



# A letter from the editor

Dear Reader,

One of the great joys of my editorial career has been working with *New York Times* bestselling author Pam Jenoff, a pillar in the category of World War II–set historical fiction. You may already be familiar with Pam from her pivotal debut, *The Kommandant's Girl*, or from her blockbuster sensation *The Orphan's Tale*, which has now sold almost half a million copies. But whether you're a familiar fan or new to Pam's work, you definitely won't want to miss her upcoming novel *The Lost Girls of Paris*.

Set against the backdrop of World War II and inspired by true events, *The Lost Girls of Paris* weaves the stories of three brave women and is centered on a ring of female spies on a daring mission in France. Filled with intrigue and adventure, love and betrayal, the novel is a perfect blend of rich historical detail and a gripping, emotional narrative. It's a fresh and exciting addition to the popular World War II genre and, I think, Pam's strongest and most compelling novel to date.

I'm delighted to share the enclosed materials—a note from Pam as well as some backstory about *The Lost Girls of Paris*. I hope you will join in our enthusiasm for this exceptional novel, and I thank you so much for your support of talented writers like Pam.

Sincerely,

*Erika Imranyi*

**Erika Imranyi**  
Editorial Director

Photo: Mindy Schwartz Sorasky



## A letter from the author

Dear Reader,

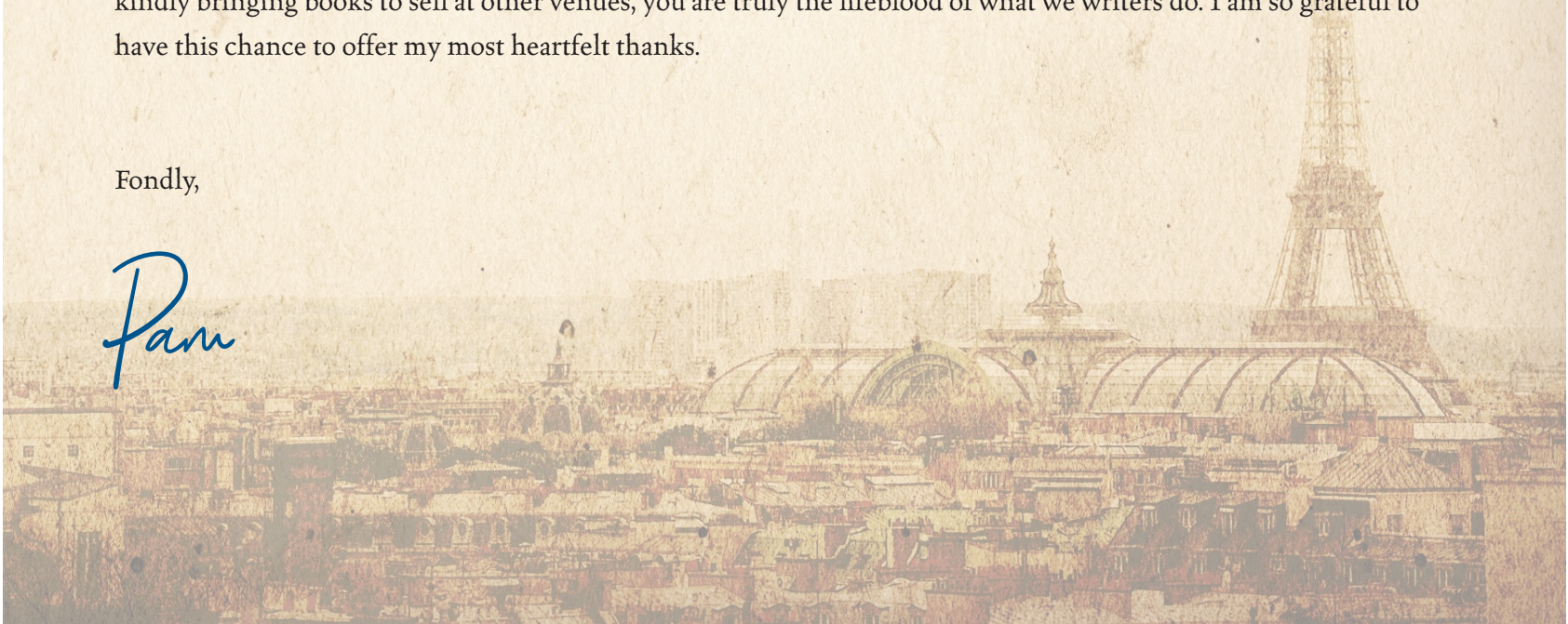
I'm delighted to share with you my new novel, *The Lost Girls of Paris*, which was inspired by the real-life story of the women who courageously deployed into occupied Europe for Britain's Special Operations Executive (SOE) to wage covert war on the Germans. These nearly forty women bravely fought alongside men as radio operators, couriers and saboteurs. And (no spoilers here!) after a series of unlikely betrayals, many of them disappeared and were never heard from again.

