

## Alice Network (Quinn)

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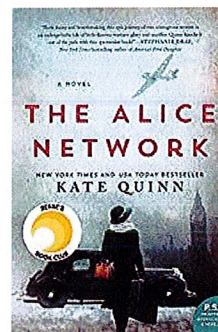
### The Alice Network

Kate Quinn, 2017

HarperCollins

528 pp.

ISBN-13: 9780062654199



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### Summary

*In an enthralling new historical novel, two women—a female spy recruited to the real-life Alice Network in France during World War I and an unconventional American socialite searching for her cousin in 1947—are brought together in a mesmerizing story of courage and redemption.*

### 1947

In the chaotic aftermath of World War II, American college girl Charlie St. Clair is pregnant, unmarried, and on the verge of being thrown out of her very proper family. She's also nursing a desperate hope that her beloved cousin Rose, who disappeared in Nazi-occupied France during the war, might still be alive.

So when Charlie's parents banish her to Europe to have her "little problem" taken care of, she breaks free and heads to London. She is determined to find out what happened to the cousin she loves like a sister.

### 1915

A year into the Great War, Eve Gardiner burns to join the fight against the Germans and unexpectedly gets her chance when she's recruited to work as a spy. Sent into enemy-occupied France, she's trained by the mesmerizing Lili, the "Queen of Spies", who manages a vast network of secret agents right under the enemy's nose.

Thirty years later, haunted by the betrayal that ultimately tore apart the Alice Network, Eve spends her days drunk and secluded in her crumbling London house. Until a young American barges in uttering a name Eve hasn't heard in decades, and launches them both on a mission to find the truth...no matter where it leads. *(From the publisher.)*

### Author Bio

- Birth—May 9, 1975
- Where—southern California, USA

- Education—B.A., M.Mus., Boston University
- Currently—lives in the state of Maryland

Kate Quinn is the author of historical novels. Several, set in ancient Rome, are known as the Empress of Rome Saga. Another series, The Borgia Chronicles, is set during the Italian Renaissance. With her novels, *The Alice Network* (2017) and *The Huntress* (2019), Quinn switched centuries, setting her stories during the eras of World War I and World War II, respectively.

Quinn has also joined 10 or so other authors in a collaborative series called Songs of Blood and Gold. The three books, now collected in a single volume, span the era of ancient Greece into the Roman empire.

As she writes on her website, Quinn has always loved history. She tells us why she enjoys writing about her favorite subject:

*Too often we grow up thinking history is boring, dull, nothing but flat lists of dates and places. In my books I hope to show the life, the laughter, and the humanity that runs through our common past.*

The author is a native of Southern California. She attended Boston University, where she earned a Bachelor's and Master's degree in classical voice. Today she lives in Maryland with her husband and two dogs. She still loves opera, as well as action movies, cooking, and baseball. (Adapted from the *author's website*

(<http://www.katequinnauthor.com/>) .)

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#### Book Reviews

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.

**NPR.org**

Amazing historical fiction.... [A] must read!

**Historical Novel Society**

Lovingly crafted and brimming with details, readers are sure to be held in Quinn's grip watching as the characters evolve. Powerful reading you can't put down!

**Romantic Times**

(*Starred review.*) Allowing Charlie to describe present events, while Eve shares her experience as an English spy for the real-life Alice Network during World War I, creates a fascinating tension that intensifies as the finale approaches.... A compelling blend of historical fiction, mystery, and women's fiction. —Stacey Hayman, *Rocky*

River P.L., OH

**Library Journal**

Kate Quinn announces herself as one of the best artists of the genre. The plotting is seamless, the pace breathtaking, and the prose is both vivid and laced with just the right amount of details. Fans of historical fiction, spy fiction and thrilling drama will love every moment.

**BookPage**

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**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 spywork 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 making money off the invaders, or for tragedies like Oradours-sur-Glane which 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 emotional. 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 effect their eventual climax?
6. Finn Kilgore and Captain Cameron are parallels for each other: both Scotsmen and 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. Rose's disappearance provides the story's driving search. Did her eventual fate surprise you? Had you ever heard of Oradours-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 horizontal 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 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?

(Questions from the *author's website* (<http://www.katequinnauthor.com>) .)

