



Oleanna

Julie K. Rose

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Set during the separation of Norway from Sweden in 1905, this richly detailed novel of love and loss was inspired by the life of the author's great-great-aunts.

Oleanna and her sister Elisabeth are the last of their family working their farm deep in the western fjordland. A new century has begun, and the world outside is changing, but in the Sunnfjord their world is as small and secluded as the verdant banks of a high mountain lake.

The arrival of Anders, a cotter living just across the farm's border, unsettles Oleanna's peaceful but isolated existence. Sharing a common bond of loneliness and grief, Anders stirs within her the wildness and wanderlust she has worked so hard to tame.

When she is confronted with another crippling loss, Oleanna must decide once and for all how to face her past, claim her future, and find her place in a wide new world.

Oleanna Details

Date : Published January 23rd 2012

ISBN : 9781105361418

Author : Julie K. Rose

Format : Paperback 274 pages

Genre : Historical, Historical Fiction, Fiction, Romance, Literature, 20th Century

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From Reader Review Oleanna for online ebook

V.E. Ulett says

Oleanna is as insular and beautiful a novel as the Norway of the early twentieth century in which it is set. Like all good stories Oleanna is about many things, and this is a story not only of one young woman's experiences, but also of change, the consequences of our decisions, and about loss and grief. The novel tells a compelling tale that concludes in hope and the power of the place we call home. Highly recommended.

Anna Graham says

A magnificent journey to the past; Rose captures turn of the century Norway as if having walked the very steps Oleanna and her sister Elisabeth trod running the family farm. But this novel is more than a trip back in time; Oleanna is chased by ghosts, also by one man who shares her trepidations. Anders Samuelsson stirs Oleanna's passions, also her fears; will she yet again be left behind?

Norway's beauty, from lush mountains to crowded Bergen, enhances this tale; one feels surrounded either by stark, delicious farmland or the bustling, dirty city. Those facets augment the core of this novel; a woman's fractured and weary heart tries living in two worlds. The past haunts Oleanna, while the future seems heavy, without purpose. Yet, Anders offers change. Will Oleanna brave the unknown, or remain trapped in a hell partly of her own making. Julie K. Rose spins a tale brimming with ancient stillness and urgent relevancy as Oleanna forges her own way while Norwegians claim their freedom from Sweden.

Rose has created honest, well-rounded characters set in stunning, crisp locales, affording a pleasurable, thought-provoking read.

Cynthia McArthur says

Oleanna is aptly titled, as it is the story of Oleanna. So many books proclaiming to be about one character wind up being about several secondary characters as well. Not so with this book. We are with Oleanna, we see the others through her eyes, and feel them with her emotions, but it is her story. She is coming afraid and also coming alive with every page of the story. The imagery was unbelievable. I could almost feel the cold Norwegian air, even see my breath as Oleanna and I sat around a fire. The dialogue was very realistic, with Oleanna sometimes saying more than she needed to, and not always in an eloquent manner, as so often happens in real life. There were many times when in conversation with someone, Oleanna's questions would be put off with a change of subject, and you could feel her resentment and frustration. This is a story about Oleanna coming to terms with herself, and it was a pleasure to be with her on her journey. I would indeed recommend this book. I haven't read anything at all about Norway at the turn of the century until this book, and the author represented the fear and excitement of change so well. Very good read.

Melanie Spiller says

I just finished reading Julie K. Rose's book "Oleanna," and I feel refreshed. The story follows a woman through loss and love, politics and poverty, and throughout it all, sets the scene quietly in Norway. I often felt as though I was reading poetry: the language was languid and lush and so very evocative. I haven't got a single Norwegian root, but I found myself wishing for them, wishing I had a farm to visit and ghosts of my own. As another reviewer mentioned, the letter from Julie's grandfather is icing on the cake.

Tinney says

This quiet, profound book explores the still depths of grief and loss, yet it ends with a sense of hope and a realization of what constitutes home. Many of my recent reads have been more like shallow rapids, so I found this book to be deeply refreshing. The protagonist is as richly realized a character as I have encountered in quite a while, and the subsidiary characters are equally individual. These are people you feel you really know by the end of the book, in all their complexity and many-faceted humanity. The setting, too, is drawn in precise and evocative detail. The reader doesn't have to take on faith Oleanna's affinity for her homestead in the Norwegian fjords, because we see the farm and the lake through her eyes, in all their beauty and wildness.

Oleanna is not a book for people who want non-stop action, but for those who want to explore human nature and experience in depth, it will satisfy. I look forward to reading more by this very talented author.

(Has a really lovely cover, too.)

Kathleen says

Oleanna was a book about the land and place my own grandfather came from in 1918. Sogn og Fjordane (south Fjord) and Sunnfjord have stark and beautiful landscapes; in the early 20th century, it was the homeland its natives were escaping in droves.

