



# Andorra

*Peter Cameron*

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## **Andorra** Peter Cameron

Alexander Fox, former owner of an antiquarian bookstore in San Francisco, journeys to a fictional Andorra, a country both beautiful and perilous, following an unspecified accident which has left his wife and daughter dead. Sun-splashed but oddly deserted, Andorra affords a personal refuge to Fox until a series of strange events occur. A handsome, promiscuous Australian couple, one prominent Andorran family, teasing socialites, and dead bodies found floating in the harbor cast a shadow over Andorra's picture-postcard surface. An outsider, Fox falls under suspicion of murder and endures a number of puzzling interrogations. Menacing locals and territorial policemen force Fox to contemplate a desperate escape from Andorra. Strong hardcover performance. \* Outstanding reviews. \* Excellent track record of Cameron's prior novel, *The Weekend*, in Plume.

## **Andorra Details**

Date : Published January 1st 1998 by Plume (first published 1997)

ISBN : 9780452279445

Author : Peter Cameron

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## From Reader Review Andorra for online ebook

Jeffrey Keeten says

**”Andorra’s dramatic topography makes it unapproachable by air, so I arrived via train from Paris, having flown that far. As a general rule---and I am afraid I am the kind of person who believes in general rules---I like to arrive in new places by train. There is something about literally crossing borders, traversing frontiers, watching the countryside hurtle by the window and become exurban, and then the gradual diminution of speed as the train approaches a city, that allows one to arrive with an experience of place that flying disallows.”**

Alexander Fox, which may or may not be his name, arrives in Andorra to begin a new life. He knows nothing about the region except that he once read a book on Andorra that impressed him with the descriptions of the beauty, peace, and solitude to be found in this almost mystical place. He wants to: *“live his life more deliberately, more consciously.”*

Of course, the sticky wicket part of escaping a past life is that one can never leave oneself in the past as well. The attractive part about being somewhere new is the editing that can be done to your previous life. You can enhance your victories and leave your colossal defeats on the editing floor. If you are really good, you might even convince yourself that all the modifications to your life story are more real than the original events.

The Andorrians ask Alexander these seemingly innocent questions about his past. It is annoying because he finds himself being evasive. The evasion creates intrigue, and soon he is perceived to be a much more mysterious person than he deserves to be.

He meets the Dents. He is attracted to the wife, and he can tell she is attracted to him, but he isn’t interested in complications.

Mr. Dent: *“The problem is, in case you haven’t noticed, I’m also attracted to men.”*

Okay, the complications have grown two-fold.

Despite Alexander’s rather astute assessment of not needing complications, it is hard to resist a beautiful, intelligent person who wants to make love to you.

*”Do you know, it’s not here I was happiest. No, not in the summerhouse. It was in your bed. Naked in that fantastic bed of yours, in the hot afternoon, fucking with the doors and windows open. That’s when I was most happy. It’s funny, isn’t it, that you can get the greatest physical pleasure from someone whom you don’t really love. It’s an odd joy, that. Odd and meaningless.”*

That is Mrs. Dent, not Mr. Dent. Fox, though he feels sorry for Mr. Dent, is much more interested in the wife. When I worked in the book business, I remember a conversation I had one evening with a head of the music department for the store, who was about my age now then. He only dated married women because he didn’t believe that he had to worry about them wanting more than sex. Of course, there was the very real worry that the husband would show up on your doorstep with a shotgun (it was gun happy Arizona, after all), and you would end up oozing from numerous buckshot wounds. My friend was absolutely deluded, of

course. Just because a woman is married doesn't mean that her emotions are put in a jar and left on the nightstand by her marriage bed. It wasn't long before he was jammed up in a fine mess, with one of his conquests expressing her undying love for him and a husband extremely unhappy with him.

\*Sigh,\* relationships are never uncomplicated. Needless to say, things get complicated with the Dents.

On the other hand, there is Miss Quay. *"I thought about the grace of her hand; how she had delicately palmed her niece's forehead, touched my shoulder; how her hand would continue its gentle and benevolent course through life. I wanted to kiss it or put it in the **Museum of Astounding Body Parts** or exhibit it in a reliquary with the ashen bones of saints."*

He likes Mrs. Dent. He certainly likes all the wonderful, uninhibited sex he has with her, but does he love her? Miss Quay makes his legs go to jelly when he is around her, but is that partly because he hasn't "had her" yet? The purpose of moving to Andorra was to live his life more deliberately and cleanly, but suddenly his life here has become very messy.

Not to mention that the police have called him in to question him about the murdered bodies that keep showing up in the waters offshore.