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Author:

**Quinn, Kate**

**Adult Fiction**

**Description:**

**Kate Quinn** writes historical romances set in turbulent first century Imperial Rome. Her novels have a great sense of immediacy, with deftly introduced characters and an invitingly vibrant sense of place and contemporary society; she elegantly blends individual stories into the arc of history. **Quinn's** plots are fast-paced and dramatic, mixing fictional and real people from emperors to gladiators and slaves. Characters are multidimensional and nuanced -- even protagonists have dark sides and a willingness to do what is necessary to survive in topsy-turvy Roman society. Narratives are complex, with multiple narrators. Start with: Mistress of Rome.

**Book Appeal Terms:** Definition of Appeal Terms

**Genre:** Historical fiction

**Character:** Authentic; Flawed

**Storyline:** Intricately plotted

**Pace:** Fast-paced

**Tone:** Dramatic; Romantic; Strong sense of place

**Writing Style:** Compelling; Descriptive; Richly detailed; Witty

**Persistent link to this record (Permalink):**

<http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=neh&tg=UI&an=1131378&site=novp-live>

**Author Characteristics:**

Female

United States

American

**Genre:**

Historical fiction

**Character:**

Authentic

Flawed

**Storyline:**

Intricately plotted

**Pace:**

Fast-paced

**Tone:**

Dramatic

Romantic

Strong sense of place

**Writing Style:**

Compelling

Richly detailed

Descriptive

Witty

**Subject headings:**

World War I.

Women spies

Missing persons

Postwar life

Civilization, Ancient

Women rulers

Secrets

Nobility -- Papal states

Senior women

World War II

Cousins

Pregnant women

Young women

Missing persons investigation

Women pilots

Nazi hunters

Deception

Gladiators

Women slaves -- Rome

Ambition in women

**Location:**

England -- History -- 20th century

Rome, Italy -- History -- 1420-1798

**Credits:**

Novelist/EBSCO Publishing

Baker & Taylor

AID: 1131378

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# ← History from a Woman's Perspective- A Book Blog

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These women defied every rule they were born under, and fought for their countries with extraordinary courage, intelligence, and toughness. They deserved to be remembered--and emulated!

## What are you working on now? Will you revisit WWI?

I'd like to revisit WWI someday, but at the moment I'm working on another dual timeline story focused more around World War II. Tentatively titled "Darkroom," it involves a hunt for Nazi war criminals in post-war America, and the incredible true story of the female Russian bomber pilots known as the Night Witches...

## About the Author:

KATE QUINN is a native of southern California. She attended Boston University, where she earned a Bachelor's and Master's degree in Classical Voice. A lifelong history buff, she has written four novels in the *Empress of Rome Saga*, and two books in the Italian Renaissance detailing the early years of the infamous Borgia clan. All have been translated into multiple languages. She and her husband now live in Maryland with two black dogs named Caesar and Calpurnia. For more information visit her website.

Also check out my review of Kate Quinn's novel:

*The Alice Network*



Author Interviews   Kate Quinn



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## Ask the Author: Kate Quinn

Kate Quinn is currently not accepting new questions.

### ANSWERED QUESTIONS (117)

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Hasving read other books you have written I was excited to see how well Alice was rated by other readers. Of course, I hope that I win a copy but whether I do or not I will find a way to read it. I am curious though. Where did you get the idea for this plot?



**Kate Quinn** A fantastic non-fiction book called "Women Heroes of WWI" (Kathryn Atwood) sent me down the rabbit hole with an essay about the historic Alice Network, of which I had never heard. As soon as I read about these ladies, I knew I had to write about them!

6 Likes · Like · Comment

I just finished The Alice Network and I'm so glad to have found another wonderful author to read. Where do you suggest I start with your other books?



**Kate Quinn** So glad you liked THE ALICE NETWORK! As far as my backlist, it depends what historical era you prefer: if you like the Italian Renaissance, start with "The Serpent and the Pearl" and then go on to "The Lion and the Rose." If you like ancient Rome, start with "Mistress of Rome." Hope you enjoy!

4 Likes · Like · Comment

How or when do you stop or pause researching and start writing? Or do you research as you go?