Oleanna herself attempted to follow her 2 brothers to America and decided against it even as the opportunity was available to her. The land and the life she was used to called her back. It is a beautiful story of a haunting place and the contrast between early 20th century Norway and the US was astounding.

A story of love, hardship, betrayal and renewal. Recommended for Norwegian descendants and anyone who loves to explore people and cultures. It deserves the accolades it received..

I received a signed copy from the author via Passages to the Past Blog Hop and, although not my usual medieval preferred timeframe, it was a wonderful read.

Jenny Q says

This lovely little novel was my introduction to Norwegian historical fiction, and I really enjoyed it. It's a beautifully written story crafted around characters based on the authors ancestors, Oleanna and Elizabeth,

two sisters left holding the pieces of their family's farm after a series of tragedies. Oleanna is the older sister, a young woman struggling to hold on to the only way of life she's ever known while the lure of the ever-widening world and the opportunities it holds draws her friends and loved ones away. As Norway stands on the verge of becoming an independent nation and radical new ideas--along with a handsome, mysterious new neighbor--make their way into her secluded valley paradise, Oleanna is forced to admit her own curiosity about a rapidly changing world and the possibility of another life that could be passing her by.

This novel is so very atmospheric, bringing the mountain and the lake and the sleepy little village in Sunnfjord to life so much that it becomes a character itself, the perfect setting to display her human characters to their best advantage, particularly Oleanna. She's such a study in contradiction: Devoting herself to the hard work of her farm, she allows herself little room for joy, and yet she is able to appreciate the joy in everything around her. She is wise beyond her years and yet at times infuriatingly childish. Full of hope and wonder of the unknown world yet too afraid to let go of the ghosts that tether her. A supportive sister and loving aunt, an enigma to other villagers, and a wild nymph of the forest to her new friend Anders, an older man starting over in life who is seduced by her unaffected charm and beauty. She's flawed and glorious and I found much in her to admire. I also found myself unable to put down her story as events combined to force Oleanna out of her sheltered existence and onto an exciting and frightening path to discover what is real, what is important, and what is worth fighting for.

It's not often you'll hear me complain that a book is too short, but in this case, I liked it so much that I wanted more. A little more backstory and revelation could have fleshed out some of the supporting characters and given them a bit more depth and motivation, and I wouldn't have minded a little more historical context either. But Oleanna is more than enough to carry the story on her own, the setting is fresh and inspiring, and the love story is both tender and tumultuous. I was also very impressed with Ms. Rose's ability to write honestly and naturally and yet so evocatively that it verges on poetic. And her author's note at the end cinched it for me with an old letter that brought tears to my eyes, a sweet homage to the natural magic of the land that had such a hold on Oleanna. *Oleanna* was a very different read for me, and very satisfying, and one I would recommend to anyone looking for a change of pace in historical fiction.

Audra (Unabridged Chick) says

When this book ended, I contemplated flipping back to the start in order to begin again. I absolutely didn't want to leave the characters I had come to like so much.

Set in early 20th century Norway, this novel drew me in immediately with the heartbreaking story and quiet, intense characters. Oleanna and her sister Elizabeth are left on their isolated farm in southern Norway after their brother emigrates to the U.S. Already too familiar with loss -- tragic deaths, ended engagements, the absence of their loved ones -- Oleanna and Elizabeth face their time on their farm with pragmatic determination and couched restlessness.

There's elegant restraint in how Rose articulates love and loss, passion and madness, the rhythm of farm life, the quietude of rural Norway. In this book, I saw shades of both Sigrid Undset and Willa Cather. Rose's story of a strong woman at an isolated Norwegian farm reminded me immediately of Undset's *Kristin Lavransdatter* while the novel's theme of emigration, place, and identity felt like a companion to Cather's *O Pioneers!*

This is a historical novel for my wife, who believes life is hard and should be unvarnished. Rose doesn't

employe melodrama or theatrics and yet this is a story of deep loss, sadness, and heartbreak, the kind that just digs and twists (I'm getting teary again recalling the few particularly sad scenes!).

I'm normally a bit hesitant about novels that feature the author's ancestors or family members -- I find that sometimes the author doesn't have enough distance to make the characters real -- flawed or otherwise. In this case, Rose's Oleanna and Elizabeth are vibrant and complicated -- I just adored them and their journey.

Even if you aren't typically a historical fiction fan, consider this novel -- it's a wonderful snapshot of a place and a time set in tradition but uprooted by enormous transition. A story of ordinary women, unique and astounding in their own way, that will charm and captivate.

