

AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY



Kristin Hannah is the award-winning and bestselling author of more than 20 novels including the international blockbuster, *The Nightingale*, which was named Goodreads Best Historical fiction novel for 2015 and won the coveted People’s Choice award for best fiction in the same year. Additionally, it was a selection of the Reese Witherspoon Book Club in 2023. It was named a Best Book of the Year by Amazon, iTunes, BuzzFeed, the Wall Street Journal, Paste, and The Week. In 2018, *The Great Alone* became an instant New York Times #1 bestseller and was named the Best Historical Novel of the Year by Goodreads.

The Four Winds was published in February of 2021 and immediately hit #1 on the New York Times, Wall Street Journal, USA Today, and Indie bookstores’ bestseller lists. Additionally, it was selected as a book club pick by both the Today Show and the Book Of the Month club, which named it the best book of 2021.

The Nightingale is currently in production at Tri Star, with Dakota and Elle Fanning set to star. Tri Star has also optioned *The Great Alone* and it is in development. *Firefly Lane*, her beloved novel about two best friends, was the #1 Netflix series around the world, in the week it came out.

A former attorney, Kristin lives in the Pacific Northwest.

kristinhannah.com

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Discuss the role of the McGrath family “heroes wall” in Frankie’s decision to enlist in Vietnam, and how she responds when her father later refuses to add her photo to the wall.
2. When Frankie visits a Navy recruiting center, she sees anti-war posters and she wonders if people think protesting actually helps. Discuss how she feels about protesters throughout different parts of the book, including when she receives letters from home and when she returns to the US.
3. Were you surprised by Frankie’s parents’ reaction when she told them the news of her enlisting? And were you surprised by their reception when she returned home after her two years of service? Frankie begged her mom to be proud of her before she left for basic training. Have you ever wished that someone would be proud of you?

4. Frankie's friendship with Barb shifts her views on the Civil Rights Act. She says that she used to view it as a triumphant end but comes to see it as a fragile beginning. Reading this with an additional 50 years of historical perspective, what is your reaction to her observation?
5. On her flight from Honolulu to Vietnam, Frankie (the only woman) was required to wear a skirt, nylons, and a girdle while the men were in comfortable fatigues. And when she first arrives in Vietnam, Ethel warns her, "Not all soldiers are gentlemen." Discuss these and other unique challenges female service members faced.
6. Frankie's friendship with Barb shifts her views on the Civil Rights Act. She says that she used to view it as a triumphant end but comes to see it as a fragile beginning. Reading this with an additional 50 years of historical perspective, what is your reaction to her observation?
7. On her helicopter rides, Frankie observes both the beauty of Vietnam and the devastation of war. Discuss this dichotomy.
8. In most of their letters home, both Finley and Frankie sugar-coated what was happening in the war. Contrast this to the letters that Frankie received from home in which her mother didn't hold back about the protests and conflicts escalating stateside. Why do you think there was such a difference in the information shared in each direction? Compare this to the letters Frankie exchanges with Ethel once Ethel returns home.
9. Frankie is reunited with Rye for the first time in Saigon. As they become closer, he tells her he has broken off his engagement. Did you trust him? Do you think infidelity was as common during the war as it is portrayed in the novel, and if so, why?
10. When she finally returns home, Frankie is constantly told (by civilians and vets alike) that "there were no women in Vietnam." Considering how many soldiers were injured, why do you think so few seemed to recognize the vital role the female nurses played?
11. Discuss the role of music in this novel, including how Frankie reacts to certain songs differently at different points in her life. Are there certain songs that always elicit strong memories or reactions for you?
12. Frankie says many times that she wants to learn to love Henry. Do you think that's ever possible?
13. Henry points out that the POWs returning in 1973 were greeted as heroes with yellow ribbons on trees, similar to the greeting of WW2 soldiers when they returned. However, Frankie's return just two years earlier was much different. Discuss the differences.
14. Were you surprised by the revelations about Rye? Did you predict what would happen?
15. After reuniting in the final chapter, where do you think Frankie and Jamie's story goes from here?

BOOK REVIEWS

Booklist

Frankie McGrath is just 20 when she enlists in the army to go to Vietnam as a nurse in 1965, planning to follow in the footsteps of her older brother, Finley. Frankie's parents are dismayed by her decision, even more so once they get the horrible news that Finley has been killed in action. Frankie deploys to Vietnam and is quickly overwhelmed by the horrors of war, but with the help of two new friends, Barb and Ethel, and a handsome doctor, Jamie, she adjusts to the rigors of nursing in a war zone. Her attraction to Jamie is stymied by complications, then she finds love with her brother's best friend, a charming pilot named Rye. When Frankie's service comes to an end, she is distressed when she returns to the States to find that Vietnam vets are not lauded as heroes and that many vets don't acknowledge the service of military women. As she grapples with PTSD and finds her place in antiwar protests, Frankie is dealt a terrible blow. Hannah (*The Four Winds*, 2021) continues her winning streak of compelling historical novels, capturing the tumultuous atmosphere of the 1960s and '70s in a moving, gripping tale that pays tribute to the under-appreciated skill and courage of combat nurses.

