

The Orchard

Synopsis (long)

Los Angeles talent agent Max Roth has a hectic life. He knows people; he makes phone calls; he spends his days in busy Los Angeles traffic and in a busy Los Angeles office, trying to attach A-listers to projects, turn his B-listers into A-listers and keep deals alive. He's good, he's really good but Max didn't always want to be a talent agent. He wanted to be a writer. . . But life has a way of pushing you along unexpected paths and here he is: Max now . He thinks he knows his life's trajectory, but then an envelope arrives from an obscure Canadian law firm.

He learns that his Aunt May had passed away, leaving him executor and sole beneficiary of her estate. It had been almost 20 years since he had seen his aunt, and he didn't remember much about her. He is shocked that she would leave her estate to him. As Max's mom, Val, puts it, "it was easier for strangers to know Aunt May than for the rest of us."

Max learns that Aunt May's estate consists of a peach orchard just outside of Peachland, on British Columbia's Okanagan Lake. He tells his mom that he plans on selling the property as quickly as possible. Then he goes to B.C. intent on doing just that.

It's an alien world to him: this is the heart of B.C.'s fruit-belt, sloping landscape dappled with vineyards and orchards, apples, cherries, apricots, and, of course, peaches. Arriving at Aunt May's home he is greeted by the clutter of her colorful life: mischievous fairy dolls, exotic knickknacks and fragments of memory that make the old house feel alive. That and a naked woman chained to a peach tree.

The naked woman is Olivia ("Olive") Cunningham. Olive was a close friend of Aunt May's and is devastated by both the loss of her friend and the possibility that this serene orchard could be sold for development (which Aunt May never would have wanted). Flanked by her closest friends and trusted sidekicks Trixy and Stilts, Olive has chained herself to the tree in naked protest.

She has also filed a legal challenge to May's will, claiming to be May's daughter and seeking to have the will declared invalid. Since she is not, in fact, May's daughter (a requirement of such a legal challenge), she suspects the legal action won't work, but the process will give her time, she thinks, to come up with a new plan.

That new plan is seduction. She and the Okanagan take Max on an unexpected journey: fruit, bread, wine, goats, a strange doctor, a runaway pig, a magical bonfire, and sensual delights in the candle light. Something in Max changes—wakes up. Life is not about a result, but a process. The things and people populating the world are not just there as accessories and shared experiences can be magical if you open your eyes, stop chasing things, and let them in.

There are a few more challenges in store for Max, but he learns to approach them with a sense of optimism. He finally articulates that he wants to 'stop chasing his life so he can be in it'. Life is not about a finish line, dead-end jobs and dead-end relationships. It's about freedom, and for that, it seems, all you have to do is see the potential, and then. . . jump.