

Enjoy Historical Fiction? Try these books!

The Dickens Boy by Thomas Keneally

The tenth child of Charles Dickens, Edward Bulwer Lytton Dickens, known as Plorn, had consistently proved unable 'to apply himself' to school or life. So aged sixteen, he is sent, as his brother Alfred was before him, to Australia. Plorn arrives in Melbourne in late 1868 carrying a terrible secret. He has never read a word of his father's work. He is sent out to a 2000-square-mile station in remotest New South Wales to learn to become a man, and a gentleman stockman, from the most diverse and toughest of companions. In the outback he becomes enmeshed with Paakantji, colonists, colonial-born, ex-convicts, ex-soldiers, and very few women. Plorn, unexpectedly, encounters the same veneration of his father and familiarity with Dickens' work in Australia as was rampant in England. Against this backdrop, and featuring cricket tournaments, horse-racing, bushrangers, sheep droving, shifty stock and station agents, frontier wars and first encounters with Australian women, Plorn meets extraordinary people and enjoys wonderful adventures as he works to prove himself.

The Diamond Eye by Kate Quinn

In 1937 in the snowbound city of Kiev (now known as Kyiv), wry and bookish history student Mila Pavlichenko organizes her life around her library job and her young son--but Hitler's invasion of Ukraine and Russia sends her on a different path. Given a rifle and sent to join the fight, Mila must forge herself from studious girl to deadly sniper--a lethal hunter of Nazis known as Lady Death. When news of her three hundredth kill makes her a national heroine, Mila finds herself torn from the bloody battlefields of the eastern front and sent to America on a goodwill tour.

Still reeling from war wounds and devastated by loss, Mila finds herself isolated and lonely in the glittering world of Washington, DC--until an unexpected friendship with First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt and an even more unexpected connection with a silent fellow sniper offer the possibility of happiness. But when an old enemy from Mila's past joins forces with a deadly new foe lurking in the shadows, Lady Death finds herself battling her own demons and enemy bullets in the deadliest duel of her life.

The Codebreaker's Secret by Sara Ackerman

1943. As war in the Pacific rages on, Isabel Cooper and her codebreaker colleagues huddle in "the dungeon" at Station HYPO in Pearl Harbor, deciphering secrets plucked from the airwaves in a race to bring down the enemy. Isabel has only one wish: to avenge her brother's death. But she soon finds life has other plans when she meets his best friend, a hotshot pilot with secrets of his own.

1965. Fledgling journalist Lu Freitas comes home to Hawai'i to cover the grand opening of the glamorous Mauna Kea Beach Hotel, Rockefeller's newest and grandest project. When a high-profile guest goes missing, Lu forms an unlikely alliance with an intimidating veteran photographer to unravel the mystery. The two make a shocking discovery that stirs up memories and uncovers an explosive secret from the war days. A secret that only a codebreaker can crack.

***Booth* by Karen Joy Fowler**

In 1822, a secret family moves into a secret cabin some thirty miles northeast of Baltimore, to farm, to hide, and to bear ten children over the course of the next sixteen years. Junius Booth--breadwinner, celebrated Shakespearean actor, and master of the house in more ways than one--is at once a mesmerizing talent and a man of terrifying instability. One by one the children arrive, as year by year, the country draws frighteningly closer to the boiling point of secession and civil war.

As the tenor of the world shifts, the Booths emerge from their hidden lives to cement their place as one of the country's leading theatrical families. But behind the curtains of the many stages they have graced, multiple scandals, family triumphs, and criminal disasters begin to take their toll, and the solemn siblings of John Wilkes Booth are left to reckon with the truth behind the destructively specious promise of an early prophecy.

***The Daughter of Doctor Moreau* by Silvia Moreno-Garcia**

Carlota Moreau: a young woman, growing up in a distant and luxuriant estate, safe from the conflict and strife of the Yucatán peninsula. The only daughter of either a genius, or a madman.