*The Lost Girls of Paris* is told from the points of view of three women. First, Marie Roux, a young single mother who makes the unfathomable decision to leave her daughter and serve as an SOE agent in the perilous months leading up to D-day. The book also tells the story of Eleanor Trigg, the SOE officer in charge of the female agents, who embarks after the war on a desperate quest to learn the fates of the women who never came home. Finally, we have the perspective of Grace Healey, a widow living in New York City in 1946 who finds an abandoned suitcase containing photos of twelve women and embarks on a quest to find out the truth about them.

I consider it a particular honor and joy to share *The Lost Girls of Paris* with you. Over the past decade of seeing my work published, I've been blessed to meet so many beloved, kindred booksellers, from my wonderful local constellation of independent bookstores to those whose stores I've been lucky enough to visit on tour or meet at various trade shows. Whether by hand selling or recommending my books online or on the shelf, hosting events or kindly bringing books to sell at other venues, you are truly the lifeblood of what we writers do. I am so grateful to have this chance to offer my most heartfelt thanks.

Fondly,

Pam



# The true story behind The Lost Girls of Paris



Those of you familiar with my earlier books may know that they center on two themes: first, I feel a deep connection to the World War II era as a result of my years in Europe spent working on Holocaust issues for the State Department. I consider my books love stories to the people who lived during this most momentous of times. Second, I enjoy writing about ordinary people (usually women) who under normal circumstances walked a certain narrow path, but through extraordinary world events found themselves tested and changed in ways they never would have imagined. It is wondrous to see how they respond and grow. So when I discovered the true story of the women who worked for Britain's Special Operations Executive during World War II, I knew I'd found the inspiration for my next book.



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In the wake of the fall of France and significant British intelligence blunders, a frustrated Winston Churchill created the Special Operations Executive (SOE). Their primary mission was sabotage and subversion behind enemy lines—or, as Churchill put it, to “set Europe ablaze.” SOE quickly found that male agents were too easily recognized and captured among the civilian populations. So they began recruiting women to deploy as agents.

Women from all walks of life in Britain were recruited and trained, then deployed into occupied Europe to undertake perilous work as radio operators, couriers and saboteurs. They made contact with partisans and other locals friendly to the cause, they armed resistance groups and they sabotaged German munitions, transit and military operations. These women were capable agents and earned the admiration of their male colleagues, many of whom had at first been skeptical that women could do the job.

The person who was primarily in charge of the female agents was Vera Atkins, a Romanian-born woman of Jewish descent who had emigrated to Britain in the late 1930s. Vera had joined SOE as a secretary and risen to the position of intelligence officer for F (French) Section. Atkins had an iron-clad memory and keen eye for detail that made her an ideal steward for the girls.

SOE operations, however, were a victim of their own success. As the

networks grew, intelligence protocols were compromised. And as the SOE missions became bigger and more aggressive, they became more visible to the Germans, who became increasingly focused on stopping and catching the SOE agents in a dangerous cat-and-mouse game. The actual collapse of SOE in France was a complicated series of events involving double agents, compromised circuits and betrayals by jealous lovers, and it is difficult to paint a comprehensive picture of the events leading up to the networks' demise. However, as a result of intelligence gaffes, the SOE agents were arrested in great numbers, including many of Vera's agents.

