



# Juliana

*Vanda*

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## **Juliana** Vanda

“An Absolutely Beautiful and Moving Novel!”

--Philip Crawford, author of *Mafia and the Gays*

Readers say, “I can’t wait for the next book in the series.”

She went looking for fame, and found her true self, instead.

New York City, 1941. Alice “Al” Huffman and her childhood friends are fresh off the potato farms of Long Island and bound for Broadway. Al’s plans for stage success are abruptly put on hold when she’s told she has no talent. As she gets a job to pay for acting classes, Al settles into a normal life with her friends and a boyfriend. It all changes when she meets Juliana.

A singer on the brink of stardom, Juliana is everything Al isn’t: glamorous, talented, and queer. The farm girl is quickly enthralled, experiencing thoughts and feelings she never realized were possible. Al finds herself slipping between two worlds: the gay underground and the “normal” world of her childhood friends. It’s a balancing act she can handle until the two worlds begin to collide

In a city bursting with change, can Alice find what she was looking for all along?

Juliana: Volume 1: 1941-1944 is a captivating work of LGBT historical romance. If you like extensively researched settings, spell-binding storytelling, and characters you can’t help but fall for, then you’ll love the first book in award-winning playwright Vanda’s new Juliana series.

Buy Juliana to discover a sexy, funny, and deadly serious world today!

## **Juliana Details**

Date : Published May 28th 2016 by New Sands Studio Press

ISBN :

Author : Vanda

Format : Kindle Edition 468 pages

Genre : Historical, Historical Fiction, Lgbt, Fiction, Romance, Adult, War, Military Fiction

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## From Reader Review Juliana for online ebook

### **Kent says**

Excellent story. I look forward to reading the next book in the series.

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### **Cindy Stein says**

An excellent historical romance in the vein of Sarah Waters in terms of its meticulous research into the NYC of the early 1940s on the eve of and during the initial years of WWII. Alice (Al) Huffman leaves her Long Island home town after HS graduation along with her best female friend and their boyfriends to seek fame and fortune on the stage in NYC. Along the way, she comes across Juliana, a semi-successful nightclub singer. Al's obsession with Juliana soon finds them in a kind of relationship and places Al into the gay subculture of the time. As Part I ends, Juliana returns to Al after a separation but it is unclear what could happen between them.

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### **Tim says**

This story of four friends who start lives in New York City to pursue fame as writers and actors just before the start of World War II has a lot to recommend it. The era is a fascinating one. Viewed with 21st century eyes, it is romantic, appalling, and humorous. The theme of this novel is the growing awareness of these young adults of their own sexualities and how sex, romance, love, and friendship is viewed, experienced and performed in that era whether between persons of opposite sex or same sex. Vanda has created an entertaining story and cast of characters. I enjoyed the book enough to keep going with it even when it verged into soap opera territory.

Some structural issues detracted from the story itself. There is a problem with pacing in the story telling, particularly in the early part of the book. (view spoiler)

This lack of interiority is the main issue plaguing this story. Who is Alice and what does she make of all these people she meets and experiences to which she's exposed? What does she make of herself? Sure, we as readers hear what she tells others. We see how she presents herself and what she is showing the world. But what of her interior dialogue? What is she thinking to herself that leads her to do the things she does and say the things she says? (view spoiler)

One often hears the comment that the book was better than the movie? Well this is a situation where the book was like watching a movie. We had none of the rich interiority of character motivations or emotional arc and had no unspoken body language, scenery or nuances to replace them that we'd get from a move or stage set.

I received a free download of this book in exchange for an honest review. While there are improvements to be made in the storytelling, it was still a pleasurable enough experience, especially for a history buff, and I will read the second volume of this tale when it's released.

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## **Mel says**

I often don't like to read longer books. It takes me a week to finish them and as long as the book is not completely holding my attention, I get easily bored with it.

So, Juliana is not a bad book - I see that there are many high ratings and praising reviews - but it is very lengthy and repetitive. It's just toooo slooow for me.

