the myths, Avilan has wisely chosen to write an "alternative ending," available on her website. In doing so, this author reveals her hyper-vigilant awareness of and skill with the HEA, while maintaining the integrity of the Greek tragedy trope. I think she had a ton of fun with this book!

Avilan is quite clear on the theme of love: It makes no damn sense and sex is what we think we want for breakfast, lunch, dinner and cocktails. And yet, she suggests, something bigger and stronger bonds lesbian love, and it might be vision. We are different; we see things differently. How we approach our vision is important.

We are visionaries for one another, for better and for worse. We are visionaries whether the person wants it or not, sees it or not, can live up to it or not. We are visionaries when love lends a hand to someone the world has forgot or thrown away or doesn't have time for. We are visionaries who see beyond the hype of someone's self-delusion or the star-power accorded them by virtue of their ability to engender a sense of mystery about themselves. And we see the reality of 'mystery' as little more than self-delusion gone public, to varying degrees of social acceptance within and without the lesbian subculture. In TAOPAO, lesbians are the wonder women of the worldwide web of wonder. Headquarters: West Hollywood—but also the world.

Lesbianism, she suggests, is an art, and a skill, and a series of close encounters, fatal attractions and gone girls. They come complete with close-your-eyes errors and (mostly) self-generated humor and horrors, as well as wide-eyed amazement and accomplishments achieved (mostly) through a maze of a mysterious and special sisterhood support, replete with sibling rivalry! It is at times both the underworld and the overworld, but it is surely another world. And Avilan might be right! After all, Orpheus did end up on the Isle of Lesbos, albeit in several disparate pieces!

Still, the themes of love and trust, the power of music, literature and art, the variable nature of happiness and even death are universal, and we see this in the ordinary and extraordinary landscape of lives lived rich in detail and yet bereft of direction—until seen through love's eyes. That vision thing again.

Certainly, the author has almost reached the level of writer as wonder woman. To be honest, Full-on, five-tilt boogie 5 stars because we should encourage this writer to keep writing. Avilan has abundant talent, an expressive imagination and has produced a published work free from all errors. I look forward to her next book. Brava Ms. Avilan!

Lynn Lawler says

This book has received some mixed reviews, but I feel after reading my review you are going to want to read this story. It has two points of view and is told from the third person perspective. Let's meet our main players, Carly and Anna.

Carly is an artist and the author provides a lot of her lifestyle. I found it interesting what she chose as her blotting material. The way she paints is an art form in itself and I could visualize what she was working on. She likes to paint portraits and landscapes. She's obsessed with the past and lives her world through Greek mythology, which is plentiful in the story. She is torn between two sides of her heart. One is love and the other is revenge.

Anna is the second player. She is colorblind and is very mysterious and very complex. Carly has an instant love-hate relationship with her. Anna's vibe was smooth and calm. Never did she raise her voice. She is multilingual, and the author has her speak in these languages throughout the book. I felt that added a nice touch. Anna has the gift of being able to see through loved ones which I felt was beyond words. I learned more things about her as the story unfolded. I felt I was reading about a legend.

In addition, there are a few secondary characters I'd like to introduce, Juliette and Kyra. Juliette is Anna's ex-lover and is very much still into her. She does things in the story that will take your breath away as she is sneaky and sly. However, she adds good drama to the story and is a love interest for one of the secondary players.

Kyra is Carly's sister and can't be fooled. In fact, her presence makes anyone want to confess what they are hiding if they are indeed doing that. She is a good listener but does hold her own judgments. The author provides scenes from Southern California and it was fun to read about places I've visited. It was exciting to go there in the book. Well done. It will draw you in. I was impressed with how she chose to include Monarch Butterflies in the story, as they are really magnificent insects.

It is easy reading and took me about 4 hours to read. I would recommend one sitting. The pace is moderate, and some scenes will get you tingling. Excitement rises as things unfold between Anna and Carly that you don't want to miss. There is sex in the book, it is tasteful and hot, but not over the top. I hope you will enjoy this book as much as I did.

