

AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY



Zoe.

Sarah was born and raised in northeast Kansas, growing up in a small log cabin nestled deep in the woods. This picturesque retreat, where she lived until early adulthood, frames most of her early memories.

Sarah began writing seriously in 2015, after attending a moving lecture given by Elizabeth Gilbert. Elizabeth was on tour for *Big Magic*, a game-changing book for creatives. Soon after Elizabeth's talk, Sarah enrolled in her first online creative writing class. She hasn't looked back since.

She's an avid traveler, though her heart is stuck in London. Other favorite destinations include Thailand, Ireland, Germany, Belize, and Italy.

Sarah graduated from the University of Kansas with a degree in finance. In early 2021, after thirteen years in corporate America, she left her day job. She's thrilled to now call herself a full-time writer. When she's not at the keyboard, you'll likely find her in the kitchen, the yoga studio, or running outdoors in the Florida heat.

She's married to my best friend, Marc. They're proud residents of the Sunshine State, where they live with their "silky hair" miniature dachshund,

[Author's website.](#)

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. As the story begins, we learn two people have been murdered. And yet, there is a relatively small cast of characters. As the story progressed, did you believe you'd figured out the "whodunit"? Who did you suspect along the way?
2. As the story unfolds, Vaudeline acts as mentor and guide to Lenna, teaching her the art of mediumship. But at various turns in the story, their roles reverse, and Lenna is the one opening Vaudeline's eyes to different ways

of thinking. What are a few of the ways the women helped each other with selfdiscovery and growth?

3. The author chose a different point of view for the two narrating characters in the story. Lenna's point of view is told in the third person, whereas Morley narrates in the first person. Why might the author have chosen these different points of view?
4. Who was your favorite character—dead or alive—in the book, and why?
5. In the mystery genre, authors often insert “red herrings”—plot devices meant to mislead a reader and prolong the story's suspense. What “red herrings” did you encounter in this story?
6. Victorian London was strait-laced and repressive, especially for women. How do you think you would have fared in such a society? Would you have rebelled against the rules, as Lenna found herself doing, or would you have been a rule-follower?
7. At the end of the story, Vaudeline and Lenna are to embark on an international tour. What else do you think their future holds?
8. Have you read the author's debut, *THE LOST APOTHECARY*? If so, discuss the ways in which *THE LONDON SÉANCE SOCIETY* is different, and also how the books are similar. Which book did you like better?
9. *THE LONDON SÉANCE SOCIETY* reveals a number of common ruses and tricks historically used in séances. Which of the ruses or tricks did you find most interesting?
10. Have you ever attended a séance? If so, did anything unusual or strange occur?

Citation.

BOOK REVIEWS

Booklist

Penner (*The Lost Apothecary*, 2021) returns to a historical setting--this time 1873--to tell the story of a young woman seeking to solve her sister's mysterious death by any means necessary. Lenna Wickes is a logical skeptic devastated by grief after her sister Evie's death. She apprentices herself to famous Parisian medium Vaudeline D'Allaire, who contacts the spirits of recent murder victims to find their killers. Evie studied with the alluring Vaudeline before taking an independent interest in the doings of the London Séance Society, where she discovered fraudulent practices. When Vaudeline is called to London to pursue contact with a recent murder victim on behalf of the society, Lenna travels with her hoping to find answers. The reader learns more problematic details about the society by alternating between Lenna and society member Mr. Morley's points of view. Retracing her sister's steps, Lenna discovers that the corruption goes much deeper than simply faking contact with the recently deceased, and it's probable that Evie's investigations led to her death--which also places Lenna and Vaudeline in peril. A great choice for fans of historical European settings, the power of women, and the fringes of the paranormal.