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Genre: historical fiction

Tags: lesbian, coming of age, New York, WWII, artists

Content warnings: (internalised) homophobia, racism, ableism

Rating: dnf at 40%, no star rating

Notes: read with Iben and Fenriz whom I abandoned halfway through after making them read it

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## **Tiff says**

Juliana by Vanda is an interesting book that follows the lives of a handful of men and women who live in New York City in the early 1940s. The characters are alluring and the tale is poignant. You definitely don't want to miss this one.

The main character in the story is Alice "Al" Huffman. Al leaves her small town family home and moves to NYC. She is accompanied by her childhood best friends, Aggie, Danny & Dickie. They plan to take Broadway by storm and fulfill the dreams they have had since grade school. Al is naive, she is thoughtful, and she is kind. Her evolution into her true self is amazing to read. She is a wonderful character, who is by no means perfect, and makes many mis-steps throughout the book, she a compelling main character.

Al and her gang meet Maxwell P. Harlington the Third on one of their first nights in the city. Upon meeting Max, life for the three, especially Al, changes forever. Max is a magnetic character. He promises to open doors for the young friends, which Aggie and Danny jump right on. Al is a skeptic, and she has no qualms putting her concerns of Max's abilities right back in his face. Max and Al's relationship continues through the book, growing as time goes on. At times they are harsh, contentious, and very critical of one another, but they have a mutual respect that continues as life and new characters weave their way into the book.

Juliana is another character who is a main player in this book. She is an absolute fascinating woman. Juliana is a singer, a great one who has not reached the peak of her stardom. She plays in well known dives throughout the city, but has not reached the main stages. She is rich, she is upper-class, she is married, and Al is hooked on her from the very first moment she hears Juliana sing. Their relationship is a push-pull force that neither can deny but is not always wanted.

Meeting Max and Juliana changes Al forever. She is introduced to a world of people that she never knew existed. One she cannot deny know matter how many times she says she is not a lesbian.

This is a great read, and I was hooked right from the start. Vanda does a wonderful job of pulling the reader

right in and holding you in the story. I highly recommended this book, you will not be disappointed. I cannot wait for the sequel!

I received this ARC from Netgalley.

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### **Bandit says**

To be honest I put off reading this book for quite a while. The premise was intriguing, but the combined cheesiness of the cover and the author's mononym...anyway, I'm so glad I finally decided to read it. It's lovely, actually. Even though it was indeed slightly cheesy at times. It isn't a perfect book, the message is somewhat heavy handed at times, it's occasionally overdramatized, but as far as reading experiences go, this was an immensely enjoyable one. The author has managed to create an awesomely immersive world and I didn't want my visit to end. Plus it is interesting and moreover important to be aware of history in all its ugliness, so that when someone goes to wax nostalgic and moon over the good old days they can be reminded of the ignorant hatred, terrible prejudice and discrimination that was so prevalent back then. Within the context of the book it is primarily about gays, but because it's a fairly expansive story, it also portrays the attitudes toward mental disorders, different races, etc., albeit to a lesser degree. The eponymous beauty isn't actually the main protagonist, she's just the shiniest most desirable one. There are plenty of characters in this story, all surprisingly engaging in their own ways. Definitely one of the best things about the book. And then, of course, it's also a fascinating and technically well rendered portrait of New York City during WWII. So if I had to classify this book, it would be something like a romantic historical fiction/coming out/coming of age story. But classifications aside, it's just a great read. This is apparently meant to be continued and I'd love to find out what happens next. Patience...patience. Suppose to be a virtue.

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### **Kathryn says**

#### **5- WORTH READING!**

This is a very interesting, and at times disturbing, study of homosexuality and prejudice in the early U.S. 20th century. The book itself begins in 1941 tracking the lives of four "country" high school kids that move to New York City to start their careers in show business. It deals with the sexuality of both male and female characters. It is at times chauvinistic, racist, bigoted, overly-dramatic, corny, sexy, funny and delightful. I would absolutely recommend this book to anyone. I look forward to book 2 which takes place in the 1950s.