At the end of the war, about a dozen of the women were still missing. Vera traveled Europe looking for them (as well as the male agents who had not returned) and discovered that most had disappeared under the German Nacht und Nebel (Night and Fog) decree, a program created by Hitler to make high-ranking prisoners disappear forever without a trace. Vera was able to find out what had happened to her agents, several of whom had been executed by gunshot or injection in the camps. She was also able to bring their heroism to light and at last get them the posthumous recognition that they had been denied in life because of their lack of official status.

The exploits and heroism of the SOE women are so vast and varied that I couldn't possibly choose just one about which to write. So I created a composite of many of these remarkable women in Marie Roux, a single mother who chooses to leave her daughter and serve her country in order to secure a better future for them both. She deploys to France just before D-day. But when her network is betrayed and begins to implode, she is forced to risk everything in an act of selfless sacrifice she never could have imagined.

Marie's story could easily have filled the whole book. But there was another compelling woman whose story beckoned. Inspired by Vera Atkins, Eleanor Trigg is the enigmatic woman placed in charge of recruiting and deploying the female agents for SOE. In *The Lost Girls of Paris*, Eleanor is driven by a need to prepare and protect the girls when she deploys them—and later by a sense of responsibility and guilt when she is unable to protect them. Desperate for answers, Eleanor undertakes a feverish quest to find out what happened to the women who never returned, with an ironclad will to unleash the truth at any cost and bring their legacies home.

Tying these two narratives together is Grace Healey, a widow living alone in New York City in 1946, helping war refugees and trying to figure out what comes next. When she finds an abandoned suitcase in Grand Central containing photographs of twelve young women, she is drawn into the mystery of Eleanor and the agents who were lost during their daring missions. With the help of her husband's best friend Mark, she sets off on a quest to find out the truth about the women and, in the process, finds her own way forward.

Blending the stories of these three strong women across five cities and two continents was a challenge and a joy, and in weaving the delicate tapestry from their three strands, I learned much from each of them. The story proved to be both personal in getting to know them and global in the way the book's themes resonate in our world today. In the end, *The Lost Girls of Paris* is a book about truth and human courage and the power of friendship and love to bring out the best in each of us. I hope you love it as much as I do.

Fondly,

Pam

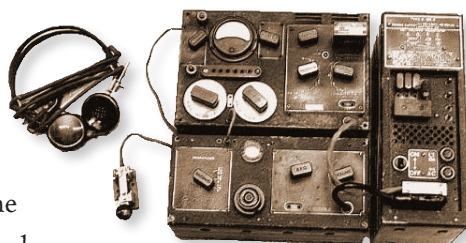


Photo: Hanedoes



# Discussion guide

1. The title, *The Lost Girls of Paris*, refers to twelve female intelligence agents who disappeared while on their missions overseas. But the title has greater significance as well. In what ways are the three lead characters—Grace, Marie, and Eleanor—lost, and how are they ultimately found?
2. The women in the novel defied common conventions about gender during the 1940s. How do you think the characters' experiences might have been different if they lived in today's world? In what ways might their experiences be similar?
3. Grace, Marie, and Eleanor have very different backgrounds and come from very different worlds. But what are some commonalities between them and their stories? Which of the three women did you relate to most closely and why?
4. Bravery and sacrifice are important themes throughout the book. In what ways did you see these themes playing out in each of the storylines?
5. Why do you think the mystery of the suitcase and its contents resonated so powerfully with Grace? If you found a mysterious suitcase abandoned in a train station, like Grace does, what would you do?
6. War makes ordinary people do extraordinary things – whether it's going to great lengths to survive, or sacrificing one's own life to save others. What impacts does the war have on the characters in the book? How might the characters' lives unfolded differently had the war not happened?
7. Each of the women in the book are put in a position of having to make a choice. Were there things you wished the women had done differently throughout the book or did you agree with their decisions?

“Pam Jenoff’s meticulous research and gorgeous historical world-building lift her books to must-buy status. Her latest interweaves the gritty World War II exploits of England’s female spies with the post-war struggle of damaged survivors trying to build new lives in the fallout of tragedy. An intriguing mystery and a captivating heroine make *The Lost Girls of Paris* a read to savor!”