Darlene says

Oleanna by Julie K. Rose is quite simply a beautifully written book. The story was inspired by the author's great-great aunts and takes place in Norway in 1905. This novel paints such a vivid picture of life at this time in history and you feel drawn in from the very first page. You feel the hardships, love, loss, loyalty and family that flow from the pages of this book all the while feeling haunted by the shadows of ghosts past. I don't often turn the last page of a book and want to go right back to the beginning but that's how this novel has made me feel with all the beautiful passages and the quiet but deep and touching tale.

Oleanna and her sister Elisabeth are all that is left of their family and they have suffered an abundance of loss with the death of both of their parents and two sisters as well as two brothers who immigrated to America. Elisabeth has her young son but all Oleanna seems left with are ghosts from the past. Since the death of her mother and younger sister Anna she can't move on as she feels responsible for them dying. Oleanna believes that everyone you love always ends up leaving you and this leaves her unable to put her trust in anyone or even to love again. Into the scenario comes Anders who lives on the border of their farm and despite trying hard to avoid it there is a definite spark between Oleanna and Anders. As things become more serious between them Oleanna begins to question Anders about his past but he is very secretive about it although he professes to love her. Just as she begins to trust him and hope for a future together he tells her that he has to leave but he promises to be back. Can he be trusted? Or is he just the same as everyone else who leaves her? When the opportunity arises for Oleanna to travel to America she pushes herself hard and takes it. If she doesn't do it now then she will never leave the farm and see the world and more importantly actually have a life. Is a life outside the farm really what she wants though or will the pull of the familiar and the love of family take her back to what is truly important to her?

I really liked Oleanna. Both she and her sister Elisabeth were no strangers to hard work. Living in on a farm that is pretty much out in the wilds ensured that they knew what an honest day's work entailed and often they worked from dawn till dusk to get all the chores completed. Oleanna also wasn't willing to settle even though she was thirty years old which in the early 1900's was considered an old maid. She was strong and yet battled her ghosts and the guilt that held her in one place. I admired her for her loyalty to both her sister and the land that had been in her family for generations. Oleanna was a woman I won't soon forget.

I loved this novel. I'm always drawn to novels of early farming communities and the struggles of the people who lived on them. Oleanna went a step further in this novel's beautiful, lyrical writing and evoking a time and place that takes you out of your world and puts you into another one. The vivid descriptions of this land of solitude were so achingly beautiful and I wanted nothing more than to find myself sitting beside the lake and staring out at the land and experiencing the peace of it for myself. I highly recommend this book and

look forward to reading more from this author!

Bettie? says

Oleanna

dedication *For Janis Terry Hunt Nelson*

Norway National Day - 17th May

Spring 2013

pub 2012

hist-fic period piece

opening: **Lake Jölster, Sunnfjord, Norway. May 1905**

Oleanna Tollefsdatter Myklebost was beset by ghosts: winter ice in her veins, chill and stiff even during the long summer days of the midnight sun.

Not the read I wanted. This was an undemanding romance/beach trinket set in 1905 with the politics merely alluded to.

Ole Bull founded a utopian 'New Norway' in PA, USA:

*Bull visited the United States several times and was met with great success. In 1852, he obtained a large tract of land in Pennsylvania and founded a colony, which was called New Norway but which is commonly referred to as Ole Bull Colony. On 24 May 1852, he formally purchased 11,144 acres (45 km²) for \$10,388. The land consisted of four communities: New Bergen, now known as Carter Camp; **Oleanna, named after him and his mother, six miles (10 km) south of New Bergen**; New Norway, one mile south of New Bergen; and Valhalla. Wiki sourced.*

Could be the root of the title here.

Karen says

"Oleanna" is a book about ordinary women, living on an isolated farm in the isolated western fjordlands of Norway. Oleanna and her sister Elisabeth and Torjus, Elisabeth's young son, are the last of their family living on their old family lands. The deaths of their parents and sisters, and the loss of their brothers to the lure of the American Dream, have left the sisters restless but tied to the land and their memories. The idea of people leaving and never returning is a constant theme in the book, and when Oleanna's relationship with neighbour Anders is threatened she is forced to make a decision about the direction her life will take.

One of the most important themes in the book is freedom and choice. Set in 1905 during the separation of Norway from Sweden, the politics is never central but is very important in the tale of Oleanna. As Norway gains her freedom, so the women in this novel develop their own style of freedom to make choices. Oleanna is confronted by the wide new world outside her mountain home. She is not a political person, and since she

is unable to vote due to her sex she dismisses it as "theory with no practical application for me". She later sits, somewhat bemusedly, through a suffrage meeting. Oleanna does not seek political power but what she discovers in the course of the novel is the freedom to choose how to live.

I find it quite interesting that in "Oleanna" it is the men who leave the farm. Traditionally, land and land ownership are "male" things. Here the men leave the women with the existing land and go to follow their dreams elsewhere. Initially, the sisters seem to lack the choices that their brothers have. The loss of their brothers (and for Oleanna, potentially of Anders) allows, and indeed forces, each of the women into making decisions about their lives. They may not have the vote but wider societal changes have their impact.