**Kate Quinn** For me, there are four distinct research phases involved in writing a historical novel.

The Dog-Paddle comes first. You have a new book idea, probably something rather vague and unformed, and you're reading everything you can get your hands on about Murano glass-blowers or the reign of Frederick the Great or Finnish lake mythology. This is the stage where you grossly over-use the One Click Buy feature on Amazon as you load up on used research texts to dog-ear and underline; you also make dire use of the "Customers who bought X also bought Y" feature. Your plot hasn't firmed up yet, so right now everything is grist for the imagination, and blinding flashes of inspiration come from random footnotes. You have no idea what will be useful, so you read it all, dog-paddling in leisurely fashion through an ocean of sometimes only barely connected reading material, daisy chaining from a book about Polish airmen in World War II to the bombing of London to the building of St. Paul cathedral, and realizing that with a single brilliant plot twist you can tie it all together in one smash-hit novel. This is the fun stage.

Stage two is The Deep Dive. You have your book idea; the era and plot are chosen. Now you need to narrow your focus; understand EVERYTHING about the historical period and events you will be covering. This is where you read every account you can find on the Battle of Crecy or the early life of Machiavelli. You want the picture in your mind as complete as possible before you start playing on that historical stage. It's easy to get lost in the research here, because no historical picture will ever be complete. There's always more to know. At some point you have to stop researching and start writing.

Stage three is The Fast Patch. This is when you're in the throes of writing, and hit a road-block. You cannot go any further in this chapter until you have accurately figured out the mechanical innards of a Pe-5, or figured out what boat will get your hero out of Dunkirk alive. So you repair to the books, the web, and the library for a quick research fix. You don't need to dive deep here, find out every conflicting opinion out there on the building of a Pe-5 or every single kind of boat used at Dunkirk. You just need a fast, reliable bit of historical information that will bridge the gap to firmer, more well researched ground.

Stage four, and most dreaded of all, is The Rabbit Hole. This generally comes in the editing phase, the stage where you are tearing your manuscript apart in a haze of caffeine-fueled paranoia, fact-

**Kate Quinn**

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16 Likes · Like · 4 Comments

How did you organize the "facts" that were contained in THE ALICE NETWORK? I had all my research in notebooks and found myself constantly flipping thru them to include the "facts." It seemed very disorganized.



**Kate Quinn** I use Scrivener, and I keep my research mostly in the file as I go. I also buy inexpensive used copies of all the books I'll need, so I can underline and margin-note to my heart's content.

6 Likes · Like · 1 Comment

Loved the Alice Network. Any other books on WWI or WWII?



**Kate Quinn** The one I've got coming out next--all about the post-WWII hunt for Nazi war criminals fled to the US, tangled up with the war-time story of all female regiment of bomber pilots who flew against Hitler's eastern front and earned the nickname "the Night Witches." No title yet, but it should be out next February. So glad you enjoyed THE ALICE NETWORK!

18 Likes · Like · 2 Comments

Hi Kate! I've read both of your Empress of Rome series & Borgia Chronicles & loved them all! As far as my understanding goes...both the Roman & Borgia series are finished (tears). My question is, do you ever have trouble letting the characters go or are you happy to give them a friendly goodbye?



**Kate Quinn** I do miss my characters, yes. Which is why I like the idea of revisiting them in post-novel short stories, if I can ever carve out the time to write them!

6 Likes · Like · 1 Comment

So, if you were an Empress of Rome superfan who had 24 hours in Rome during an upcoming trip, which site(s) would you make a point of visiting? Any favorite characters' favorite haunts you might suggest? :) (I'm trying to think about what I can leave out of my suitcase so that I can bring along all four books for a re-read...)



**Kate Quinn** The Colosseum for sure. The Forum. The Circus Maximus. If you can get a little outside Rome, wander around Hadrian's Villa and soak in the atmosphere--a huge site, so lots to see! Though I'd be completely torn by the opportunity to see the Borgia Apartments in the Vatican, which show up in my Renaissance series... Have a wonderful trip!

7 Likes · Like · Comment

I'm obsessed with your book The Alice Network. So well written, I love how you also have a love story intertwined! It was a real page turner, I haven't read that good of a book in awhile. I hope you write more? I will be checking out your other books as well. I had no idea there really was an Alice Network and now I'm so intrigued to learn more! Love your writing style!!



**Kate Quinn** So glad you enjoyed TAN! I certainly am writing more; I just finished and turned in my next book, which centers around the Russian all-female night bomber squadron nicknamed the Night Witches who flew against Hitler's eastern front during WWII.

17 Likes · Like · 1 Comment

One of my favorite qualities in your novels is the way each character is presented with a certain love in terms of their mannerisms and motivations. Characters are presented as whole people rather than caricatures or one-dimensional saints/demons. Do you use people in your own life as models?



