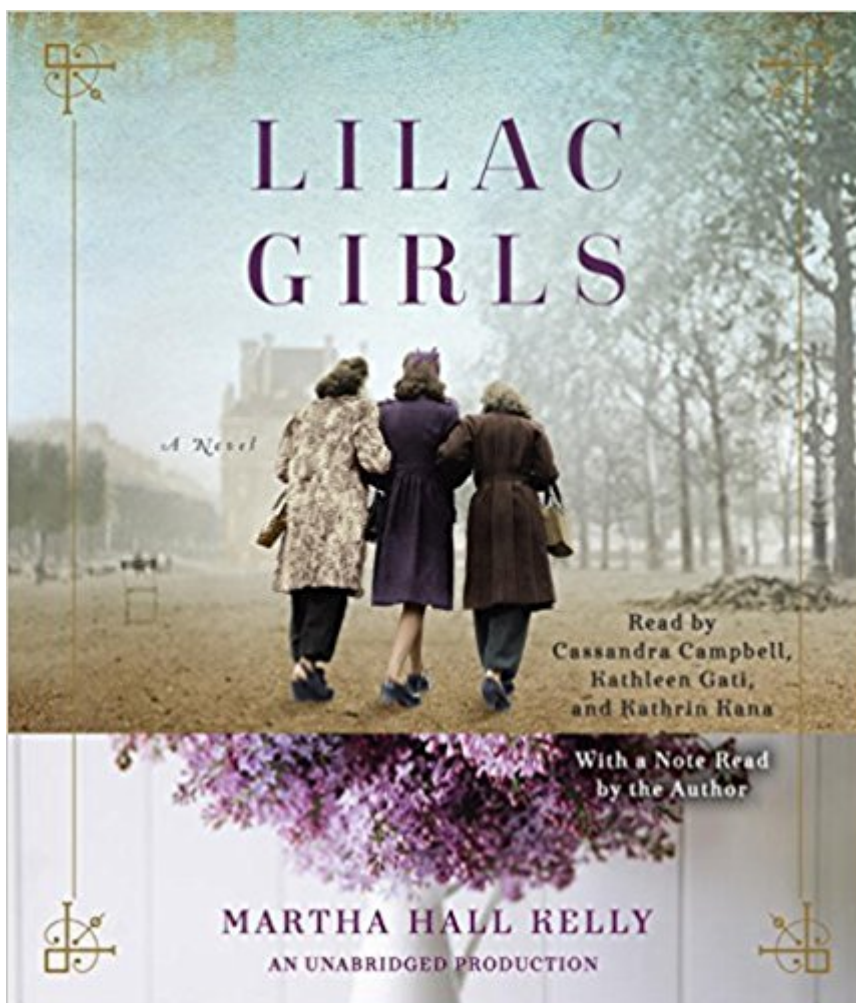


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# Lilac Girls: A Novel



## Synopsis

Inspired by the life of a real World War II heroine, this powerful debut novel reveals an incredible story of love, redemption, and terrible secrets that were hidden for decades. A New York socialite Caroline Ferriday has her hands full with her post at the French consulate and a new love on the horizon. But Caroline's world is forever changed when Hitler's army invades Poland in September 1939 and then sets its sights on France. An ocean away from Caroline, Kasia Kuzmerick, a Polish teenager, senses her carefree youth disappearing as she is drawn deeper into her role as courier for the underground resistance movement. In a tense atmosphere of watchful eyes and suspecting neighbors, one false move can have dire consequences. For the ambitious young German doctor, Herta Oberheuser, an ad for a government medical position seems her ticket out of a desolate life. Once hired, though, she finds herself trapped in a male-dominated realm of Nazi secrets and power. The lives of these three women are set on a collision course when the unthinkable happens and Kasia is sent to Ravensbrück, the notorious Nazi concentration camp for women. Their stories cross continents from New York to Paris, Germany, and Poland as Caroline and Kasia strive to bring justice to those whom history has forgotten. In *Lilac Girls*, Martha Hall Kelly has crafted a remarkable novel of unsung women and their quest for love, freedom, and second chances. It is a story that will keep readers bonded with the characters, searching for the truth, until the final pages.