Both sisters become strong women. Memories of the lost family members abound, tied into the land and the lake, and Oleanna's struggle with her feelings of how to pay her debts to the dead form one of the most beautiful aspects of the novel. All the family members (except young Torjus) accuse themselves of cowardice. All struggle to cope with the land and the ghosts of memories who inhabit it. Can peace be made with these ghosts or will Oleanna need to leave, and follow in her brothers' footsteps to overcome them? Can ghosts ever be outrun? These are some of the questions this book attempts to answer.

I really enjoyed this novel. It is a very quiet, thoughtful book. I felt drawn in from the first page and found the whole atmosphere convincing; from the setting to the characters' emotions. Loss, grief, change, meanings of freedom, land, family are all explored. This novel was a treat from start to finish and I highly recommend it.

I received a copy of the book for free through Goodreads First Reads.

The Lit Bitch says

This novel caught my eye for one specific reason.....the setting. Normally, I read a lot of historic fiction that is set in England, America, or France.....but mostly England. England tends to be the favorite setting for most historical fiction novels and why not, it's full of history!

But after a while, one can't help but wonder what else is out there beyond the UK in the world of HF? Enter Oleanna.

I was astonished at the breathtaking use of setting! Norway sounds absolutely stunning! The flourishing landscapes, forest, and lake all drew me in and made me feel like I was reading about a place both foreign and familiar at the same time.

But the novel isn't just about a refreshing setting, it's a novel about love, loss, and a woman's journey to find peace within herself.

I thoroughly enjoyed learning about what was going on historically at that time from the Norwegian perspective. You do not want to pass up this sweeping novel!

See my full review [here](#)

Meg - A Bookish Affair says

I really liked this book. It had a good story, good characters and an interesting setting. I think one of the marks of a good book is when you aren't ready to leave the characters when the book ends. I was most definitely not ready to leave Oleanna when the book ended. I wanted to see what happens to her. Is she happy? Will she ever change her mind?

Oleanna is a fabulous character. She's strong but personable and definitely the sort of character that you find yourself rooting for. While Oleanna is a thoroughly fictional character, she is based on one of Rose's real life relatives, which I thought was infinitely cool. Rose took some of the very little details about what she knew of two of her spinster aunts in Norway and turned it into something really amazing. I really liked that Rose included this information in the afterword of the book. It's so awesome to see where authors get their ideas.

Norway is not a country that I'm too terribly familiar with. I'm even less familiar with the country's history. And I'm not sure that I've ever read a fiction book about the country. I definitely learned a little bit from this book (definitely a bonus when reading something). I had no clue that Norwegian as it is today is such a nascent language. I found Rose's afterword about the context of this story really, really interesting. This book definitely made me interested in learning a little bit more about the history of Norway. I do wish that Oleanna would have included a little more information about the suffrage movement. I thought that would have been a really interesting arc especially in light of the country separating from Sweden.

Historical fiction lovers will eat this book up!

Stephanie says

Reading Oleanna was like taking a breath of fresh air. Julie has crafted a compelling story that takes place in Norway in 1905 and evokes a strong tie between a family and everyday life of the farm they work and live on. She also creates a strong sense of place and culture that blends beautifully with the story.

Oleanna and her sister Elisabeth are the last of their family. The remaining two brothers have left for America, leaving them behind. The farm is all the sisters really have ever known and the world around them is changing before their eyes. On the border of their farm arrives a man named Anders. Oleanna and him share a bond. Will Oleanna and Anders find their place in the world together or will they give in to the grief they have both known and be lost to each other forever? To find out, I highly recommend reading this captivating story.

Stephanie
Layered Pages Review team Leader

www.layeredpages.blogspot.com

Stephanie Dagg says

This is a novel of landscapes - physical, political and emotional. It has the unusual and beautiful setting of Norway, at an unsettled time in its history. The lives of Oleanna and Elisabeth are also unsettled. Their brother is shortly to leave them for America, but they must stay and look after the farm. The arrival of Anders causes further ripples in their demanding but rhythmic lives that follow the seasons. This is something I can sympathise with as a farmer. The weather and the needs of the farm at each stage controls what you do at different times of the year. And a farm is a hard place to leave.

All of the characters are strong people. Their tough environment seems to have shaped them to be like that. None of them is conventional and that's what makes them so rounded and interesting. Too often rural folk are dismissively seen as simple and shallow. This novel shows the immense depth of personality that such country people possess, like everyone else, and how their lives are enriched by the background of tradition and rural arts and crafts.

It's a touching, fascinating story. It's impossible not to be pulled into Oleanna's life and suffer her torments and triumphs with them. A unique and beautifully constructed story that I recommend very highly.
