



## The Alice Network

*Kate Quinn*

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## **The Alice Network** Kate Quinn

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.

## **The Alice Network Details**

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Author : Kate Quinn

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## From Reader Review The Alice Network for online ebook

### Jennifer Masterson says

"The Alice Network" was a nice escape for me. I enjoyed one part of the book but not the other. There are two storylines going on. I absolutely loved the story in 1915 but the story in 1947 was just OK for me. I didn't like the character of Charley nor that storyline. I'm not a huge fan of historical fiction so maybe it's just me. A lot of people loved this book.

I listened to the audio version. The narrator was very good. No problems there.

WWI storyline - 5 Stars

WWII storyline- 2.5 Stars

If you enjoy historical fiction you might really like this book.

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### Lindsay - Traveling Sister says

2.5 stars. I'm disappointed in myself for not enjoying this more than I did. I really thought I would love this book, yet I barely even liked it.

I really enjoyed learning about The Alice Network and that amazing piece of history involving female spies. These women were brave secret agents leading double lives during WWII aiding their country in uncovering highly classified information. These unsung heroes risked their lives as much as any soldier on the battlefield and I have so much admiration and respect for them. The Author's Note at the end of the book was wonderful in explaining a lot of historical detail and once I read that, I decided to round up to 3 stars instead of down to 2 stars.

While I enjoyed the educational piece of this novel, I had a very hard time connecting with the storyline and characters. The 1947 storyline centered around Charlie who I had a very hard time with. Her character was highly unlikeable and unrealistic to me, her actions often making me cringe in disgust. She was very selfish and immature and I couldn't find even one ounce of sympathy for her. There were a few things about her character and storyline that I wondered why the author chose to include - they seemed unnecessary and took away from the seriousness of the story for me. I grew to dread reading Charlie's chapters after about the halfway mark. She really took away from my overall enjoyment of this novel.

I know I am in the minority with my feelings toward this book, so please read the numerous other raving reviews before making a decision and please visit the Traveling Sisters link listed below to see how our group had varying reactions and opinions of this book. It was an incredible experience to read this along with my Traveling Sisters Brenda, Norma, Susanne and JanB.

To find our full Traveling Sister Read review, please visit Norma and Brenda's fabulous blog at:

<https://twogirlslostinacouleereading....>

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## Eleanor says

Oh dear! I slogged through about 150 pages of this 500 page book before giving up. It purports to be historical fiction, set partly in 1915 and partly in 1947. I say purports, because just telling us the date won't really convince the reader, 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? Who knew?

The story of Louise de Bettignies, working as a spy in France and Belgium during the Great War, deserves to be told, but told well. A lot of people seem to have enjoyed this book. I wasn't one of them.

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## Emily May says

*"Facing a pistol-wielding murderer does tend to put parents further down the list of things to be intimidated by."*

The Alice Network, to put it plainly, is too long a book for one of its two perspectives to not work for me. Most of my three star ratings are "I liked it, but...", though in this case it's more that I liked roughly half of the book and had to force myself not to skim through the other chapters.

Many historical books use the perspectives of two characters more successfully than this one, in my opinion. The first that springs to mind is Orphan Train, a book that also uses two female characters to tell stories in two very different time periods. In this book, Eve's tale during World War I is so gripping and dangerous that the story noticeably slows down and becomes dull when we are forced to return to Charlie's perspective in 1947.

In 1915, Eve Gardiner is recruited as a spy in the Alice Network, based on the very real story of Alice Dubois who led an espionage team in Lille during the First World War. Eve is a fiery character who refuses to be held back by conventional gender roles and the speech impediment she has struggled with her whole life. Going undercover during the German occupation of north-east France, Eve must play a part and, at times, lie through her teeth.

Years later, embittered and drunk, Eve still has nightmares. Then the air-headed American socialite - Charlie St. Clair - walks into her life, demanding to know what happened to her cousin Rose during the Second World War. Eventually, the two women's stories begin to overlap, but there's a whole lot of Charlie's whining and self-pitying to sit through before that happens.

Eve's story is **absolutely fascinating**. Female secret agents sneaking around under the enemy's nose makes Charlie's road trip to find her cousin seem bland in comparison. One half of this book is a thrilling and terrifying historical adventure; the other half is a love story and an overlong journey across France.

