

AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY



Kate Quinn is the New York Times and USA Today bestselling author of historical fiction. A native of southern California, she attended Boston University where she earned a Bachelor's and Master's degree in Classical Voice. She has written four novels in the Empress of Rome Saga, and two books in the Italian Renaissance, before turning to the 20th century with "The Alice Network", "The Huntress," and "The Rose Code." All have been translated into multiple languages. Kate and her husband now live in San Diego with three rescue dogs.

- Author's website

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Female friendship is a constant theme throughout *The Alice Network*. Charlie St. Clair and Eve Gardiner begin as antagonists, whereas Eve and Louise de Bettignies (Lili) are friends from the start. How does each friendship grow and change over the course of events?
2. The young Eve introduced in 1915 is very different from the older Eve seen through Charlie's eyes in 1947. How and when did you see the young Eve begin to change into her older self? What was the catalyst of those changes?
3. Lili tells Eve, "To tell the truth, much of this special work we do is quite boring." Did the realities of spy work surprise you, compared to the more glamorous version presented by Hollywood? How do you think you would have fared working for the historical Alice Network?
4. Rene Bordelon is denigrated by his peers as a war profiteer and an informer. He sees himself as a practical businessman, pointing out that he is not to blame for making money off the invaders, or for tragedies like Oradour-sur-Glane that happened on German orders. Did you see him as a villain or an opportunist? Do you think he earned his final fate?
5. Eve loves Captain Cameron and hates Rene Bordelon—but her relationship with Rene is longer, darker, and more complex. How is her hatred for him complicated by intimacy? How does his realization of Eve's true identity

change him? How do you think they continued to think and feel about each other during their thirty years' separation, and how did that affect their eventual climax?

6. Finn Kilgore and Captain Cameron are parallels for each other: both Scotsmen and ex-soldiers with war wounds and prison terms in their pasts, acting as support systems for the women they love who go into danger. How are the two men different as well as alike? How does Finn succeed where Cameron fails?
7. The disappearance of Charlie's cousin Rose Fournier provides the story's driving search. Did her eventual fate surprise you? Had you ever heard of Oradour-sur-Glane? How did Rose's fate change the goal of the search?
8. Everyone in The Alice Network suffers some form of emotional damage from war: Charlie's depression after losing her marine brother to suicide, Eve's torture-induced nightmares, Finn's concentration-camp memories and resulting anger issues, Cameron's guilt over losing his recruits. How do they each cope with their war wounds? How do they help each other heal? How is PTSD handled in Eve's day as compared to Charlie's day—and as compared to now?
9. Charlie dreads the stigma of being a "bad girl" pregnant out of wedlock, and Eve fears shame and dismissal as a horizontale if it is learned she slept with a source for information. Discuss the sexual double standards each woman faced. How have our sexual standards for women changed since 1915 and 1947?
10. Charlie decides to keep her baby, and Eve decides to have an abortion. Why did each woman make the choice she did?
11. Charlie argues that Rene' should be brought to legal justice, and Eve argues for vigilante justice. Who do you think is right? How did it affect the ending? How do you think the outcome will bind Eve and Charlie and Finn in the future, since they cannot share their adventure with anyone else?
12. "There are two kinds of flowers when it comes to women. The kind that sit safe in a beautiful vase, or the kind that survive in any conditions...even in evil." The theme of the fleurs du mal carries from Lili to Eve—how does Eve pass it on to Charlie? When do you see Charlie becoming a fleur du mal in her own right? How has knowing Eve changed Charlie's life, and vice versa?

- Author's website

<http://www.katequinnauthor.com/extras/book-clubs/>

BOOK REVIEWS

Library Journal

Those looking for intrigue and danger in their summer fiction may be drawn to Quinn's (Mistress of Rome) latest, already generating positive early buzz. Featuring a time line split between a woman desperately seeking her cousin in 1947 postwar France and the doings of the "Alice Network" of female spies during World War I, this fast-paced story offers courageous heroines, villains you love to hate, and dramatic life-or-death stakes.

OTHER MATERIALS

'The Alice Network' Is A Crackling Tale Of Spies And Suspense

"Solve for X." That's the phrase invoked repeatedly by Charlotte "Charlie" St. Clair, the brainy college student at the center of Kate Quinn's exciting new novel, *The Alice Network*. In the aftermath of World War II, Charlie is thrown together with a veteran female spy from the previous war in a high-stakes journey to locate disappeared figures from the past. Unsolved puzzles and cryptic riddles crop up like weeds in a bomb crater, and as math-whiz Charlie puts it, "There was always an answer and the answer was either right or it was wrong." But her adventures turn out to be messy, non-formulaic and not so black and white, which after all is what makes life — and novels — interesting.