—**Kate Quinn**, *New York Times* bestselling author of *THE ALICE NETWORK*

# Behind the book cover

by Kathleen Oudit

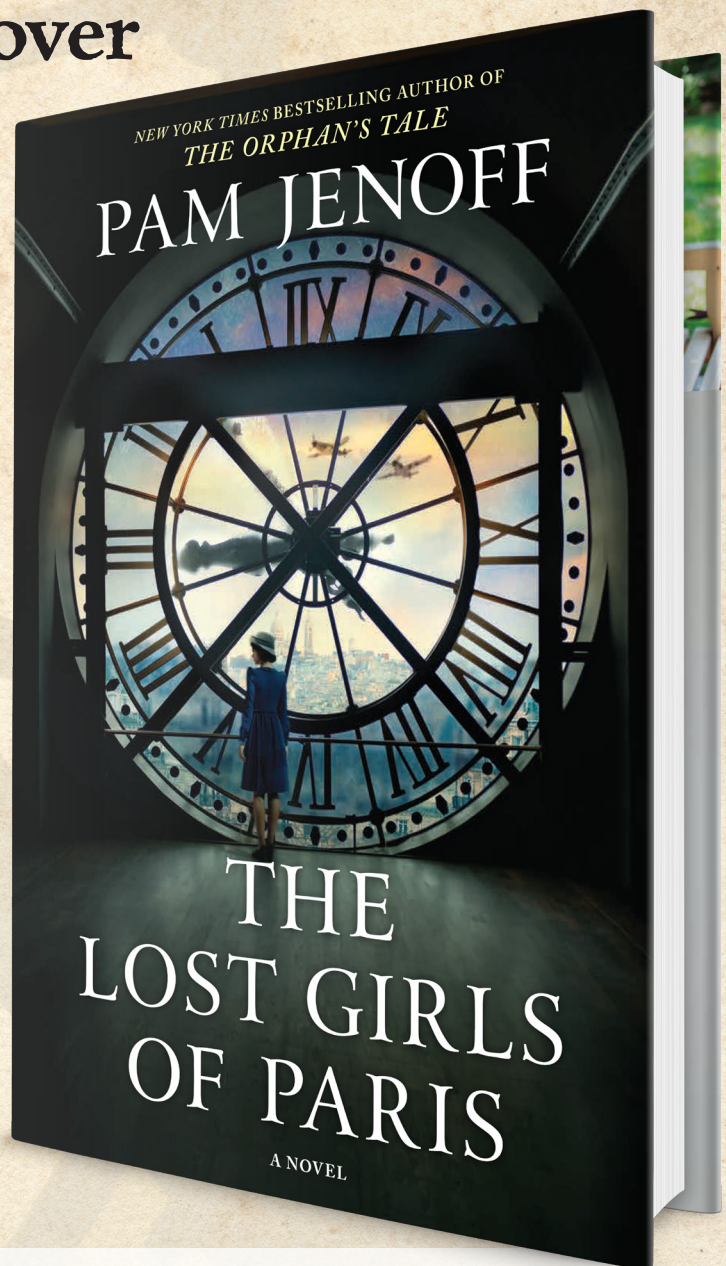
The challenge with historically set fiction is finding cover images that have era-appropriate details, yet won't inadvertently cue the book as a non-fiction history text book. And, when a novel follows women's journeys during World War II we must honor the characters' struggles, without casting them in pretty victim roles.

There is not an easy visual shorthand for this — women fought, but not often in battlefields; we cannot “just blow something up” to symbolize war.

Therefore it was thrilling to see the conceptual solution found by our book designer Quinn Banting.

The lone young woman waiting under the imposing D'Orsay clock, takes us directly to Paris, to mystery, and measures loss and hope in minutes.

**Kathleen Oudit** is an Art Director with Park Row Books and has worked on Pam Jenoff's *The Orphan's Tale* and the forthcoming *The Lost Girls of Paris*.



“In *The Lost Girls of Paris*, Pam Jenoff has used her finely honed story-telling skills to give us a smart, suspenseful, and morally complicated spy novel for our time. Eleanor Trigg and her girls are every bit as human as they are brave. I couldn't put this down.”

—**Jessica Shattuck**, *New York Times* bestselling author of *The Women in the Castle*