It didn't help that Charlie herself was bratty, immature and selfish. I rolled my eyes so many times during her chapters. And when you consider that this is a 500+ page book, that makes approximately 250 pages that I was reading just to make it through to the good stuff.

The ending pulls the two stories together, but I think by then it was a little too late for me.

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## L A i N E Y says

**Steel blades such as you and I do not measure against standards for ordinary women.**

### Louise de Bettignies

If this book was an anime, Charlie St. Claire would be what we call ‘filler’: A character or episode that is non-canon and was just *there* to make the anime longer, hence, filler.

This is, of course, absolutely a personal experience but Charlie’s chapters more often than not were always always *in the way* of the bigger, more important action. I felt like I spent half the book trying to get her out of the way.

Eve, on the other hand, was an excellent main character. She was scared out of her mind but she pushed on. If the book was told from Eve’s and Lili’s perspective then it would have been so much more. **The bravery and courage was simply astounding, then you find out in ‘acknowledgement’ section that the novel actually drew heavily from real accounts of Violette..... Speechless.**

War is the real beast: so ugly and leaves no one untouched, one way or another. How lucky I am to have to be born in a time of ‘peace’.... Owed to these inspiring women (and men). I am so grateful.

**“What about your war?”**

**Because everyone’s war was different.**

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## Angela M says

I was introduced to an aspect of war that I haven’t read much about - espionage, and even less so to an aspect reflecting the courage and intelligence and iron will of women serving as spies during WWI. Two time frames are connected even though there are two different wars, through the character of Eve Gardiner . She meets Charlie St. Clair in 1947 and we become privy to Eve’s fascinating and intriguing life as a spy in 1915 during WWI. Charlie is searching for her cousin Rose, who was living in France during WWII and has not been heard from since. While Eve plays a major role in the more current time frame, at first reluctantly

helping Charlie, it is the story of her past that is the most gripping. Having said that I was drawn to Charlie's story as well and admired her persistence and independent spirit. I was on the edge of my seat as Eve puts herself in danger to learn enemy secrets and I held my breath during one horrific scene.

I've read novels about female spies in Code Name Verity and a couple of the Clara Vine stories by Jane Thynne during WWII but this is the first I've read of women spies in WWI and to say I was pulled into this story is putting it mildly. It's over 500 pages and not once did I feel as though the stories were dragged out. In fact it was hard to put down. While the main characters in this novel are fictitious, there are some real people in the story and one of them is the spy known as Alice Dubois, for whom the network of brave women is named (<https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Louis...>). The real people depicted here as well as knowing that many of the circumstances were true make this so much more meaningful. The author is well known for historical fiction about Rome and I hope to read some of these as well.

I received an advanced copy of this book from William Morrow/HarperCollins through Edelweiss.

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### **Lucy Langford says**

*"There are two kinds of flowers when it comes to women," Eve said. "The kind that sit safe in a beautiful vase, or the kind that survive in any conditions . . . even in evil. Lili was the latter. Which are you?"*

This book brings together two incredibly different women; one, a female spy recruited in WW1 for the Alice Network to spy on those involved in the occupation in France during 1915. The other, an unconventional American socialite, pregnant, and in search for her missing cousin who disappeared in France during WW2. It is 1947 when the 'yank' bursts into the 'spies' derelict house and the two women come face to face, both with a connection to ghosts that they are chasing.

The timeline of the book shifts between 1915 and 1947. In 1915 Eve Gardiner wants nothing more than to join the fight, but is dismayed when all of the posters and recruitment's only want male fighters. Instead she is unexpectedly recruited and trained as a spy and is sent to enemy, occupied France. Here she meets the mesmerising head of The Alice Network, "Alice Dubois" (AKA Lili, real name: Louise de Bettignies) and is working with other secret women agents right under the enemies noses. During Eve's time here, the information collecting and passing information, going undetected, is riddled with danger and the reader gets a real sense of dread and anxiety for these women and the tasks that they face.

Switching to 1947, Eve Gardiner is traumatised by the ending of The Alice Network and what she has witnessed and endured during both World Wars. She spends her days drunk and secluded in a dark, crumbling London House. One day, suddenly, Charlie St Clair; the American socialite, barges into Eve's life on a mission of her own and uttering a name that Eve has not heard in decades, shocked, they both begin to work together to uncover the truth. The point of view of 1947 is mainly told from Charlies view.