Montgomery Laughton: a melancholic overseer with a tragic past and a propensity for alcohol. An outcast who assists Dr. Moreau with his scientific experiments, which are financed by the Lizaldes, owners of magnificent haciendas and plentiful coffers.

The hybrids: the fruits of the Doctor's labor, destined to blindly obey their creator and remain in the shadows. A motley group of part human, part animal monstrosities.

All of them living in a perfectly balanced and static world, which is jolted by the abrupt arrival of Eduardo Lizalde, the charming and careless son of Doctor Moreau's patron, who will unwittingly begin a dangerous chain reaction.

For Moreau keeps secrets, Carlota has questions, and in the sweltering heat of the jungle, passions may ignite.

***Four Treasures of the Sky* by Jenny Tinghui Zhang**

Daiyu never wanted to be like the tragic heroine for whom she was named, revered for her beauty and cursed with heartbreak. But when she is kidnapped and smuggled across an ocean from China to America, Daiyu must relinquish the home and future she imagined for herself. Over the years that follow, she is forced to keep reinventing herself to survive. From a calligraphy school, to a San Francisco brothel, to a shop tucked into the Idaho mountains, we follow Daiyu on a desperate quest to outrun the tragedy that chases her. As anti-Chinese sentiment sweeps across the country in a wave of unimaginable violence, Daiyu must draw on each of the selves she has been—including the ones she most wants to leave behind—in order to finally claim her own name and story.

***The Half Life of Valery K* by Natasha Pulley**

In 1963, in a Siberian gulag, former nuclear specialist Valery Kolkhanov has mastered what it takes to survive: the right connections to the guards for access to food and cigarettes, the right pair of warm boots to avoid frostbite, and the right attitude toward the small pleasures of life so he won't go insane. But on one ordinary day, all that changes: Valery's university mentor steps in and sweeps Valery from the frozen prison camp to a mysterious unnamed town that houses a set of nuclear reactors and is surrounded by a forest so damaged it looks like the trees have rusted from within.

In City 40, Valery is Dr. Kolkhanov once more, and he's expected to serve out his prison term studying the effect of radiation on local animals. But as Valery begins his work, he is struck by the questions his research raises: why is there so much radiation in this area? What, exactly, is being hidden from the thousands who live in the town? And if he keeps looking for answers, will he live to serve out his sentence?

***The Arctic Fury* by Greer Macallister**

In early 1853, experienced California Trail guide Virginia Reeve is summoned to Boston by a mysterious benefactor who offers her a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity: lead a party of 12 women into the wild, hazardous Arctic to search for the lost Franklin Expedition. It's an extraordinary request, but the party is made up of extraordinary women. Each brings her own strengths and skills to the expedition- and her own unsettling secrets. A year and a half later, back in Boston, Virginia is on trial when not all of the women return. Told in alternating timelines that follow both the sensational murder trial in Boston and the dangerous, deadly progress of the women's expedition into the frozen North, this heart-pounding story will hold readers rapt as a chorus of voices answer the trial's all-consuming question: what happened out there on the ice?

***Island Queen* by Vanessa Riley**

Born into slavery on the tiny Caribbean island of Montserrat, Doll bought her freedom—and that of her sister and her mother—from her Irish planter father and built a legacy of wealth and power as an entrepreneur, merchant, hotelier, and planter that extended from the marketplaces and sugar plantations of Dominica and Barbados to a glittering luxury hotel in Demerara on the South American continent.

Vanessa Riley's novel brings Doll to vivid life as she rises above the harsh realities of slavery and colonialism by working the system and leveraging the competing attentions of the men in her life: a restless shipping merchant, Joseph Thomas; a wealthy planter hiding a secret, John Coseveldt Cells; and a roguish naval captain who will later become King William IV of England.

From the bustling port cities of the West Indies to the forbidding drawing rooms of London's elite, *Island Queen* is a sweeping epic of an adventurer and a survivor who answered to no one but herself as she rose to power and autonomy against all odds, defying rigid eighteenth-century morality and the oppression of women as well as people of color. It is an unforgettable portrait of a true larger-than-life woman who made her mark on history.