

Questions
Extras
Goodies
for Readers

A NOVEL

“A tour de force—
a book to treasure!”
—KATE QUINN,
New York Times bestselling
author of *The Rose Code*

VANESSA RILEY

Book Club Reader's Guide

ISLAND QUEEN

VANESSA RILEY

VANESSARILEY.COM

Table of CONTENTS

03 ABOUT VANESSA RILEY

Bit More About Vanessa's Life

04 BEHIND THE SCENES

A Little More about Vanessa, Pics, and Reading List Checklist

07 BOOK CLUB QUESTIONS

A Lot of Questions to Aid Discussions

12 PLAYLISTS

Music Feeds The Soul

13 RECIPE FUN

Some Yummy Recipes. Bake for Fun.

17 HOW TO HELP

How to Keep Up with Vanessa, Spread the Word, Learn More About Her Passions





VANESSA HERE!!!

I'm Vanessa Riley, and I'm beyond excited to share a glimpse into my world with you through this Book Club Reader's Guide for "Island Queen." As an author, I'm passionate about crafting stories that showcase the hidden histories of marginalized communities, celebrating strong sisterhoods, and vibrant multicultural communities.

While my background includes a doctorate in mechanical engineering from Stanford University and contributions to organizations like NASA and GM, my true passion lies in historical fiction, romance, and mystery. With over twenty-five titles to my name and each one being a labor of love, I'm thrilled to welcome you to my first historical fiction, first biographical fiction, *Island Queen*."

Within these pages, you'll find discussion questions to spark meaningful conversations, Spotify playlists curated to enhance your reading experience, behind-the-scenes glimpses into the novel's creation, and some delightful recipes inspired by research.

I can't wait for you to immerse yourself in the story of Dorothy Kirwan Thomas and her incredible life. Thank you for being a part of this journey .

Warm regards,
Vanessa Riley

BEHIND THE SCENES

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Vanessa Riley, a historian and avid traveler, immersed herself in research to the essence of the Island Queen.

Thank you for reading Island Queen. Dorothy Kirwan Thomas's story needed to be told. She should be in our history books. I loved researching Dorothy Kirwan Thomas, a strong Black woman who needs to be in our textbooks.

The discussion guide asks thought-provoking questions about the book, exploring the troubles and triumphs of this valiant person. Have a wonderful time chatting about Dorothy and thinking of the women like her whose stories need to be told.

Additionally, I've included the 'Baby Daddy' chart, as I know many find it helpful.

Do you have a favorite place you want to visit or have visited because of a book? Tweet, post on IG, or share however you like. Tag me if Caribbean is one of your favorites. Find my social handles on the last page of the guide. #BookLovers

BEHIND THE SCENES BEHIND THE SCENES BEHIND THE SCENES



Dorothy's Family Tree

BOOK CLUB QUESTIONS

- Before reading ISLAND QUEEN, had you read other books set in the colonial West Indies? What were your impressions about the time and place before you read Dorothy's story?
- What does Dorothy take away from her early years, enslaved by her father, living in the shadow of her parents' tumultuous and unequal relationship? How did her mother use what very little power she had to protect Doll and Kitty, and try to secure a better future for them?
- Early in the novel Dorothy says of John Coseveldt Cells, "I had a piece of his heart. I knew it. I gripped it in my hand. Didn't know if I'd have to give it back." How would you describe the long relationship between Dorothy and Cells? Why do you think he made the choices he did, particularly with regard to marriage and his children with Doll? If he had married Dorothy, how would their lives have changed?
- What did you make of Dorothy's relationship with Mr. Foden? Did he view her differently than the other men around her did? Was she right when she said "That man was better to me than my own flesh.' Better than the man I loved."?