Peter Cameron writes this character of Fox that I can't help, but identify with. I even like him. His astute observations about people and books are familiar, as if I've thought them or seen them for myself. *"I discovered a copy of Crewe Train by Rose Macaulay, the very book that had prompted me to move to Andorra. I had read it very long ago. If I read it again now, what would I think? Should I let my memory of it alone? Sometimes it is dangerous to revisit a loved book, especially after a great change in one's life: the book no longer seems perfect; one swears it has been altered or edited, when in fact it is, of course, oneself who has been revised."*

### **Peter Cameron**

Oddly enough, that is exactly the way I feel about rereading this book. I really enjoyed it in the late 1990s and the book has travelled with me back and forth across the country as I ended up in new places to live. I even had the pleasure of meeting Mr. Cameron and had him sign the book, but that was before I'd even read it. That might have been fortunate, to save me from being a stammering idiot as I tried to explain to him how much I enjoyed his book.

My first thought is the book reminds me of Graham Greene, with the intrigue elements of the plot, but as I finish it, I realize that it reminds me much more of a Paul Bowles novel. I could certainly see Greene or Bowles, either one, in similar circumstances trying to escape themselves and failing miserably. The five glorious gold stars speak for themselves. My experiment in rereading this book was a success.

**"Many years ago I read a book that was set in Andorra."**

If you wish to see more of my most recent book and movie reviews, visit <http://www.jeffreykeeten.com>  
I also have a Facebook blogger page at: <https://www.facebook.com/JeffreyKeeten>

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## Szplug says

The Andorra of Peter Cameron's self-same titled book is out-of-synch in many ways: unlike the landlocked principality in the Pyrenees, Cameron's is an oceanside realm; its inhabitants are all variations of the same lovesick prototype that is drawn towards the shadowy narrator; its tourist-friendly streets and shops, its baroque architecture and cobbled lanes harbour secrets and intrigues out of a fifties *noir* novel; and the narrator himself, a cipher, the unlikely object of so much attention and goodwill, finds himself amidst the plots and events that unfold in an occasionally sinister manner.

*Andorra* will test the reader's credulity and patience as it creeps towards its final chapter - but please stick it out. This book is a literary equivalent of a Singapore Sling with one large lemon twist perched atop the rim as a final touch; and when the lightbulb flares to the accompaniment of a drawn-out *Ah!* during the final moments of the narrator's testimony, perhaps the reader will gain a new appreciation for what was, just moments before, seemingly vexing and careless storytelling.

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## Marcello S says

Lui è Alexander Fox. Del suo passato ci dice poco e niente, tranne qualcosa di molto poco piacevole cambiando anche versione un paio di volte.

Andorra è un paese dove tutti sanno tutto. Un luogo particolare dove scappare e ricominciare. Una fuga della mente.

La scrittura è diretta, semplice, raffinata. Ci sono una manciata di personaggi, la teatralità dei loro movimenti e dei dialoghi che si incastra con ambientazioni di interni ed esterni che sembrano sceneggiature di film.

Quando ci si mette di mezzo la polizia le cose prendono una piega strana. Una certa tensione inizia a starsene lì in disparte e ci accompagna fino alla fine.

Andorra è più cose mescolate assieme nelle giuste dosi.  
Chiaramente c'è il colpo di scena finale.

Difficile aspettarsi di più da un romanzo d'esordio.  
Cinque alto per te, Peter. [73/100]

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## Kasa Cotugno says

Every time I read something by Peter Cameron, I wonder why I don't seek him out more. This compulsively readable thriller told by Alex Fox, an unreliable narrator if there ever was one, holds surprises around every turn. There is a languid pace that matches the climate as Andorra is not the mountain community of the Pyrenees, but a fictitious seaside country located between France and Spain. I was reminded of other stories I referenced in an earlier review featuring visitors from cooler climates seeking answers to insolvable problems in hotter places, with their overhanging atmosphere of menace.

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## Antonella says

3,4

"Tanti anni fa lessi un libro ambientato ad Andorra...

[...]

Ritornare su un libro amato a volte può essere pericoloso, soprattutto dopo un grande mutamento di vita: il libro non sembra più perfetto e si giurerebbe che lo abbiano rivisto, corretto, quando invece siamo noi a essere cambiati."

Licenza narrativa allo stato puro.

Andorra, si sa, geograficamente è posta in montagna, in seno ai Pirenei (ha una superficie di appena 468 km quadrati) e la sua capitale è Andorra la Vella; qui è sul mare, adagiata sul promontorio di una penisola, la città si chiama La Plata e il suo porto, in epoca romana, era un operoso scalo per il trasporto delle merci fra Oriente e Occidente.

Cameron??? Dove mi hai portata?!?

In un Paese dove chiunque ci viva (e mai nessuno vuole andar via, anzi, a quanto pare arriva sempre gente nuova) viene considerato a tutti gli effetti "cittadino", così come stabilito dalla Costituzione. Un Paese dove la gente è curiosa e ansiosa di conoscere i nuovi arrivati, cercando di accaparrarsene la simpatia e l'amicizia, imponendosi gentilmente ed educatamente, con molta classe e con non poca generosità.