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### **Fenriz Angelo says**

Juliana is a coming of age story settled in NYC in the 40's.

Our main character is Alice 'Al' Huffman, a girl from a town who goes to NYC with her best friends, Dick, Aggie, and her beau Danny. They want to be stars but they face adversities that make their path to become artists difficult or unreachable.

In this journey, Alice discovers parts of herself she never paid attention to when she met the singer Juliana and other characters who are part of the homosexual community that happens to be also in the entertainment

industry. Her attraction to Juliana confuses her and it gets worse when Juliana makes the first step to seduce this naïve girl.

Through the eyes of Alice who get to see the life in the 40's, what's expected from men and women, the struggle to get into the entertainment industry, how homosexuals struggled to have a place (though underground) to be themselves and their involvement in theater and clubs, how the war affected the life of the citizens and what war did to the men who went to the front lines.

While in the beginning I struggled more with the narration due to the lack of descriptions of the city and close to no show of emotions from the MC, than the length of the story, by the middle of the book, my buddy reader, Iben, told me Vanda is a playwright and then, the writing made sense. Personally, the book would have been better for me if it were more descriptive and showed more emotions from the characters (especially from Juliana and Alice) than just dialogue. Also, there's a very very subtle character development and the only one I felt more rounded is Max, the other characters didn't feel flat but neither felt with much personality aside the roles they had in Alice's life. Other problem I saw was the lack of passion in the sex scenes between Alice and Juliana, I sincerely didn't feel they had raw strong feelings for each other, for me, the sex was like seeing two women caressing each other in a "lesbian" porn video; more descriptive scenes would have helped.

Ultimately, I think the story is good, long and slow but not boring, though maybe I'm biased because I've read nonfiction books of the 20's-40's regarding the mafia and queer lives so I more or less know how things were back then and it's simply an era I enjoy to read about. The research is palpable and the addition of the references helps curious history buffs like me to read more about the themes of this book.

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### **Iben says**

Vanda says about this book, that: "Juliana is not a story of just some ordinary men and women living in New York City in the 1940s; it is the story of gay men and women living in New York City in the 1940s."

-As such, I thought it was a wonderful book. Full of lively dialogue and a rich gallery of characters to show us "the scene". I'm looking at photos from the 40's, and listening to lovely music, and this little piece of history brought alive, feels so important to me. It even feels relevant to me, personally, even though I was born in a different country, in a different time, with a different experience in relation to my own sexual identity.

The fact that the author is a playwright, and this novel was acted out on stage as part of the writing process, shines through. On one hand, it reads almost as a movie; and it leaves a lot to my own interpretation and imagination. That felt refreshing to me; not having all of the answers right away, or only having a very limited access to interpretations.

I did miss getting to know more about the inner workings of the characters, however, and especially Al, the narrator. I was sometimes baffled by her reactions, and I had trouble understanding her motivations, other than the very obvious psychology of her upbringing and early experiences in her life, and having that rejection repeated time and again as a young adult. This resulted in me not being able to feel all that much empathy towards Al, and feeling like a lot of the other characters were just stencils (her mother and father, for instance).

In no way do I need to find a main character sympathetic all the time - I love reading about complex characters with flaws and blind spots. Adding more character depth and giving the readers more understanding of the character, would have made this a brilliant novel for me, instead of a good one.

I look forward to Volume 2. I do hope the next years will treat our heroine well.

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### **Dee says**

This story touches on a lot of topics. It skated the fine line of homophobia and racism, but I'm giving the author the benefit of the doubt that it was fitting given the era.

It's also very loooooooooooooong, so don't start this book intending to finish it in a day or two, unless you're a very fast reader.

Kindle Freebie - <https://www.amazon.com/dp/B01GBEZOUE/ref>

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### **Patty Killion says**

4.5 Stars!!

WOW---WHAT A BOOK!!

It's a spell-binding, entrancing read. A gay underworld with the sights and sounds of a lost New York!! "Juliana" is the first in a series and covers the years of 1941 to 1944, in which the same characters live out LGBT history in New York City through the decades.

