



Oleander Girl: A Novel

By Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni

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Beloved bestselling author Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni has been hailed by Abraham Verghese as a “gifted storyteller” and by *People* magazine as a “skilled cartographer of the heart.” Now, Divakaruni returns with her most gripping novel yet, a sweeping, suspenseful coming-of-age tale about a young woman who leaves India for America on a search that will transform her life.

THOUGH SHE WAS ORPHANED AT BIRTH, the wild and headstrong Korobi Roy has enjoyed a privileged childhood with her adoring grandparents, spending her first seventeen years sheltered in a beautiful, crumbling old mansion in Kolkata. But despite all that her grandparents have done for her, she is troubled by the silence that surrounds the circumstances of her parents’ death and clings fiercely to her only inheritance from them: the love note she found, years ago, hidden in a book of poetry that had belonged to her mother. As she grows, Korobi dreams of one day finding a love as powerful as her parents’, and it seems her wish has finally come true when she meets the charming Rajat, the only son of a high-profile business family.

Shortly after their engagement, however, a sudden heart attack kills Korobi’s grandfather, revealing serious financial problems and a devastating secret about Korobi’s past. Shattered by this discovery and by her grandparents’ betrayal, Korobi decides to undertake a courageous search across post-9/11 America to find her true identity. Her dramatic, often startling journey will ultimately thrust her into the most difficult decision of her life.

With flawless narrative instinct and a boundless sympathy for her irrepressible characters, in *Oleander Girl* Divakaruni brings us a perfect treat of a novel—moving, wise, and unforgettable. As *The Wall Street Journal* raves, “Divakaruni emphasizes the cathartic force of storytelling with sumptuous prose. . . . She defies categorization.”

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Editorial Review

From [Booklist](#)

Starred Review Orphaned at birth, Korobi (Bengali for “oleander”) always wondered why her mother named her after a beautiful but poisonous plant. By the dramatic conclusion of this utterly transfixing novel, she finds out, and we are left whirling in the wake of Divakaruni’s (*One Amazing Thing*, 2010) newest penetrating tale. An entrancing storyteller with an unerring moral compass, Divakaruni has created a superbly well-plotted, charming, yet hard-hitting novel of family, marriage, and class, a veritable Indian Jane Austen novel spiked with racial prejudice and religious violence. Raised in Kolkata by her sweet if burdened grandmother and her grandfather, a famous and irascible lawyer, Korobi is a modest, smart, and unworldly college student when she meets wealthy, stylish, and jaded Rajat. Much to the surprise of his high-society friends and the horror of his megarich ex-lover, Rajat proposes to quiet, unhip Korobi, who feels as though she has stepped into a fairy tale, cuing us to expect tragedy. But there is no anticipating the complexities and implications of the crises and obstacles Korobi and Rajat face in light of Korobi’s resolute quest for the truth about her father as she journeys across harshly xenophobic post-9/11 America. From baneful secrets, poisonous misunderstandings and conflicts, and transcendent love, Divakaruni has forged another tender, wise, and resonant page-turner. --Donna Seaman

Review

"Gorgeous. . . [An] elegant and highly evocative new novel from Divakaruni." ([PopMatters.com](#))

"With the barest touch of magical realism, *Oleander Girl* whisks the reader into the layered intricacies of love affairs, family, Indian social class, racial prejudice and religious tension. . . [Divakaruni] delivers an absorbing modern fairy tale about an orphan in search of the messy truths of family and love." ([San Antonio Express News](#))

"Emotionally compelling. . . . *Oleander Girl* . . . weaves together many realizations—social and personal. It’s a book that allows you to debate the place of pure emotion as a driving force in life. . . . Divakaruni brings up the generation gap, . . . social status, personal loyalty, Indian mindsets and American realities (ongoing subjects of inquiry in many of her former novels) and serves them with just enough sugar and spice to keep her reader liking the fare." ([Live Mint](#))

"Divakaruni is a poet as well as a novelist—a fact on display in this mystery, which unfolds like a time-lapsed lotus. . . . [She] weaves the issues of the caste system, Hindu and Muslim differences, modern Indian women balancing love and duty, and prejudice into the fabric of her story. It’s the smell and feel of Kolkata that resonates long after the book is finished." ([BUST magazine](#))

"Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni’s new novel, *Oleander Girl*, is . . . a showcase for the best-selling author’s ability to maintain her signature, beautifully-crafted prose while creating a complex set of deceptions, ruses, and lies, exposing the dark side of human nature. . . . Skillfully crafted, the novel is a bouquet of collisions that illustrate how choices we make affect more than just ourselves. The past and present clash, as do secrets and truths, needs and wants, old and new India, East and West, wise and unwise decisions. Subplots span two continents and families, and double back on themselves." ([India Currents](#))

"A many-faceted story of discovery . . . *Oleander Girl* is part mystery, part search, but mostly the story of a young girl finding herself and deciding where she belongs." ([Seattle Times](#))

"An orphan teen raised by her grandparents in India finds the love she always searched for, but a newly unearthed family secret may interfere." (Oprah.com "16 New Books to Get Lost in This April")

"*Oleander Girl* will keep you captivated from the very first chapter. . . . The twists and turns to the story will make you want to read it in one sitting. Beautifully written. As an author, **Divakaruni** is in a league of her own." (UrbanAsian.com)

"*Oleander Girl* is a coming of age novel in the best tradition. . . . Divakaruni's gift is story telling, and she is generous with her gift. Through her wonderful novel we become active participants. . . and grateful witnesses to the maturing of a child into a woman." (The Huffington Post)

"Chitra Divakaruni's enthralling new novel, *Oleander Girl*, tells a love story that is more than just that. . . . The many memorable characters that people this novel make it a pleasure to read. [Divakaruni] lavishes as much care on secondary characters as she does on the principals.