Publisher's Weekly

Hannah's emotionally charged page-turner (after *The Four Winds*) centers on a young nurse whose life is changed by the Vietnam War. Before Frankie McGrath begins basic training for the Army in 1966, her older brother Finley is killed in action. Frankie excels as a surgical nurse in Vietnam and becomes close with fellow nurses Ethel and Barb. After Ethel's tour ends, Frankie and Barb gets assigned to the base at Pleiku, near the Cambodian border, where some of the heaviest fighting occurs. There, she reunites with Navy officer Rye Walsh, Finley's best friend, and they become lovers. When Frankie returns to the U.S., she's met with indifference for her service from her parents, who are still grieving her brother's death, and disdain from people who oppose the war. She leans on alcohol and drugs while struggling to acclimate to civilian life. Though the situations and dialogue can feel contrived (Rye, after announcing he's re-upping, says to Frankie at the close of a chapter, "I'm not leaving my girl"), Hannah's depictions of Frankie tending to wounded soldiers are urgent and eye-opening, and a reunion of the three nurses for Frankie's benefit is poignantly told. Fans of women's historicals will enjoy this magnetic wartime story.

Kirkus Reviews

A young woman's experience as a nurse in Vietnam casts a deep shadow over her life. When we learn that the farewell party in the opening scene is for Frances "Frankie" McGrath's older brother--"a golden boy, a wild child who could make the hardest heart soften"--who is leaving to serve in Vietnam in 1966, we feel pretty certain that poor Finley McGrath is marked for death. Still, it's a surprise when the fateful doorbell rings less than 20 pages later. His death inspires his sister to enlist as an Army nurse, and this turn of events is just the beginning of a roller coaster of a plot that's impressive and engrossing if at times a bit formulaic. Hannah renders the experiences of the young women who served in Vietnam in all-encompassing detail. The first half of the book, set in gore-drenched hospital wards, mildewed dorm rooms, and boozy officers' clubs, is an exciting read, tracking the transformation of virginal, uptight Frankie into a crack surgical nurse and woman of the world. Her tensely platonic romance with a married surgeon ends when his broken, unbreathing body is airlifted out by helicopter; she throws her pent-up passion into a wild affair with a soldier who happens to be her dead brother's best friend. In the second part of the book, after the war, Frankie seems to experience every possible bad break. A drawback of the story is that none of the secondary characters in her life are fully three-dimensional: Her dismissive, chauvinistic father and tight-lipped, pill-popping mother, her fellow nurses, and her various love interests are more plot devices than people. You'll wish you could

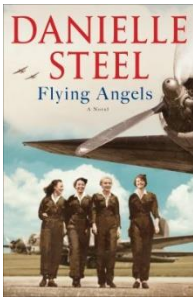
have gone to Vegas and placed a bet on the ending--while it's against all the odds, you'll see it coming from a mile away. A dramatic, vividly detailed reconstruction of a little-known aspect of the Vietnam War.

READALIKES



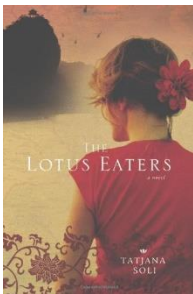
***The Fourteenth of September* by Rita Dragonette**

On September 14, 1969, Private First Class Judy Talton celebrates her nineteenth birthday by secretly joining the campus anti-Vietnam War movement. In doing so, she jeopardizes both the army scholarship that will secure her future and her relationship with her military family. But Judy's doubts have escalated with the travesties of the war. Who is she if she stays in the army? What is she if she leaves? *The Fourteenth of September* portrays a pivotal time at the peak of the Vietnam War through the rare perspective of a young woman, tracing her path of self-discovery and a "Coming of Conscience."



***Flying Angels* by Danielle Steel**

Audrey Parker's life changes forever when Pearl Harbor is attacked on December 7, 1941. Her brother, a talented young Navy pilot, had been stationed there, poised to fulfill their late father's distinguished legacy. Fresh out of nursing school with a passion and a born gift for helping others, both Audrey and her friend Lizzie suddenly find their nation on the brink of war. Driven to do whatever they can to serve, they enlist in the Army and embark on a new adventure as flight nurses. Risking their lives on perilous missions, they join the elite Medical Air Evacuation Transport Squadron and fly into enemy territory almost daily to rescue wounded soldiers from the battlefield.



***The Lotus Eaters* by Tatjana Soli**

On a stifling day in 1975, the North Vietnamese army is poised to roll into Saigon. As the fall of the city begins, two lovers make their way through the streets to escape to a new life. Helen Adams, an American photojournalist, must take leave of a war she is addicted to and a devastated country she has come to love. Linh, the Vietnamese man who loves her, must grapple with his own conflicted loyalties of heart and homeland.