**Kate Quinn** In a few cases I've used real people as models for fictional characters--Vix from the Rome series shares quite a lot of traits with my husband, and tart-tongued chef Carmelina from the Borgia duology is exactly how I imagine my salty Sicilian grandmother-in-law would have been in her youth, had she been born during the Renaissance. But for the most part characters grow up inside their own stories on their own, and I try to make sure they have their own weaknesses and strengths. Nobody ever envisions themselves as the villain; we're all the hero in our own minds; and



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**Kate Quinn** I wish I was! Hope your book club enjoys the book, and feel free to hit me up with any questions from the group. Happy New Year!

2 Likes · Like · Comment

A small criticism one reviewer had was the authenticity of the language in that timeline : ie 1947 Charlie saying : "when a young woman in 1947 says "nice wheels" in reference to a car. And then back in 1915, writing about Folkestone and the refugees there, we are told that "more French and Belgian (was) heard on the docks than English". Belgian is a language?"... I also found 'baby blues' a surprise. Research ?



**Kate Quinn** Hi! In any 150,000 word book it's inevitable that a few errors get through no matter how many times an author and her editors read it. "Belgian" looks like one of those; I think it was originally "French and Belgian voices heard" and then a word got trimmed out of the sentence and the correct "Dutch" didn't get swapped in. I'll add it to my "whoops" page on my website, and pass it on to my publisher to correct for future editions. "Baby Blues" appears in published American literature as early as 1918, and "nice wheels" was indeterminate timing-wise even after quite a bit of searching--I liked the term, so I decided to use it.

14 Likes · Like · 2 Comments

Congrats on the Goodreads Choice Award nomination for The Alice Network in Historical Fiction! What will you do if you win?



**Kate Quinn** No idea! Dance around excitedly, go to Disneyland... ;)

13 Likes · Like · Comment

Hi Kate, Wanted you to know that I am thrilled that you liked my review. I loved The Alice Network, and have suggested it to many friends. Am about to look at your back list.....and looking forward to your next book.....have you started on it yet? Is it likely to be based on modern history as was 'Alice', or the ancient world you previously wrote about? Annette Kent



**Kate Quinn** So glad you enjoyed TAN! My next book is also 20th century: a triple-narrative involving post WWII war criminals, the war correspondents hunting them down, and the Russian bomber pilots known the Night Witches who flew against Hitler's eastern front. Hope you enjoy it!

8 Likes · Like · 2 Comments

I absolutely adored "The Alice Network"! Do you have any idea when your next book will come out? Thanks so much! ^\_^



**Kate Quinn** So glad you enjoyed TAN! No publication date set yet, maybe late next year or early the following? It's a story of post WWII war criminals, war correspondents hunting them down, and the Russian bomber pilots known the Night Witches who flew against Hitler's eastern front.

5 Likes · Like · 1 Comment

I was thrilled that you liked my review of The Alice Network! What inspired you to write in that time frame? It's such a departure from your other novels.



**Kate Quinn** So glad you enjoyed "The Alice Network"! As to why I decided to jump into the 20th century to write, I've never been a one-era author--having always had ideas that spanned from the ancient world to the 20th century, it made sense to take a look at some of those later-set ideas when I saw the boom in 20th century war fiction. I decided to do some digging, some reading, some research to see if any ideas took off on me, and they did!

4 Likes · Like · Comment

Hello!!! I don't have a question, I just saw this quote after reading "The Alice Network" and felt it was appropriate.... "The historian will tell you what happened, the novelist will tell you what it felt like." E.L. Doctorow thank you for writing this story, it was in a





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Ok, I haven't even got past chapter 6 yet and I can see this being a movie! Would you take that opportunity if it arose??



**Kate Quinn** Of course! Though authors never get much say in how film versions of their books turn out, so who knows how an "Alice Network" movie would look in the end? It's a pretty long shot for any book to make it to the big screen, though, so while I enjoy a good daydream about a film deal, it's long odds that it will ever happen. (Fingers are still crossed, though!)

7 Likes · Like · 1 Comment

Do you think you will ever write more books set in Ancient Rome? I loved your Empress of Rome series, particularly because it was set during a period of Roman history that not a lot of historical fiction has previously covered. I would love to read your fictional take on, say, the Severan Dynasty. (Elagabalus would certainly make for an interesting character.....)