**Narrator List:** CAROLINE, read by Cassandra Campbell  
KASIA, read by Kathleen Gati  
HERTA, read by Kathrin Kana  
With the Author's Note read by the author.

**Advance praise for *Lilac Girls***

“Inspired by actual events and real people, Martha Hall Kelly has woven together the stories of three women during World War II that reveal the bravery, cowardice, and cruelty of those days. This is a part of history—women's history—that should never be forgotten.” —Lisa See, *New York Times* bestselling author of *China Dolls*

“This is the kind of book I wish I had the courage to write—a profound, unsettling, and thoroughly captivating look at sisterhood through the dark lens of the Holocaust. *Lilac Girls* is the best book I've read all year. It will haunt you.” —Jamie Ford, *New York Times* bestselling author of *Hotel on the Corner of Bitter and Sweet*

“Rich with historical detail and riveting to the end, *Lilac Girls* weaves the lives of three astonishing women into a story of extraordinary moral power set against the harrowing backdrop of Europe in thrall to Nazi Germany. Martha Hall Kelly moves effortlessly across physical and ethical battlegrounds, across the trajectory of a doomed wartime romance, across the territory of the soul. I can't remember the last time I read a novel that moved me so deeply.” —Beatriz Williams, *New York Times* bestselling author of *A Hundred Summers* and *The Secret Life of Violet Grant*

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

âœ“Harrowing . . . Lilac illuminates.âœ“ âœ“People Â âœ“A compelling, page-turning narrative . . . Lilac Girls falls squarely into the groundbreaking category of fiction that re-examines history from a fresh, female point of view. Itâ€™s smart, thoughtful and also just an old-fashioned good read.âœ“ âœ“Fort Worth Star-Telegram Â âœ“A powerful story for readers everywhere . . . Martha Hall Kelly has brought readers a firsthand glimpse into one of historyâ€™s most frightening memories. A novel that brings to life what these women and many others suffered. . . . I was moved to tears.âœ“ âœ“San Francisco Book Review Â âœ“Extremely moving and memorable . . . This impressive debut should appeal strongly to historical fiction readers and to book clubs that adored Kristin Hannahâ€™s *The Nightingale* and Anthony Doerrâ€™s *All the Light We Cannot See*.âœ“ âœ“Library Journal (starred review) Â âœ“[A] compelling first novel . . . This is a page-turner demonstrating the tests and triumphs civilians faced during war, complemented by Kellyâ€™s vivid depiction of history and excellent characters.âœ“ âœ“Publishers Weekly Â âœ“Kelly vividly re-creates the world of RavensbrÃ¼ck.âœ“ âœ“Kirkus Reviewsâœ“Inspired by actual events and real people, Martha Hall Kelly has woven together the stories of three women during World War II that reveal the bravery, cowardice, and cruelty of those days. This is a part of historyâ€™s womenâ€™s historyâ€™s that should never be forgotten.âœ“ âœ“Lisa See,Â New York TimesÂ bestselling author ofÂ *China Dolls* Â âœ“This is the kind of book I wish I had the courage to writeâœ“ a profound, unsettling, and thoroughly captivating look at sisterhood through the dark lens of the Holocaust. Lilac Girls is the best book Iâ€™ve read all year. It will haunt you.âœ“ âœ“Jamie Ford, New York Times bestselling author of *Hotel*

on the Corner of Bitter and Sweet Â â œRich with historical detail and riveting to the end, Lilac Girls weaves the lives of three astonishing women into a story of extraordinary moral power set against the harrowing backdrop of Europe in thrall to Nazi Germany. Martha Hall Kelly moves effortlessly across physical and ethical battlegrounds, across the trajectory of a doomed wartime romance, across the territory of the soul. I canâ™t remember the last time I read a novel that moved me so deeply.â•â "Beatriz Williams, New York Times bestselling author of A Hundred Summers and The Secret Life of Violet Grant

Martha Hall Kelly is a native New Englander now living in Atlanta, Georgia, where sheâ™s writing the prequel to Lilac Girls. This is her first novel.

