



Vol. 3, No. 20, May 14, 2021

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From the Editor



Happy Friday to all of our historical fiction lovers. The year is flying along – much too quickly for my liking. But that’s alright, as long as the new books keep flying off the presses too, which they have.

Stop in and join us this week as we chat with Clare Flynn. With thirteen books under her belt, she has a lot to share and the storylines sound like they’re still churning away. It’s always so nice to hear from a prolific author and one who’s used her life experiences to deepen her characters and her tales.

Stay tuned for future issues –In the weeks ahead we have author interviews scheduled with Ellie Midwood, Sharon Bradshaw, Jeff Salter, Rebecca Dharlingue, Gail Ward Olmsted, and lots more!

Trisha

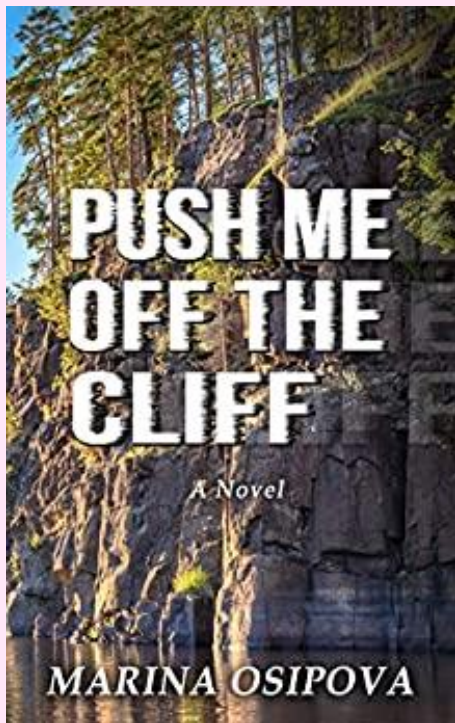
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New Releases!

Push Me Off the Cliff

Marina Osipova



March of 1948. Three years have passed since the Great Patriotic War ended in victory, disposing into the streets of the destroyed and hungry cities and villages brave decorated soldiers: thousands of them having been burned, maimed, or disfigured beyond recognition.

On a crowded commuter train, Maria hears an invalid singing, which painfully connects her to her time at the front and to the love that failed to happen to her. Why, then, since that day, does the voice from the past echo so insistently in her present life? The torture of uncertainty—was it really Armen?—intensifies after the next encounter and leaves her with an unsettling compulsion to do . . . what? Help him? Or, rather, rescue herself from her lonely and unassuming existence her heart subtly rejects? She must decide whether she is willing to let go of the life she knows for feelings she had never thought she could experience.

But, first, she has to find him.

As the genocide of 1915 within the Ottoman Empire destroyed the lives of Armen's parents and about one-and-a-half-million ethnic Armenians, his future is shattered by this other war and betrayal. Legless and totally alone, and without any family after his mother is gone, it seems the most merciful thing for him would be to end his miserable existence by leaping off a cliff. Otherwise, he must find the courage to continue living in the condition the war left him and find his place in the bitter every-day reality full of difficulties prone to men like him.

Maria and Armen. Each carries private wounds. In the face of despair, will fate offer them a chance to heal their souls and hearts?

Author Spotlight: Clare Flynn



Hello Clare Flynn! You have such a selection of historical fiction books, that I'm not quite sure where to start. I think if we were to talk about each of them, twelve in all if I counted correctly, we'd be here for far longer than a simple author interview. What drew you to write historical fiction?

Thanks for having me along, Trisha. Thirteen books actually! To be honest, I never set out to write historical fiction. My first attempt at a novel was a crime thriller. But when I started writing seriously the story that came into my head happened to be set in 1920 (*A Greater World*). I enjoyed doing the research so decided to stick with it and it's now my established genre. I can't imagine writing a contemporary novel – although I've done a few short stories.

I see on your Amazon author page that you lived in Paris in the late 80s/90s. How did your life and experiences there reflect in your writing in later years?

It wasn't a very happy period for me personally – but doubtless it was character-forming! My current work-in-progress is set there so I'm drawing a lot on my memories now. If I could go back in time and live it all again, I'd do it very differently – and I'd love to have my old apartment back on the Boulevard St-Germain! It would be a very handy bolt-hole for me to escape to now! Last month I wrote a blog post about my time in Paris, and I also talk in that post about the upcoming book. <https://clareflynn.co.uk/blog/memories-of-living-in-paris>

You have three series – the books set in Penang, 'Across the Seas', and 'The Canadians'. Can you tell our readers a brief bit about each of these three series?