**Kate Quinn** I would like to write more books set in ancient Rome someday. I'm not sure I'd go for the Severan dynasty, but Diocletian is a possibility! Or maybe something a bit earlier Empire, like Augustus...who knows? For the time being, though, I'm researching and enjoying 20th century history. So glad you've enjoyed my Rome series!

2 Likes · Like · Comment

Hi Kate, I've read "Tiger Queens" and loved it as well. Why not write the story that bridges these two worlds? There is some historical evidence to suggest that ancient Sarmatians emigrated to Mongolia (<http://www.pbs.org/wnet/secrets/amazon-warrior-women-clues-evidence/1471/>). What a story you could tell of the last of the Amazons fleeing to a land that doesn't try to enslave and confine their fighting spirit!



**Kate Quinn** After seeing "Wonder Woman" I SO want to write a book about Amazons! (Even if the reality wasn't quite like the ladies of Themyscira...) Who knows, maybe in future!

2 Likes · Like · Comment

*This question contains spoilers... (view spoiler)*



**Kate Quinn** How cool to have Edith Cavell in your family tree! She's another very stellar lady who needs a book of her own. If you want to keep up with what I'm writing, I'm on Facebook and Instagram and Twitter (though mostly Facebook) and can quite often be found online there procrastinating from my wordcount! I'm so glad you enjoyed THE ALICE NETWORK.

3 Likes · Like · Comment

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## *On Inspiration: Interview with Kate Quinn*

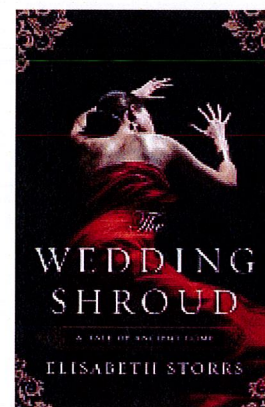
July 28, 2017 By [Elisabeth Storrs](#) — [16 Comments](#)

My guest today is the wonderful Kate Quinn, a fellow Romaphile who has diverted from Rome to venture into the world of women spies in WWI. Kate is a native of southern California. A lifelong history buff, 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*. All have been translated into multiple languages.

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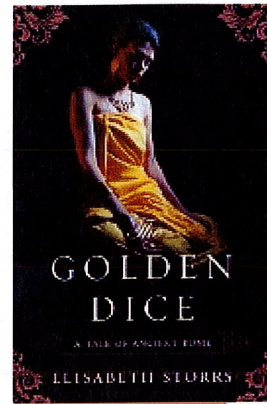


*What or who inspired you to first write? Which authors have influenced you?*

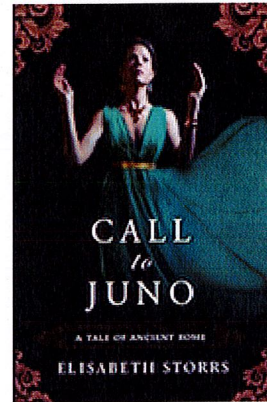
I've always had the urge to tell stories, who knows why. My mother has a history degree, so I grew up hearing fascinating historical tid-bits as bedtime stories rather than fairy-tales; because of that, I gravitated naturally toward stories grounded in the past. My role-model authors for hist-fic have been Gwen Bristow (great story-telling, clean clear prose), Judith Merkle Riley (who showed me that historical fiction can be funny) and Bernard Cornwell (most thrilling historical action writing ever).

*What is the inspiration for your current book? Is there a particular theme you wished to explore?*

I wrote *The Alice Network* after stumbling across a reference to the historic ring of spies which operated during World War I, headed and masterminded by a brilliant woman nicknamed the Queen of Spies. I was astounded that the entire network wasn't more well known, and

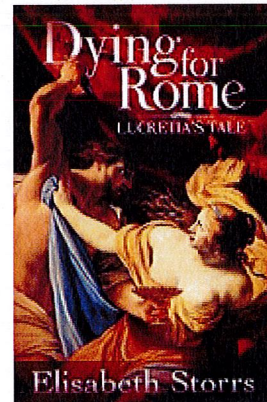


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girl whose death inspired the men of Rome to rebellion.

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wanted to pay homage to the incredible courage of these women who risked their lives to spy on the Germans. It's fundamentally a book about women in war, and what they can accomplish when they join forces and refuse to be beaten.