Alealea says

This a good book, well-written and more literature than lesfic.
This is also a nightmare.

I read it in one-go tonight, unable to put it down. It was a really fast read, the story is beautiful and dark and sad and annoying. Grief, madness, art and egomania leaks at each chapter.

It reminded me of Invitation to a Beheading by Nabokov : The story enfolds in a dreamlike, phantasmagorical way, with darkness and beauty intertwined.
It's addictive, frightening, and left me with the taste of ashed in my mouth.

I didn't enjoy it but I'm not sure I will ever forget it.

Nicole says

Exciting!

Ms. Avilan takes you on a tortuous road with deep peaks and valleys. So many "I didn't see that coming"! Excellent first work!

Aj Smith says

This is one of the most mindbendingly wondrous books I've read in a long time. I'm not quite sure how to describe it though. While the blurb mentions it being "a gender-bending, risqué take on the myth of Orpheus and Eurydice", I must confess that on a first read (there will soon be a second and many more), I didn't see too much evidence of gender-bending. While there were plenty of references to Greek mythology, they are explained within the text in a subtle manner. (I've studied Classics and it didn't come across as patronising/over-simplified.) Ugh, I'm rambling again.

As swiftly as Carly's emotions are thrown into turmoil, so the reader is drawn into the swirling vortex of her life and it's intersection with Anna Garibaldi, La Divina. Anna is a famous novelist, poet, dancer, actor director but most importantly of all, she's the woman Carly's fiancée Greg, ran away with the night before they were supposed to get married. Carly goes to confront the woman she blames for ruining her life after Greg dies in a car crash while driving to Carly's after sending her a cryptic text. Once she arrives at Anna's, however, she begins to realise that nothing is as it seems.

I really don't think I've done this book justice in this review but I would really recommend it to anyone. It truly is a joy to read.

Swetha Chodavarpu says

Spellbinding, magical and simply breathtaking!

If there is one book I would recommend you jump into without reading the blurb, this would be it.

The Art of Peeling an Orange came as a complete surprise and knocked me off my feet. I have to admit, I only picked up this novel because it was free on kindle unlimited, and the title gave way to curiosity. The tale was woven with attention to detail; each thread complementing the other with a flair of perfection. There were moments of magical surrealism, awesome dialogues, spellbinding erotica, and mind-blowing chemistry.

You fall in love with Anna Garibaldi too, although you know you shouldn't and you have no reason to. But, you find yourself waiting for her to appear, to grace the pages of your kindle with her presence, and when she does, you know the wait was worth it.

This book will open your eyes to whole new kind of storytelling. One where you cannot escape the narration even if you want to.

So, my advice : Surrender and become Anna Garibaldi's prisoner.

Amy Woods says

Touching and mysterious

This book is a real page turner. It's mysteries keep you wondering until the very end. Makes you question the reality behind a facade. Would definitely recommend.

Darsie says

What I liked best in this book were the descriptions of color and form, which truly are spectacular! I'm not an artist but this story gave me an insight into what it's like to be one.

Other than that, the author was obviously madly in love with one of her main characters, because there were endless descriptions of her appearance, the way she moved and spoke... almost to the exclusion of everything else (except for the non-stop lesbian sex, which was also included at every turn, at the most improbable moments) So much so, that at the end of the book I had just an impression of what everyone else in the story looked like, but could have detailed every aspect of La Davina's persona. I know that the reader is supposed to be as obsessed about her as the characters, but it was a bit much.

Clearly, from a "plot" point of view, characters couldn't just ask the most obvious questions, and had Carly done that, it would have been a different story entirely.

Having said that, I didn't see that ending coming, at all. Good surprise. My only quibble with it was that it seemed rushed? Under the circumstances, I don't think it could have been told differently though.

Interesting to note that there is a published alternate ending - happier, according to reviews - So if this ending leaves you unsatisfied, you could give that a go. I wonder how many people read both and prefer the alternate ending? However, IMO a forced and false happy ending wouldn't have worked nearly as well with the rest of the dark and twisty story.