It has been a long time since I've read a novel this moving. The story alternates between three characters. Caroline Ferriday, socialite and former actress in New York, works at the French embassy as WWII starts. The book features a romance between her and a French actor, and this story weaves in and out, not seeming to connect until at last it does. However, you don't mind your time with Caroline, although she is not the most compelling figure. By far, that would be Kasia, spunky Polish teenager, who wants to be part of fighting the Germans and is caught up in the Polish underground. Before long, her boyfriend, sister and mother are all arrested and sent to a women's concentration camp for "re-education", a place where Nazi doctors performed unsavory operations on human subjects. This story reminds us all of the horror of Nazi Germany, of the huge numbers of people they killed, of all nationalities and backgrounds, and of the madness that Hitler was able to convince so many people to believe. Kasia throughout the story is brave, tough, but not entirely unbroken. Finally, the most gut-wrenching parts of the story involve Herta, a Nazi doctor that somehow convinces herself that she is doing the right thing, the patriotic thing. It was so sickening to read that sometimes I had to put the book down and look away, as much as Kasia's sections sucked me in and kept me turning pages. She's an anti-heroine, but it's still important to understand her story, and what drove her - and she is a key part of the total story that is told. Don't worry - she doesn't get away with it and you never truly sympathise with her. The book was well-written and apparently well-researched judging by the notes. The author was a former journalist and that shows the mark of it, and yet, it reads as fiction even though many of the characters were real people of that time period.

Really liked this book as it gave a perspective to those persecuted under Hitler that were not

Jewish. The book is written from the perspective of 3 individuals -- a woman in NYC trying to help the French children; a Polish woman and her family who were sent to one of the worst "re-education camps" where horrific experiments were done on healthy individuals (most of them non-Jewish); and from a female German doctor who worked at that re-education camp. It follows their stories through some years. It was only AFTER reading the book that I found out that this was the true story of each of these 3 women. It is historical fiction because these were not their words and there is one fictional character that the author developed. This along with "Above the East China Sea" by Sarah Bird were my 2 favorite books this summer. Wish I could find more like these. If you liked "Sarah's Key" you will definitely like this book.

Best book I have read this year! Absolutely enthralling, intriguing and insightful. I learned a piece of history I never knew about while reading this very well written and researched book. I love novels that are entwined around actual events. This novel follows three women, Caroline Ferriday, Herta and Paul Amirson, and Kasia Kuzmerick, starting in 1939. How these women are impacted by World War II and how their lives intersect is the crux of this amazing story. I have read many books set in this same time frame, but this book came from three perspectives that I had not read before. After the first few chapters I was totally hooked. I highly recommend this book to anyone, but especially to those who like books like "The Nightingale" by Kristin Hannah or "Sarah's Key" by Tatiana de Rosnay. Perfect for book clubs. There is so much in this book that would lend itself to great discussions. If I were you, I would pre-order this book.

I have visited Ravensbrück with a choral group to participate in Remembrance Day ceremonies about seven years ago. The descriptions of the camp in the book brought so much back to mind about our solemn visit - the lake, the factory building, the cement rollers, the road into the camp, and more. Many events rang true to what we saw. I also learned more from this book about the "experiments" in the camp. I appreciated the Afterword about what was historical in the novel. The technique of character chapters in a rotation to advance the plot is a technique that is being overused in recent novels. Thank you, Martha Hall Kelly, for taking this on. The topic can possess us.

The author takes us through a journey back to the horrifying atrocities that occurred during Hitler's reign. What these women went through was worse than Hell, but they survived and received redemption. Well written...one of the best books I have ever read!

This book painted a true picture of the era. It is based on some real heroes and their stories. The character depictions were excellent. This made you see all sides of WWII thinking and justifications. I loved the book. It was realistic, gritty, brave, and heartwarming. We should never forget what happened.

I really enjoyed this book. The characters are very interesting. It was interesting learning about the resistance to WW2 from the Polish perspective, which is seldom written about. It was also interesting to learn about attitudes of Americans before France was invaded. I recommend this book.

Thought this would be just one more WWII Nazi prisoner of war story but it turned out to be one of a kind. Wonderful historical detail ... Captured the spirit of the time at home and abroad... Good suspense. Read it!

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