



Love and Other Pranks

Tony Vigorito

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Stylish and surreal, *Love and Other Pranks* by Tony Vigorito is a wild ride through both the past and present.

The novel is split between two time lines. The first introduces modern San Franciscans Merlin and Lila, who oppose a New Age cult leader, Ivan, and his Holy Company of Beautiful People. The second focuses on eighteenth-century Caribbean pirates Crow and Jane, who contend with the murderous Goldtooth and his path of vengeance. Gliding effortlessly through a host of bizarre and enchanting scenarios, both couples' seemingly different journeys become concurrent; each is ultimately a quest for truth, beauty, and fundamental meaning.

This is surrealist writing that strikes an effective balance. Vigorito's inventive use of syntax is the novel's best feature. Ostensibly dissimilar ideas and scenarios are conjoined in unprecedented ways through language, furthering the philosophical leanings of the characters.

Deeply theoretical ideas like the absurdity of our created society and the real meaning of truth are explored with a joyous exuberance that makes the book impossible to put down. Though seemingly intended as something of a wake-up call to readers, *Love and Other Pranks* never sermonizes on the importance of abstract thinking in the age of rampant consumerism and mindlessness, instead creating a humorous, fun space where these kinds of meditations can occur naturally.

The book is also well designed. Succinct chapters marked only by number make up three broader sections titled "Yes, and Nectar," "The Treasure of All Treasures," and "Beware the Meadow of Marvels." The sleek front cover features an image and concept that come up often in the text: the Möbius strip, a geometric figure appearing to have two sides but actually having only one. This figure symbolizes the seemingly dual story lines and is also used as a section divider, reminding the reader to ruminate on the tricky nature of what seems real.

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AMANDA ADAMS (March/April 2017)

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