Ma poi si scopre che se arrivare ad Andorra è facile, anche solo allontanarsene per un breve periodo può diventare un problema, soprattutto quando un paio di corpi vengono restituiti dal mare alla riva e la polizia indaga. Allora non resta, forse, che chiedere aiuto...

Tra facili amicizie, relazioni più o meno intense, gruppi familiari atipici con alle spalle storie di cui si evita di parlare, pranzi, cene e tante chiacchiere, il periodo per il protagonista scorre fin troppo veloce e si arriva alla fine. Le ultime righe non sono affatto scontate (!).

La storia tutto sommato si rivela abbastanza buona e ben scritta; le descrizioni del posto sono accurate ed invitano ad andare a vedere, ma poi si ragiona: è fantasia... Quello che mi è piaciuto meno sono stati proprio i personaggi e i loro caratteri: ce ne fosse stato uno, dico uno, che si sia rivelato "simpatico"; per carità, sono tutti ben descritti e ognuno occupa un posto ben preciso nel racconto, ma di certo mi hanno suscitato un certo nervosismo, protagonista compreso. E i dialoghi... con quell'accanirsi sul significato di ogni espressione, di ogni singola parola detta.... Nervi!

Beh, forse uno di loro si salva: Mrs Reinhardt, ospite anziana dell'unico hotel del posto, guarda caso, amante dei libri e della lettura.

E così anch'io, fra qualche tempo, potrò dire: "Tanti anni fa lessi un libro ambientato ad Andorra..."

? Europa Tour con un libro sotto il braccio: ?? Andorra ??

? Biblioteca

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## **Mrfishscales says**

I've always been intrigued by Andorra, a tiny county in the middle of the Pyrennes. Peter Cameron uses the fact that most people wonder about the country but few know anything about it to create an Andorra that is basically an expatriate colony without overbearing native culture. The narrator seems amiable enough to begin with, but as the novel progresses your doubts pile up. Not only does his account of himself to others begin to seem a little fishy, but the very character of the setting in which he moves begins to seem strangely self serving.

Initially you will want to be in Andorra with the narrator, but as you read on the glass comes off both the country and him. To say that it becomes nightmarish is to overstate it, but gradually you feel yourself pulling away from him and watch his life unravel from a safe distance instead of basking in the sun at a café with him.

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## **Roberto says**

"Aprii il taccuino alla prima bellissima pagina bianca, sfilai la penna stilografica, tolsi il cappuccio e scrissi con l'inchiostro scintillante, denso e permeabile come sangue: Tanti anni fa lessi un libro..."

Alexander Fox è un uomo solitario, disincantato, scostante, misterioso, che ha condotto una vita ricca di avvenimenti che però non vuole rivelare e questo lo fa diventare, agli occhi di chi lo incontra per la prima volta, una persona interessante da conoscere e magari da conquistare. È appena arrivato ad Andorra, luogo che Cameron, anche se esiste veramente un luogo con quel nome nei Pirenei, posiziona sul mare descrivendolo come uno strano stato dove tutti si rifugiano e dove la polizia, se vuole, fa il bello ed il cattivo tempo.

Nei primi giorni dopo il suo arrivo Alexander si guarda in giro, conduce una vita tranquilla e inizia a conoscere persone del luogo; anche loro quasi tutti stranieri trapiantati, quasi tutti desiderosi di rifarsi una vita, quasi tutti in fuga dai rispettivi passati.

Nel passato di Alexander è successo qualcosa di molto doloroso. Per quanto si sforzi di sorvolare sull'argomento, tutti gli domandano chi sia e cosa l'abbia portato in quell'angolo di mondo e, fino all'ultima pagina, fa di tutto per non rispondere fino a mentire, circondandosi però così di un alone di ambiguità facilmente avvertibile.

Ma anche le persone che incontra hanno qualcosa da dimenticare, tutti tacciono o fingono di essere quello che non sono. I loro problemi, i loro caratteri, la loro psicologia emergono gradualmente, tramite dialoghi bellissimi, mentre aumenta contemporaneamente la nostra conoscenza del protagonista.

Tutto sembra andare bene ma, improvvisamente, per lui e per tutti, il passato "ritorna", con tutto il suo dolore e con tutti i suoi rimpianti.

Andorra è un libro suggestivo, asciutto, evocativo, enigmatico, evanescente e a tratti indecifrabile. Un libro ricco di silenzi, di atmosfere, di ricordi rappresentati in modo perfetto, che ci parla di solitudine e di disperazione, che ci dice che tutti noi scontiamo gli errori del nostro passato, da cui non riusciamo a liberarci.