This book is a tale of retribution and revenge, as well as being able to forgive oneself. It tells a woman's story of how society treated women during these time periods. Both time lines specifically dealt with pregnancies in countries where abortion was not yet legal and unwed mothers are seen as shameful. This book also focused on how PTSD effected both female leads, either directly or through family members suffering, and how this disorder was not effectively discovered, diagnosed or treated.

I found this book showed the strong backbone of war through women's work, featuring brave and resilient women characters. It showed the suffering of character's as they endured human rights violations and crimes against humanity, the severe torment they had to go through. The characters of those involved in the Alice Network, Eve and Louise de Bettignies, were completely fascinating characters, consistently risking ones life to get a message to British Captains and going undetected when gaining information.

This book had utterly exquisite story telling and it is amazing how much information the author lifted from true life. For example, while Eve Gardiner and Charlie St Clair are fictional, Louise de Bettignies "The Queen of Spies" and the Alice Network were real and operational during WW1.

This was a whirlwind of a story and was unputdownable.

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### **Erin says**

Find this and other reviews at: <http://flashlightcommentary.blogspot....>

Do you know what happens when one of your favorite authors leaves her usual stomping grounds and tackles your favorite period of world history? First, you geek out like the nerd you are. Then worry sets in and you start to psyche yourself out over whether or not the novel will live up to your inflated expectations. After that, you vacillate back and forth between the two. This continues until you actually get opportunity to read the book and are put out of your misery. I know because that's exactly what happened when I discovered Kate Quinn was writing about World War II.

It was horrible. The highs and lows of my anticipation put Tim Curry to shame, but I was offered an unexpected reprieve in the form of a simple blue ARC. My copy lacked the author's notes and the attractive jacket, but the story was there and that was all I needed. I inhaled the book in single sitting and then, just because I could, I read it again. I didn't take notes on the first pass which is unusual for me. I intended to, but my infamous notebook was actually blank when I finished the final page and looking back, I'm glad I didn't write my review then and there as my thoughts on my first read were remarkably different than those on my second.

Quinn's signature humor was abundant, but the rhythms of The Alice Network are very different than those of her earlier works. I was confused by that on my first pass, but I grew a deep appreciation for it on my second. I loved the characters, Eve, Lili, and Finn had me rolling on floor more often than I care to admit, but the thematic ideas Quinn played with over the course of the novel felt larger and more comprehensive than anything I'd seen from her before.

I was tickled by the appearance of a Legonda LG6, but the car itself was a superficial detail that could have been dropped into any story. The fabric of the narrative, however, speaks to a much deeper understanding of the period than the car and/or cover description suggests. Half the narrative takes place during World War I while the other unfolds just after World War II. Anyone who has studied the politics will tell you the two conflicts are intrinsically related, but as a fan of war era fiction, I can attest that few authors attempt to illustrate the relationship in a single narrative. Though she avoids deep diving into the political side of things, Quinn treats the two wars as continuing chapters in the lives and experiences of her cast and while I'm not sure every reader will appreciate the subtle nuance, I was personally very impressed with the thematic

parallel.

I freely admit that some portions of the narrative are slower than others. In terms of tension, Quinn's work can't be compared to spy novels like *Code Name Verity*, but the personal journeys and conflicts faced by each character offer a different sort of intrigue. There are moments, carefully scattered throughout the story, that leave one on edge of their seat, but it is the characters and how they are shaped by their experiences that captivates the imagination.

Would I recommend the book? Whole-heartedly and without hesitation. I expected this novel to be well-written and I expected an exhaustive level of research to be evidenced in the final product. Quinn delivered on both, but she also managed level of creativity, depth and authentic human emotion that caught me entirely off guard.

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### **Malia says**

"Facing a pistol-wielding murderer does tend to put parents further down the list of things to be intimidated by."

? Kate Quinn, *The Alice Network*

This is a very short review, but I couldn't stay completely silent on this book. *The Alice Network* is excellent, and I might go so far as to say it is among my favorite this year, or even among my favorite historical fiction novels ever. It had everything I wanted - mystery, history, adventure, drama, romance, wit - and though it is quite long, I was never bored. I borrowed this from the library, but will buy a copy now, because I just liked it so much. Highly recommended, Kate Quinn has a new fan!