I never set out for any of these to be series! But a combination of me wanting to write more about some of the characters and readers asking for it, led me to have a go. My first series was *The Canadians*. It's a wartime trilogy. The first book, *The Chalky Sea* is set here by the seaside in Eastbourne and came about when I moved here and started to unearth the town's dramatic wartime history. One of the key characters is a Canadian soldier, Jim Armstrong, and the book ends with him finally going into battle in Sicily after spending over a year waiting around twiddling his thumbs, while the Canadian army was held in reserve. Readers were keen to know what became of Jim, hence *The Alien Corn*, set in post-war Canada, which tells of Jim's struggles coming to terms with his terrible experiences in the Italian campaign, and of Joan his English war-bride's, struggles to come to terms with living in Canada. I intended to leave it there – but readers asked what happens to Ethel – a very minor character in *The Chalky Sea* – so I sent her off to

Canada too, to stay with her cousin Joan. That final book is *The Frozen River* and it's also the story of Alice, who breaks Jim's heart at the beginning of *The Chalky Sea* by going off with his younger brother.

The Penang series started off with a one-off book *The Pearl of Penang* (Evie's story) which came out of a half day visit to the island when I was on a cruise! I was later asked to write a WW2 novella and decided to return to a secondary character (Mary) and follow her into the internment camps as a prisoner of the Japanese, *Prisoner from Penang*. The third book is the story of Jasmine, Evie's daughter, after the war during the little known 12-year Malayan Emergency, *A Painter in Penang*.

You have a new book that just released at the beginning of the month – *Sisters at War*. What is this book about?

This is in fact the third book in the *Across the Seas* series. It's the story of two sisters in Liverpool during WW2. One is newly married, the other about to fall in love, and both are suffering the trauma of their father's murder of their mother. *Sisters at War* deals with the terrible toll of the 1940-41 Blitz on Liverpool, the terrors faced by the brave merchant seamen who kept Britain going through the war by plying back and forth across the dangerous U-boat-filled Atlantic, and the plight of Italian men classed as enemy aliens when Mussolini entered the war. It's a story of ordinary people whose lives are upended by war and how they cope with that.

One of my favorite eras to read in is the 1920s and 1930s. I see that one of your books, *The Gamekeepers Wife*, is set in England in the 1920s. What inspired this book?

I had a short break holiday renting a former gamekeeper's lodge on a country estate in Bedfordshire. As soon as I walked through the door, I knew I had to set a book there. The lodge was built in the Edwardian period and the estate – like so many English estates – loses much of its workforce – and the family one of its sons in WW1. That whole period between the wars is endlessly fascinating. The place immediately made me think of *Lady Chatterly's Lover* – and my starting premise was Lady C in reverse – instead of rich wife falls for husband's gamekeeper, I'd have rich (but disabled) landowner falls for the (dead) gamekeeper's wife. That's a very simplistic explanation of the start point but the book deals with all kinds of things from plant-hunting in Borneo, to dynastic marriages, domestic violence, mental institutions, garden restoration, and of course love and loss – and plenty of cocktails!

What kind of research was involved in the stories you've written?

As you will have gathered, I get a lot of inspiration from places and often return to them to do further research. I read a ton of nonfiction books about the period, collect maps, read firsthand accounts, use online tools such as Google Earth, and do lots of online research including old images, music and films. I have two abiding rules about research – firstly that even the smallest detail should be accurate and secondly, that the research serves the story not the other way round. I want the research to be invisible!

Out of all your books, if you had to pick a favorite character – I know, that's like asking a parent to choose a favorite child – which one would it be and why?

I've always been very fond of Hector in *Kurinji Flowers* – and I have a soft spot for Nance in *Storms Gather Between Us* and *Sisters at War*. Both these are secondary characters, and I was able to have some fun with them. They're both very irreverent in their different ways. Hector is gay, upper class and rather Noel Coward-like, while Nance is a cockney ex-prostitute who says what she thinks.

Is there anything you'd like to share with us that I didn't ask you about?

I think your questions have been very comprehensive. I just hope your readers aren't dropping off now with my answers! It's been an absolute pleasure, Trisha, so thank you!

My website <https://clareflynn.co.uk>



You can find Clare Flynn's books here:

Sisters at War <https://books2read.com/sistersatwar>

The Pearl of Penang <https://books2read.com/Pearlofpenang>

The Chalky Sea <https://books2read.com/chalkysea>

You can find Clare Flynn here:

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BIO: Clare Flynn is the author of thirteen historical novels and a collection of short stories. A former International Marketing Director and strategic management consultant, she is now a full-time writer. Clare is a Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts, a member of The Society of Authors, ALLi, and the Romantic Novelists Association. When not writing, she loves to read, quilt, paint and play the piano.

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