Non sarà forse all'altezza dei successivi libri di Cameron per qualità ed intensità dei dialoghi, ma è molto ben costruito e godibile. Tre stelline e mezzo. Anzi no, quattro.

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### **Terry says**

Firstoff, this book isn't for everyone. If you like suspense, the novel Rebecca, the films The Usual Suspects and Identity, you'll probably really enjoy it. But, if you're not a suspense fan who's up for some author trickery, you might feel a) bored (by some of the long sections of dialogue) or b) cheated (oh those last lines).

With that disclaimer, I have to say I loved this novel! Yes, 5-star loved. Cameron's dialogue is truly realistic and brings his characters to life; his description is thoughtful and nicely balanced with the dialogue. And yet, while reading it you know that something's...not...quite...right. That is the wonder of this novel--getting drawn in by the beautiful prose and crackling dialogue, while all the while knowing that things aren't what they seem. Sections of dialogue go on too long. Some characters seem too proper, others too odd. The plot is believable...to a point. I won't spoil anything, but it's truly masterful how Cameron is writing on multiple levels--on one, he's crafting a suspense novel; on another, he's writing a travel diary; and on yet another, he's putting on a show for the reader. What I appreciated most of all is how the main character transforms for the reader from a sympathetic victim to a more complicated, and yet completely understandable, protagonist. The moment in which I realized who this character was was one of the best moments I've had reading a novel in recent memory. I just wish I could recommend the novel to everyone, but sadly, I think most of my friends and family would disagree with me. Even if I can't pass it along to them, however, I hope mystery and suspense lovers find this book!

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### **Eleonora A says**

Amazing little book. Read in one breath. The power of a new beginning, the power of landscape, the power of imagination. hypnotic, daydreaming.

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### **Carolee Wheeler says**

I was puzzled by the people who found this book puzzling, or confusing.

Peter Cameron writes beautifully, and this novel had a wonderful way of drawing me along, as though I were wandering the winding streets of an old city.

It doesn't matter to me that the Andorra Cameron uses for his story does not reflect the real Andorra. It doesn't matter to me that the ending is abrupt, and strange. The way I understood it is that the protagonist's Andorra is invented because he is telling his story from prison, where he is serving time for killing his wife and child. The fact that he tries to re-write his own story to have a more favorable outcome is not all that hard to understand.

I loved this book.



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## Thomas says

In my real life I rate my books on a ten-point scale with 10 being an all-time favorite. When I use a five here on Goodreads it really means anything that rates an 8 (really liked it) 9 (loved it) and 10 (all time favorite). On that scale Andorra gets an 8. I liked the setting, the details, the prose, and the plot. Was it a masterpiece? No. But I really enjoyed reading it and am interested in seeing what else Peter Cameron has written.

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## Kittaroo says

Premetto: amo Cameron. Temo di non essere obiettiva quando ne parlo.

Amo il suo manierismo, amo il modo in cui riesce a tratteggiare caratteri in modo semplice e rapido, amo le sue descrizioni geografiche. Nulla è, però, mai lineare come appare all'inizio. I personaggi sono mascherati e si mostrano totalmente diversi con l'andare delle pagine, la trama, lieve e leggera si tinge anche di giallo, ma la svolta è totalmente inaspettata.

Caratteri che si ballano intorno, si sfiorano e si svelano, sullo sfondo di una bellissima città che assomiglia sempre di più ad una galera.

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## Harley Biala says

It was well-written. I loved its philosophies and moral views about marriage, death, and love. It's an awesome read if you want to escape from where you are right now and be in a place like Andorra. Spoiler Alert: the justice system is also fuck up there. So.... no good? ?

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## Jenny Lee says

READING CHALLENGE

#PASSPORTLISTY

Book 01/10

I hate to start the year off with a 1 star read, but here we are.

Alexander Fox read a novel once about the wonders and romantic world of Andorra.

When his life in America takes a turn for the worst, he packs up his bags and starts a new in the country that won his heart over through the novel. Upon his arrival in Andorra, everything is picture perfect and what he came to expect from his fantasized notions provided by his book.

And after the introduction, this book lost me.

None of these characters were likable in the least. It's also very weird that he kind of just spends his days hovering around all day doing nothing important, and that there is no explanation provided on how that is

possible for a majority of the book.

There are murders happening towards the start of the story that kind of pop up and then bubble out as quickly as they happen, left on the back burner for most of the book. The story instead focuses on the series of affairs Alex has. There are also several points where he is hinting at his past with his wife, and his reasoning for coming to Andorra. The story changing ever so slightly with each time he tells it.

Due to the character's manipulative and dishonest personality, I feel like I figured out the story far too soon, and it took away any entertainment I would have gotten from it.

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### **Jessica says**

Another wonderful novel by Cameron, loved it almost as much as 'The City of Your Final Destination.'

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