Find more reviews and bookish fun at <http://www.princessandpen.com>

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### **Liz says**

What a fascinating story! And to discover it's based on a real woman, Louise de Bettignies or Alice Dubois. I love a good historical novel and this one ranks right up there. Telling two parallel tales, one of several female spies in Lille during WWI, the other of a pregnant college student looking for her cousin who went missing after the end of WWII. Eve Gardiner, one of the spies, is the link between the two stories. Both stories held my interest, which is a feat. I usually find with dual stories that one is more interesting than the other. I loved reading about what the spies were able to accomplish and the risks they were willing to take to achieve their information. This is a sad but ultimately redeeming tale of strength and courage.

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### **Susanne Strong says**

3 Stars.

The Alice Network was a Traveling Sister Group Read with Norma, Brenda, Lindsay and JanB. The sisters

were split on this one, which was quite interesting!

The Premise of The Alice Network is a fascinating one: a historical novel based on the true story of a female spy network which took place during World War I. The best part of it for me however, was reading it with my sisters.

This is a novel told in two timelines.

In 1915: Eve Gardiner and Lilli are spies: Eve is a seemingly innocent, yet brilliant woman who becomes a spy for the Alice Network at the height of World War I. She lies easily and laughs in the face of danger. Eve is funny, tough resilient. A survivor. Lilli teaches Eve everything she needs to know. And Lilli is the best and the brightest female spy ever.

The war, however was tough. Hard fought as well all know. Years later, Eve is angry - a gun toting shell of her former self.

In 1947: Charlie is a young teenage girl who, after getting pregnant, is thrown out of her New York home because of her “situation.” Searching for her cousin Rose, Charlie treks to London. There she meets Eve Gardiner and Finn (her cook and driver). They all form a bond. However, Charlie is childish, idiotic, immature and cringe-worthy, even: calling her child the “little problem,” getting drunk every single night while extremely pregnant, She also had sexual relations with several young men during time period, which frankly just didn’t fit the novel, in my opinion.

Eve’s story was fabulous, had the book been just about her, I would have given it 5 stars. Charlie’s story ruined it for me however (I gave hers 2 stars). The author’s note added a lot to the story, which made me raise the novel to 3 stars.

For the full Traveling Sister’s Group Read Review, please see Norma and Brenda’s blog:  
<https://twogirlslostinacouleereading....>

Published on Goodreads and Twitter on 10.9.17

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### **Dorie - Traveling Sister :) says**

THIS AUTHOR HAS A NEW BOOK COMING OUT IN FEBRUARY, "THE HUNTRESS", I HIGHLY RECOMMEND READING THIS NOVEL WHICH IS NOW IN PAPERBACK". INCREDIBLE HISTORICAL FICTION!

I really loved this book. I hadn't read anything about women spies during WWI, lots about WWII, so this was unique. The characters were great, well described with lots of depth of understanding of what it was to be them.

I think this is one of the best historical fiction novels I have read this year. I will write a longer review and post to social media soon. I just wanted to get this posted so you will all still have time to request it!

There are so many great characters it's hard to say who my favorite is. The main protagonists are Charlie St. Clair who has just left her parents as they were checking into a suite in England. They are there to settle Charlie's "little problem" and then she can reappear for the Fall semester of school without anyone being the wiser. But Charlie has other ideas and when she flees the hotel she starts her search for her lost cousin, Rose, whom she was extremely close to in childhood. She is stated as missing and Charlie very much wanted to know whether she was killed or is still alive.

Eve Gardiner is the first contact that Charlie had to start her search. Eve we fairly quickly learn was a spy during WWI. She and her network of female spies are part of "The Alice Network" . The entire story of how Eve got recruited by Captain Cameron, her training and her "work" in German occupied France is vividly described and very interesting.

The book alternates chapters between Charlie and Eve, both stories were enticing to read and I did find myself reading quickly to get back to the other character, but I liked them equally well. They were both courageous and intelligent women and their stories are unique.

I would highly recommend this historical fiction novel even based on the characters alone, but I know you will enjoy the plot!

Thank you to Edelweiss who provided me with an ARC from the publisher.

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### **Brenda - Traveling Sister says**

4 stars for Norma and I

3 Stars for our Traveling Sisters

Traveling Sister Group read with Norma, Susanne, Lindsay and JanB

We read this book along with three of our Traveling Sisters and Norma & I ended up having different feelings about this novel than our other sisters did leaving us lost in the coulee without our sisters as we enjoyed this a little bit more than they did.

The Alice Network is an interesting, fascinating, and an extraordinary historical fiction novel that is centered around a spy network of women lead by the remarkable Louise de Bettignies or Alice Dubois as she was known within this network of spies.