*What period of history particularly inspires or interests you? Why?*

There are so many I find fascinating! Ancient Rome, Renaissance Italy, Tudor England, World War I & II, the Roaring 20s...I suppose what they all have in common is that they are periods with both tremendous advancements in art or culture or science, but also tremendous upheaval and turmoil and violence, which makes great grist for novelists.

*What resources do you use to research your book? How long did it take to finish the novel?*

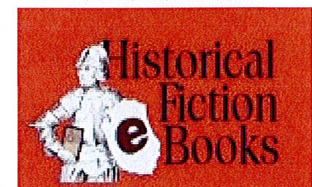
I wrote *The Alice Network* in a year, which is fairly standard for me. I couldn't travel to Europe to research the places visited in the book—it was a year with a lot of upheaval; extended travel wasn't possible—so I relied on every online source and written source I could find to aid my research. I was lucky enough with *The Alice Network* to work with the modern-day descendants of several actual spies who worked for the real network during WWI, and whose archived letters gave me invaluable insights.

*What do you do if stuck for a word or a phrase?*

Tear my hair a while, then find another one and keep going.

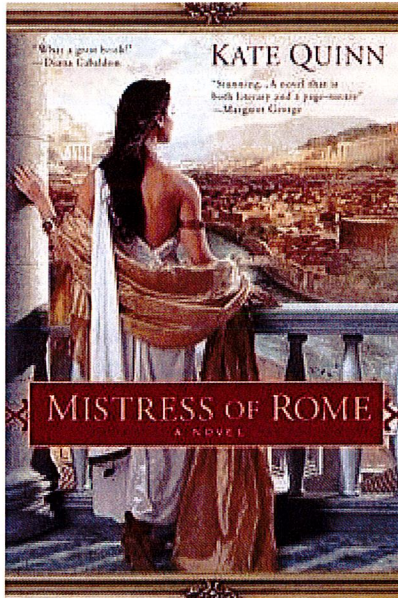
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*Is there anything unusual or even quirky that you would like to share about your writing?*



Something fun I've started doing with the last two books is playing with scent to get into a new writing project. For my last Rome-set novel about Emperor Hadrian, I spritzed a citrusy perfume called "Nuits d'Hadrien" (and as a result, lemon trees

popped up everywhere in the book!) For *The Alice Network* I picked a scent called "Code" because I figured my lady spies would like it. It's silly, but it's fun—and there is something about linking the sense of smell to work, because after a while I associate the new scent with "Ok, time to get cracking on that word-count."

*Do you use a program like Scrivener to create your novel? Do you ever write in long hand?*

I am a recent Scrivener convert—now I have no idea how I would work without it. I haven't written longhand since I was a teenager; my thoughts race way too quickly for my hand to catch up!

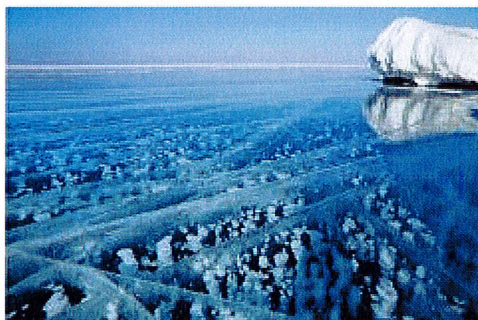
*Is there a particular photo or piece of art that strikes a chord with you? Why?*

I love historic photographs. Look at a picture of the Queen of Spies who headed the Alice

Network, and you see a tiny woman with a big lace collar and a corseted waist and poofed Edwardian hair...she looks as fragile and decorative as a china shepherdess on a shelf. Then you take a closer look at her eyes, and they're sharp and humorous and hiding so much.

For the current WIP I have a photograph of Lake Baikal I'm using as inspiration—a huge, mysterious lake on the very eastern edge of Russia which I decided was my heroine's birthplace.

*What advice would you give an aspiring author?*

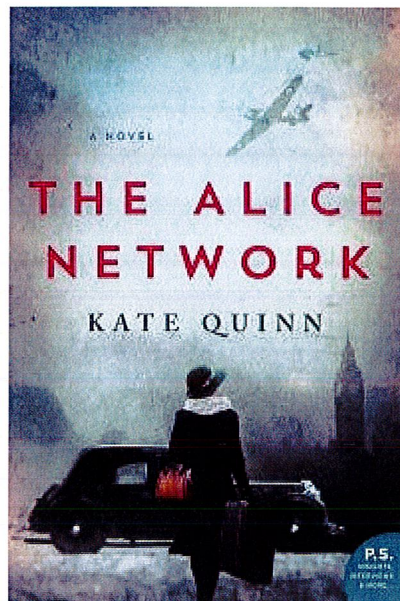


Find and befriend other writers, because your writer friends will keep you sane.