The year is 1947. Charlie's posh Bennington College existence gets derailed by an unwanted pregnancy. Her domineering French mother hauls her off to Europe, heading for a clinic that will take care of her "Little Problem," as she calls her condition throughout the novel. En route, Charlie hatches an alternative plan — to track down her beloved cousin Rose, lost somewhere in France. In Europe, the "hangover of war was still visible in a way you didn't see in New York." Rose is a refugee amid a horde of displaced persons, a single grain of sand on a blasted, nearly obliterated beach, but Charlie is determined to "solve for X" and find her.

Enter Eve Gardiner, a raging, hard-drinking, foul-mouthed WWI espionage agent who just might possess a clue to Rose's whereabouts. When Charlie first comes into her room, Eve cocks a Luger pistol and demands, "Who are you, and what the bloody f--- are you doing in my house?" In alternating chapters with alternating world wars as backdrops, we follow Eve's exploits in 1915 in "the Alice Network," a historically accurate cabal of spies.

Shedding the overbearing chaperone of a mother, Charlie and Eve set off to find Rose in a real beaut of a car, a dark-blue convertible Aston Martin Lagonda. *Cherchez l'homme*: Serving as their driver is a charming but war-stunned Scotsman, Finn, master of the "one-pan breakfast." In romances and historical novels alike, the word "tousled" is a tell-tale signifier, and it certainly works that way here: "Finn's tousled dark head leaned out the window, and I saw the ember glow of his cigarette," Charlie says at one point. Equipped with Eve's ever-ready Luger, the intrepid trio travel through Lille, Limoge and Grasse, *vielle* French towns that Quinn renders in exquisite detail. Charlie sponsors the journey by pawning a precious rope of pearls inherited from her *grandmere*.

In 'The Alice Network,' the lives of two indomitable women intertwine in a plot crackling with suspense. Both women experience transformations, Charlie by dumping her New Look full skirts and petticoats for slim black slacks and a Euro-chic striped sweater, Eve by learning to treat her traveling companions with a modicum of respect. Charlie's arrogance doesn't change — "there wasn't a bill anywhere I couldn't tot up faster than an adding machine" — but she lets her guard down enough to find kinship with both Finn and Eve.

And at the heart of Quinn's telling is the true story of the covert Alice Network, through which courageous men and women infiltrated the German lines in rural France. Lili, in the novel the chief handler of the group, is based on a real woman who at the time was called a "regular Joan of Arc." With dozens of operatives under her command, Lili asserts that the Germans will never be able to find her: "I'm a handful of water, running everywhere."

Despite this brand of courageous self-assurance, displayed by all the women in the story, Quinn's novel gives us tragedies, too, both from war and from pursuing the ghosts and demons of the past. But these pains are offset by the invigorating pleasure of the read. In *The Alice Network*, the lives of two indomitable women intertwine in a plot crackling with suspense. We root for Charlie and Eve, and cheer when they triumph.

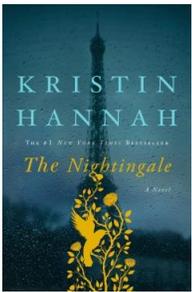
<https://www.npr.org/2017/06/08/530794379/the-alice-network-is-a-crackling-tale-of-spies-and-suspense>

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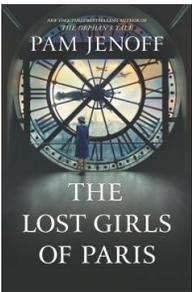
***All the Ways We Said Goodbye* by Beatriz Williams, Lauren Willig, and Karen White**

An heiress, a Resistance fighter and a widow find their lives intertwined by their wartime experiences and the turbulent 1960s when they seek refuge at Paris' legendary Ritz hotel.



***The Nightingale* by Kristin Hannah**

Reunited when the elder's husband is sent to fight in World War II, French sisters Vianne and Isabelle find their bond as well as their respective beliefs tested by a world that changes in horrific ways.



***The Lost Girls of Paris* by Pam Jenoff**

After discovering an abandoned, photograph-filled suitcase in Grand Central Station in 1946 a young widow sets out to discover who the people in the pictures are.