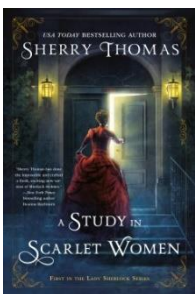
Publisher's Weekly

Penner (*The Lost Apothecary*) delivers another captivating feminist gothic tale. The story begins with a midnight séance in 1873 Paris, hosted by Vaudeline D'Allaire, a celebrated medium known for getting murder victims to pinpoint their killers. Vaudeline has fled London under mysterious circumstances, in the company of skeptical Lenna Wickes, who's convinced the other woman to let her be an apprentice. Lenna's true motivation is to unravel the sudden death of her sister, Evie, a burgeoning medium and student of D'Allaire's, which occurred on All Hallow's Eve. In a parallel narrative, Mr. Morley, director of the London Séance Society, is occupied with another puzzling death that also occurred on All Hallow's Eve, that of society president Mr. Volckman. Under the pretense of hosting a séance to ascertain the identity of Mr. Volckman's killer, Mr. Morley offers Lenna and Vaudeline a chance to return to London, by inviting them into the Séance Society's all-male club. The two accept with the hopes of conjuring up details of Evie's murder. As the well-paced adventure reaches an explosive climax, Lenna uncovers more about the London Séance Society's illusions and comes to terms with her sexuality. A late-breaking romance involving Lenna and Vaudeline feels underdeveloped, but otherwise Penner expertly fits the pieces together. Fans of the genre will eat this up. Agent: Stephanie Lieberman, Janklow & Nesbit Assoc. (Apr.)

Library Journal

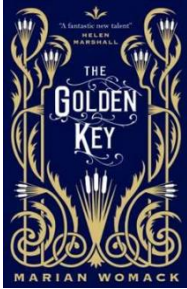
Despite her skepticism and penchant for logic, Lenna Wickes travels to Paris to study under esteemed spiritualist Vaudeline D'Allaire after her sister is murdered in London. When the president of the renowned gentleman's club known as the London Séance Society is also murdered, Vaudeline is called upon by society member Mr. Morley to conduct a séance back in London. The women are swept up in a dangerous mystery full of supernatural intrigue, trickery, and illusion, where only the dead can provide the answers they seek. Narration performances are astounding and perfectly suited for the dual narrative of Lenna and Mr. Morley. Lenna and Vaudeline are played with delightfully distinct British and French accents by Lauren Irwin, while the stuffy British Mr. Morley is impeccably portrayed by Alex Wyndham. The narration brings to life the era-specific atmosphere and vocalizes the characters' varying emotions, ranging from extreme tension and anger to softer, more sensual moments. VERDICT Penner (*The Lost Apothecary*) proves herself again to be a writer to watch. Recommend to fans of historical fiction, especially Victorian-era stories, who enjoy elements of the supernatural. Irwin's and Wyndham's theatrical performances make this a must-listen.--Meghan Bouffard

SOLITO READALIKES - FOOTNOTES



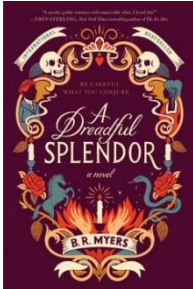
***A Study in Scarlet Women* by Sherry Thomas**

When Charlotte's father fails to honor his promise to provide the funds needed for her education, Charlotte takes drastic measures. Caught in a compromising position with a married man, she avoids being banished to her family's country estate by running away. As she settles into her independent life in London, she finds a new benefactress and a way to support herself by opening a private consultation business as "Sherlock Holmes." When her beloved sister Livia is suspected of being involved in a scandalous murder, Charlotte brings all of her powers of observation into play in order to find the real killer.



***The Golden Key* by Marian Womack**

After the death of Queen Victoria, England heaves with the uncanny. Seances are held and the dead are called upon from darker realms. Helena Walton-Cisneros, known for her ability to find the lost and the displaced, is hired by the elusive Lady Matthews to solve the mystery of her three stepdaughters, who vanished without a trace on the Norfolk Fens. But the Fens are an age-old land, where folk tales and dark magic still linger, and the locals speak of devilmen. Here, Helena finds what she was sent for, as the Fenland always gives up its secrets, in the end...



***A Dreadful Splendor* by B.R. Myers**

Genevieve Timmons, a fake spiritualist who robs the wealthy of their jewels, is making a hasty exit from a séance she had just conducted in a London house when the police arrest her. Soon after Genevieve is imprisoned on charges of theft and murder, she's bailed out by a lawyer named Lockhart, who represents Lord Chadwick. Genevieve's release is conditioned on her agreeing to travel to the nobleman's coastal home. Six months earlier, the body of Chadwick's bride, Audra, was found washed ashore, but the heartbroken widower refuses to accept the official verdict of suicide.