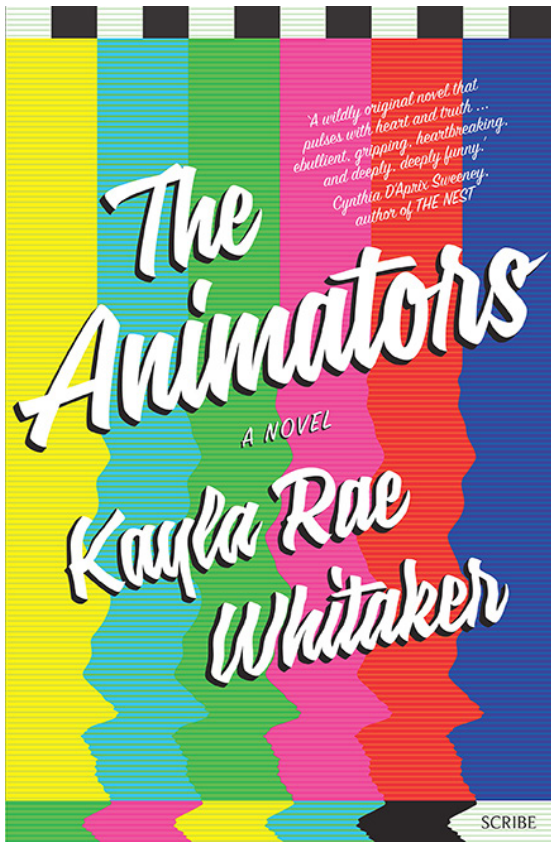


The Animators

KAYLA RAE WHITAKER



BOOK DETAILS

Format: Paperback

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AUTHOR'S BIOGRAPHY

Kayla Rae Whitaker is from Kentucky. She is a graduate of the University of Kentucky and of New York University's MFA program. She lives in Louisville. *The Animators* is her first novel.

From age eighteen on, I had a partner, a kindred spirit. I had a friend. Someone bound and determined to keep me from the worst in myself.

At a private East Coast college, two young women meet in art class. Sharon, ambitious but lacking confidence, arrives from rural Kentucky. Mel, brash and wildly gifted, brings her own brand of hellfire from the backwaters of Florida. Both outsiders, Sharon and Mel become fervent friends, bonding over their love of classic cartoons, their dysfunctional working-class families, and — above all — their craft: drawing. Mel, to understand her tumultuous past, and Sharon, to lose herself altogether.

A decade later, Sharon and Mel are an award-winning animation duo, living and working in Brooklyn, and poised on the edge of even greater success after the release of their first full-length feature. But with this success comes self-doubt, and cracks in their relationship start to form. When unexpected tragedy strikes, long-buried resentments rise to the surface, hastening a reckoning no one sees coming.

Funny and heartbreaking by turn, *The Animators* is a dazzling story of female friendship, the cost of a creative life, and the secrets that can undo us.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. How do you think the book represents different kinds of love (familial, romantic, friendship)?
2. In what ways are Sharon and Mel different to each other, and how does this help or hinder their relationship?

REVIEWS

‘An engrossing, exuberant ride through all the territories of love — familial, romantic, sexual, love of friends, and, perhaps above all, white-hot passion for the art you were born to make ... I wish I’d written *The Animators*.’

EMMA DONOGHUE, AUTHOR OF ROOM AND THE WONDER

‘[An] outstanding debut ... Whitaker skillfully charts the creative process, its lulls and sudden rushes of perfect inspiration. And in the relationship between Mel and Sharon, she has created something wonderful and exceptional: a rich, deep, and emotionally true connection that will certainly steal the hearts of readers.’

PUBLISHERS WEEKLY

‘A compulsively readable portrait of women as incandescent artists and intimate collaborators.’ ELLE

‘*The Animators* is a heartbreakingly beautiful, sharply funny, arrestingly unforgettable novel about love and genius, the powerful obsessiveness of artistic creation, and the equally powerful undertow of the past. Kayla Rae Whitaker writes like her head is on fire.’ KATE CHRISTENSEN, AUTHOR OF THE GREAT MAN

3. Both Sharon and Mel’s childhoods have influenced them greatly. How do you think this has affected their adult life and career?
4. Art is a central theme of the book — how did you feel reading the descriptions of the animation? Could you picture Sharon and Mel’s art? Is there an artist you can think of that is similar to what you imagined?
5. Do you think the relationship between Sharon and Mel was equal?
6. Sharon was very hesitant to return to her home town. Why was this so difficult for her, and how did the trip affect her?
7. What was the significance of Sharon’s DNA test? And did the result change her?
8. In what way did Sharon’s stroke and recovery change her and Mel’s relationship?
9. Discuss the role of art in self-expression.
10. On page 348 Sharon says while looking at Mel’s art, ‘My body runs ice-cold with the knowledge of all I didn’t see, the things I had never known.’ What is she talking about?



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