The story is told in two separate timelines from our two main characters perspectives, Eve and Charlie bringing the two stories together in the end. Kate Quinn does a fantastic job here with Eve's character and storyline as her character was fascinating, interesting, and compelling to read.

The story told from emotional, broken, grief and guilt-stricken Eve's perspective we learn her backstory and her part in The Alice Network. This was our favorite part of the story as we really enjoyed the friendships here and their deep connection that they had with each other. Eve's character and her perspectives we felt were the strongest part of this story. We really could feel and see their loyalty and how protective they were of each other. We loved how the Kate Quinn gave her a stutter and it really showed how she was able to use that to her advantage. The characters involved in this storyline were Eve, Lili and Vivian who are remarkable and memorable characters.

Now for Charlie's perspective, we didn't enjoy her storyline as much as we did Eve's and this became a big part of our discussion. We all agreed we had some concerns with her character and this is where our opinions differed as her character affected the enjoyment of the story for our traveling sisters. This is where we were left lost in the coulee with our thoughts by our traveling sisters. This affected their rating but not for Norma and I. We all agreed on some things to her storyline seemed out of place and didn't fit into that time period for us. They felt Charlie's character brought a little chick-lit to the storyline and that distracted them from the overall enjoyment of the story. There was a little eye rolling going on here with some parts of Charlie's story that had Brenda rolling her eyes too. Our sisters felt her character was too annoying, immature, and careless. Where Brenda and Norma felt she brought an important and interesting part to Eve's story as they came together which added an exciting and compelling element to the storyline. Now, this is where the story did pick up for our sisters and they did start to like and enjoy Charlie's character a little bit more.

The Alice Network made for an interesting group read and discussion that we all really enjoyed. We all agreed we really appreciated learning about the remarkable Alice Network. We recommend for group reads and for anyone looking to learn more about this very interesting part of history and the workings of this spy network of women.

All of our Traveling Sisters Reviews can be found on our sister blog:  
<http://www.twogirlslostinacouleereadi...>

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### **Diane S ? says**

In the last several years women from many different walks of life and ethnicities, and their integral contributions to the arts and science are being uncovered, recognized and brought to mainstream attention in books and movies. The Alice network, operating in France, is another such contribution, taking place during the first world war and was a spy network consisting of women. Women who put themselves in grave danger to collect information that the allies could use to defeat Germany.

I enjoyed the characters in this, became engrossed in their stories, such good characterizations; from the naive Charley, who shows tremendous growth during the course of this novel, to the irascible and hard drinking Eve, on to the delicious Finn, the Scotsman? with a delicious bu'ur, well all I can say about him is be still my heart. Eve's story takes us back to the first world war, when she was part of the Network and her horrific experiences at the hand of a profiteer. Charley's story takes place in 1947, when she is looking for her cousin Rose who went missing in France. Fantastic, though tense filled stories, what these women risked with so little reward nor recognition.

The authors afterward clearly defines what who and what events were actual people or happenings. I think you will be surprised at just how much of this was based on fact. I was and so much of which I had never heard. The ending was a bit over the top, but if ever a book deserved a somewhat schmaltzy ending, it is this one.

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### **Paula Kalin says**

I'm in the minority with this book. I did not like the author's writing and found The Alice Network to be repetitious and quite tiresome.

There is no doubt that historically women played an important role in WWI and WWII. Their courage, sacrifice, and strength should be rejoiced. This book, however, really wasn't about the history, it was all about 2 woman's silly behavior.

1947's Charlie St. Clair's story was so flip. Pregnant and single, drunk, sleeping around - these should not be the highlights of a book written on a very serious matter - heroism. Her journey to look for her cousin Rose was not believable. I had a real hard time with her pregnancy called her "little problem" throughout the book. Very immature at the least.

I enjoyed some of the 1915 escapades of Lili and Eve when spying on the Germans and their collaborators during WWI. However, I can't imagine the real Louise de Bettignes treating what she did every day so lightly. 1947's Eve wasn't written much better. PTSD should be treated in a more enlightening way. She needn't be a raving drunk.

I really felt this book should have been classified as YA. This was chick lit at it's worst. I think back to one of my favorite books on war, A Constellation of Vital Phenomena, where women are treated with dignity and have fierce loyalty.

1 out of 5 stars

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