I would say "Juliana" is an amazing historical fiction. It is a more or less coming of age story of a young girl who falls in love and lust with another woman. In her new world she is introduced and becomes friends with many of the gay community who were stars and performers of Broadway.

It's 1941 and Alice "Al" Huffman come from the potato fields of Long Island with her three childhood friends to make it on the Broadway stage. Al meets Juliana, the glamorous, nightclub singer whose voice sounds to her like "warm milk slipping down the whole of my body." Julianna, a sexual risk taker with a secret easily reels in Al who has never felt a love like this before.

This is such an excellent read...I have only touched on the topics that this book covers!!

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### **Betty BoomBa says**

3.75

I am not a fan of historical fiction as a rule, so many make it all quite tedious. This is not the case with this particular book.

The world building is well researched and evocative. There are notes at the end which explain and outline the

researches involved.

The characters all have their flaws, and they extend them almost to the point of unpleasantness. For me, this makes them remarkably more realistic than many works of fiction, and is both a good thing and a negative.

On the downside, sometimes the story seemed to ramble a little too much, but as this is the story of the times it is not such a bad problem.

I would recommend this to anyone who wants to look at gay and lesbian history.

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### **Beau North says**

Stayed up all night reading this book so this review probably won't be terribly coherent. I thought the author did a marvelous job putting the reader into the era and setting. I found the attitudes of the four friends repellent at first, and had to keep reminding myself that this was a different time, when being gay or lesbian or even bisexual was seen as unnatural. I loved how gradually Al's attitude changed (though I still wanted to grab her and shake some sense into her more than once) as she began to see some of these "undesirables" as people, and then as friends, and then as family. I loved watching her learn how to stand up for herself, loved watching her grow as a person. This book was in a lot of ways not as dark as I expected, and in some ways much more heartbreak than I thought possible. I'm looking forward to seeing where Vol 2. takes me.

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### **HornFan2 (Mike) says**

It's a coming of age story as four friend's finish High School, then leave a potato farming community on Long Island and head to New York City.

Three dream of being Broadway Stars, the other wants to be writer and dreams of being the next Ernest Hemingway.

While it's titled Juliana, really it's about Al, Aggie, Dickie and Danny coming of age in NYC, fulfilling their dreams, four likable characters and great support cast and Al just takes over the story.

Felt like Vanda without realizing it, or maybe she knows it, wants the reader to become Alice or Al, as her friends call her.

I liked Vanda's writing style, she writes an engaging story, she puts the reader right in the pages, has unforgettable characters, your at the Stage Door Canteen with your few soldiers enjoying singing entertainment, making sacrifices for the war cause and reads like a play or a movie even.

Even if your not into the reading LBGT books, but like reading post World War 2 books, the author keeps it relatively clean, scenes change before they get to graphic and think you like this one.

With Juliana, Vanda gives the reader a look at what life was like in the States during WW2, the sacrifices everyone made, dimming lights, finding alternative items for things they can't get due to the war and like that it's fiction verse non-fiction.

I also like how Vanda took actual history regarding the celebrities from that time period, added real places, and expertly blended it with her fictional characters.

Will be adding more to this one.

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### **Scarlett ♦ Underrated Lit Warrior says**

To start, I really loved the addition in the back of the book of the research the author did on 1940s history. It surrounded the novel and made it seem real, especially parts that I already knew, like women needing three feminine articles of clothing if the police questioned them. But also understanding that the language used by the majority of the characters was actually thought by a lot of people in that time -- it hurt to read it but that sort of thought was normalized.

I really liked how everyone was human and made mistakes but you know, it was frustrating to read Aggie just deserting Al like that.

My favorite parts were when Al and Juliana were together, being sweet. The progression of Al & Max's friendship is something I thought was strong too. And man, when Al was thinking of the girls in her past that she's had crushes on, that was a little relatable.

I really enjoyed this book and can't wait to start on the second! 4 ?

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