*Tell us about your next book.*

My next book is another 20th century dual timeline, like *The Alice Network*. It involves an English war correspondent turned Nazi hunter teaming up with a Russian female pilot from the all-women night-bomber regiment known as the Night Witches, tracking a Nazi murderess who fled to America post-World War II...even as a budding teenage photographer in Boston begins to suspect there is something very wrong about her father's new fiancée. I'm about 2/3 done and enjoying it hugely!





*In an enthralling new historical novel from national bestselling author Kate Quinn, two women—a female spy recruited to the real-life Alice Network in France during World War I and an unconventional American socialite searching for her cousin in 1947—are brought together in a mesmerizing story of courage and redemption.*

*1947. In the chaotic aftermath of World War II, American college girl Charlie St. Clair is pregnant, unmarried, and on the verge of being thrown out of her very proper family. She's also nursing a desperate hope that her beloved cousin Rose, who disappeared in Nazi-occupied France during the war, might still be alive. So when Charlie's parents banish her to Europe to have her "little problem" taken care of, Charlie breaks free and heads to London, determined to find out what happened to the cousin she loves like a sister.*

*1915. A year into the Great War, Eve Gardiner burns to join the fight against the Germans and unexpectedly gets her chance when she's recruited to work as a spy. Sent into enemy-occupied France, she's trained by the mesmerizing Lili, the "Queen of Spies",*

*who manages a vast network of secret agents right under the enemy's nose.*

*Thirty years later, haunted by the betrayal that ultimately tore apart the Alice Network, Eve spends her days drunk and secluded in her crumbling London house. Until a young American barges in uttering a name Eve hasn't heard in decades, and launches them both on a mission to find the truth ... no matter where it leads.*

Many thanks, Kate. Can't wait to read The Alice Network and your next book about Night Witches!

You can connect with Kate via her [website](#), [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#) and [Facebook](#).

Buy Kate's books via the following links:

[The Alice Network](#)

[Mistress of Rome](#)

[Daughters of Rome](#)

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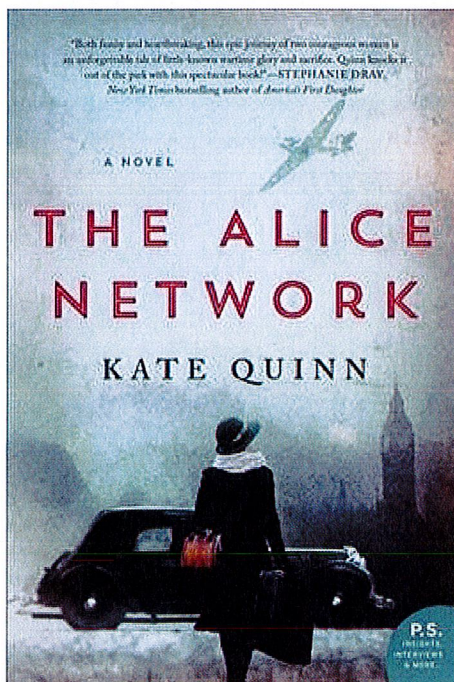


REVIEW BOOK REVIEWS

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

June 8, 2017 · 7:00 AM ET

JEAN ZIMMERMAN



## The Alice Network

by Kate Quinn

Paperback, 528 pages

[purchase](#)

"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.

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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.

*Jean Zimmerman's latest novel, Savage Girl, is out now in paperback. She posts daily at Blog Cabin.*

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## Interview with Kate Quinn



June 06, 2017

Today, I have the pleasure to interview bestselling author, Kate Quinn. She is best known for *The Empress of Rome Saga* and *The Borgia Chronicles*. Her latest novel, *The Alice Network*, focuses on a WWI spy network made up of women. In this interview we discuss these unsung heroines, who risked their lives in WWI. Mrs. Quinn also gives us a hint about what she is working on next. I hope this interview will give you some insight into the history of *The Alice Network*. I have given a very good review of this book, and I hope you will take the opportunity to read it. Thank you, Mrs. Quinn!