[Her] tale is so well-plotted that few will guess the secrets at the heart of this page-turner." (The Dallas News)

"Divakaruni uses her considerable storytelling skills to full advantage in her new novel." (The Oregonian)

"Divakaruni explores issues of class and politics in modern India and immigrant America, but the family issues at the heart of the novel give it a cross-cultural appeal. Told with empathy and intelligence, and accompanied by intrigue, the stories--and issues--of the Roy and Bose families should appeal to a broad range of readers." (Shelf Awareness)

"Divakaruni has crafted a beautiful, complex story in which caste, class, religion, and race are significant factors informing people's world views." (Library Journal (starred review))

"An entrancing storyteller with an unerring moral compass, Divakaruni has created a superbly well-plotted, charming, yet hard-hitting novel of family, marriage, and class, a veritable Indian Jane Austen novel spiked with racial prejudice and religious violence. . . . From baneful secrets, poisonous misunderstandings and conflicts, and transcendent love, Divakaruni has forged another tender, wise, and resonant page-turner." (Booklist (starred review))

"The heart of Divakaruni's cross-cultural novel lies in contemporary Kolkata, India. . . . Like an Indian Maeve Binchy, Divakaruni offers an entertaining [read].” (Kirkus)

"*Oleander Girl* is elegant and classic, but also vivid and immediate. Love and loss and secrets collide in this powerful story of the way we live now. There is poetry on these pages, but also the burning-on-both-ends urgency of a page turner. Gorgeous and exciting, this is a wonderful novel." (Tayari Jones bestselling author of *The Silver Sparrow*)

"When you think of thrilling page turners, you don't usually think of fluid, graceful prose. But that's what you'll find in *Oleander Girl*. This is the gripping story of a young woman who leaves India in pursuit of a shocking family secret, only to learn far more about herself than she bargained for. It is also a story that bears out the wisdom of something one of the characters says: Never choose something because it's easier. Chitra Divakaruni is such an elegant writer, one who makes the reader feel not only engaged and entertained, but a bit elevated, too. I've been a fan of Divakaruni's work for a long time; this book keeps me one." (Elizabeth Berg New York Times bestselling author of *Tapestry of Fortunes*)

“Compulsively readable, a real page-turner. I found it impossible to set this novel down once I picked it up. Chitra Divakaruni confronts the hard truths about love, loss, grief, redemption and the choices we make, in a family saga that reads like a detective novel.” (Thrity Umrigar bestselling author of *The World We Found* and *The Space Between*)

“*Oleander Girl* is a riveting and powerful exploration of family secrets, betrayal, love, and ultimately, the search for self. Divakaruni paints colorful characters on a rich tapestry of modern India, all still haunted by the past.” (Shilpi Somaya Gowda New York Times bestselling author of *Secret Daughter*)

“*Oleander Girl* is a masterpiece--a Dickens novel moved forward 150 years.” (BookReporter.com)

About the Author

Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni is the author of sixteen books, including *Oleander Girl*, *The Mistress of Spices*, *Sister of My Heart*, *Palace of Illusions*, *One Amazing Thing*, and *Before We Visit the Goddess*. Her work has appeared in *The New Yorker*, *The Atlantic Monthly*, and *The New York Times*, and has won, among other prizes, an American Book Award. Born in India, she currently lives in Texas and is the McDavid professor of Creative Writing at the University of Houston.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Florence Croy:

What do you in relation to book? It is not important along with you? Or just adding material when you really need something to explain what the ones you have problem? How about your extra time? Or are you busy particular person? If you don't have spare time to perform others business, it is make one feel bored faster. And you have extra time? What did you do? Everyone has many questions above. The doctor has to answer that question mainly because just their can do in which. It said that about guide. Book is familiar on every person. Yes, it is suitable. Because start from on pre-school until university need this kind of *Oleander Girl: A Novel* to read.

Ruth Barr:

Exactly why? Because this *Oleander Girl: A Novel* is an unordinary book that the inside of the e-book waiting for you to snap the item but latter it will surprise you with the secret the item inside. Reading this book beside it was fantastic author who write the book in such amazing way makes the content inside easier to understand, entertaining technique but still convey the meaning totally. So , it is good for you because of not hesitating having this ever again or you going to regret it. This amazing book will give you a lot of gains than the other book have such as help improving your proficiency and your critical thinking means. So , still want to hold up having that book? If I were you I will go to the publication store hurriedly.

Bonnie Camacho:

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John Negron:

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