### What drew you to take a break from Ancient Rome and write about women in WWI?

I love ancient Rome, and I'd love to write more books about it someday, but I've never been a one-era writer. I've always had ideas for books in a wide array of historical periods, from ancient Rome clear through to World War I. When I saw the huge recent boom in popularity for

20th century war fiction, it made sense to revisit some of those old plot ideas, and see if



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forgotten?

In their day, women like Louise de Bettignies and Edith Cavell were heroines, lionized and medalled and written about. A generation of girls grew up knowing their stories, and some were motivated by those stories to join the SOE and become spies themselves in the next world war. But such women--Pearl Witherington, Nancy Wake, others like them--eclipsed the female spies who came before them, just as World War I itself tends to be eclipsed in the national memory by World War II. Also, plain old sexism played a certain role in gradually forgetting women like Louise. During wartime women have always stepped into male-dominated fields--but after the war is over, they are asked to step back again. In my research I saw a palpable unease with the idea that women had been asked to participate in such a dishonorable business as spying. Far easier to laud the women who contributed to the war effort in more traditionally feminine roles like nursing.

**The story of Mata Hari fascinates us today. However, why we do not hear more about these other female spies like Louise de Bettignies?**

Mata Hari became famous not because of her spy work, which is dubious, but because she was a beauty and an exotic dancer with some sexy photographs. She became more famous than her counterparts less because of what she did, than because "sexy female spy" is more of a draw than just "female spy." And I'm afraid the Madonna-whore double standard was alive and well in the intelligence business at the time; women in espionage were either cast as saintly patriots who worked for their country without ever compromising their virtue (Louise de Bettignies, Edith Cavell; both portrayed in propaganda as fragile paragons of martyred femininity) or they were sultry untrustworthy harlots who wormed secrets out of men with sex (Mata Hari, portrayed in propaganda as a devious sexpot). And since sex sells, Mata Hari is the one who ends up the most famous--or notorious.

**Are there any other women you found fascinating that deserves some recognition for their efforts?**

So many! Marthe Cnockaert, to whom the Germans awarded an Iron Cross for her work nursing German soldiers, never realizing she was spying on them at the same time. Lyudmila Pavlichenko, a Russian female sniper in World War II who racked up 309 kills and met Eleanor Roosevelt. Elsie Inglis, a doctor in WWI who founded hospitals in France and Serbia, stayed

with her patients when Germans took over her Serbian unit, and when threatened to sign a

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Not really. World War I is now more than 100 years in our past, so a lot of material is no longer under wraps. And there were some excellent first hand sources: Louise de Bettignies' surviving female lieutenant Leonie van Houtte (known in my book under her code name of Violette) went on in real life to marry a journalist after the war, and he wrote a memoir about her experiences as a spy. So I had first hand accounts for a good many of the scenes I had to dramatize!

### **Were there some facts that surprised about female spies?**

It's not a glamorous job. Movies might make you think spying is all couture gowns and cocktail parties and thrilling action, but the reality was boredom and danger; keeping your head down and trying not to be noticed as you gathered and passed intelligence. Spying took a particularly grueling kind of courage: not just nerving yourself up for one dangerous act, but setting yourself to do it over and over and over again, for months and possibly years as you tried to survive in a war zone.

### **What were the challenges for working for the Alice Network?**

If you were caught spying, you could be arrested, tried, sentenced to life in prison, or to death by firing squad--being a woman was no protection from the death penalty, as the executions of English nurse Edith Cavell and French spy Gabrielle Petit can testify. Even aside from the dangers of espionage, network spies faced the ordinary privations of life in a war zone. Shortage of food and fuel was dire in occupied France; French homes could be inspected at any time and anything from kitchen curtains to food stores requisitioned. Assault and rape were hovering threats, and curfews and restrictions made daily life miserable--even your clocks were turned to German time to remind you who was boss.

### **With the dangers these brave women faced, how do you think being a part of the Alice Network affected their lives after the war? Do you think they were stressed as much as a male combat soldier?**

PTSD has existed as long as there have been wars, whether there was an acknowledged name for it or not. Spies might have faced a different kind of combat from the kind soldiers faced in the trenches, but their fight was surely still wearing on the nerves. I'm sure the women

of the Alice Network had their own struggles when they returned to ordinary civilian life--I