BOOK CLUB QUESTIONS

- During an argument, Dorothy tells Cells “We are a mirror, two people who want the world, but I live in the truth. I live in my skin. My black skin.” How are Doll and Cells mirror images? Why does she throw the truth of his birth in his face in that moment? Does Doll live a more authentic life than Cells because the truth of her birth and her race cannot be hidden? How does that play out later in her relationship with their daughter Catharina, who was raised as White?
- Dorothy frequently suffers from deep depression after her children are born, which her mother says “...is the sadness, comes sometimes when you have children.” Do you know women who have suffered the same post-partum depression? Do we treat it differently in modern times?
- How does Doll’s life and fortune depend on her ability to leverage her relationships with the powerful men around her, from Foden, to Cells, Thomas, and Prince William? Are women today still dependent on their relationships with men for status and security? What has changed and what hasn’t?
- At her daughter’s wedding, Doll reflects: “Pure happiness couldn’t exist without sacrifice.” What do you think brings Doll pure happiness? What are the sacrifices she’s had to endure to achieve that happiness?
- Although she struggled to free herself from slavery, Doll later makes the decision to enslave others. “I tried to think I’d be better than these white men and women. I had to...do things that sickened me...I prepared to sell my soul. If I had to be a full member of the planter class, the slaveholding class, I’d be a better massa than them all.” Is she just deceiving herself? Can her decision to participate in slavery ever be justified? Did your opinion of Doll change when she crossed that line?

BOOK CLUB QUESTIONS

- When the Entertainment Society reaches out to Doll, she tells them, “All my life I’ve been singled out as that one woman, that one different from the rest. Now I’m sitting with women, good powerful women. And you want to help me. That’s different. I like this kind of different.” Why has it taken so long for Doll to develop bonds with women outside her own family?
- Why is her alliance with the Entertainment Society so transformative?
- When Dorothy, her daughters, and granddaughters appear in London society, she thinks, “Seeing colored girls led by me, a woman with beautiful jet skin invited to the prince’s ballroom, must be shocking, causing such stirs.” Why does Dorothy defy the whispers and proudly bring her family to take their place in that ballroom?
- At the end of the novel, Dorothy ultimately gets the assurances she wants from Lord Bathurst. Why do you think the author set up the novel with this story as the opening and closing? What about Dorothy’s life made her able to journey to the heart of the British Empire and defend her hard-won fortune?
- In the author’s note, Vanessa Riley writes “Finding Dorothy Kirwan Thomas, and the women of the Entertainment Society, and so many other Black women who had agency and access to all levels of power has restored my soul.” How does our understanding of history change when we focus on the stories of women like Doll and her peers? Why have their lives been left out of traditional history books, or novels about their time?

Feel free to use these questions to guide your book club discussions and delve deeper into the themes, characters, and storytelling elements of *Island Queen* by Vanessa Riley.

Book Club Suggestion Meeting Themes:

Vanessa here with some fun party ideas for your book club or reading group to create a dynamic experience! Don't forget to take pictures and share them on social media. You can even tag me! It's a wonderful way to spread the joy of reading.

01

HOST A HAT PARTY. INVITE READERS TO WEAR ANY TYPE OF HAT, ESPECIALLY EXTRAVAGANT ONES. TAKE PICTURES. POST TO SOCIAL MEDIA WITH THE HASHTAG #ISLANDQUEEN #BOOKCLUB

02

HOST HIGH TEA. ENJOY RICH CHAMOMILE AND OTHER HERBAL TEAS. PLATE TEA CAKES AND FINGER SANDWICHES, WHILE DISCUSSING ISLAND QUEEN

03

BE PART OF THE ENTERTAINMENT SOCIETY. HOST A SPECIAL DINNER. DRESS UP. TOAST WITH CHAMPAIGNE. TAKE PICTURES.

04

GET PICTURES OF THE PLACES DOROTHY TRAVELED. HAVE THEM IN YOUR LITERARY SALON. TAKE PICTURES WITH BOOK CLUB MEMBERS. THIS IS A TRAVEL NIGHT THEME.

Moody Joyful Fun Healing

PLAYLISTS

01

THE SONG LIST FOR ISLAND QUEEN

<https://spoti.fi/3Y2xKSd>



02

SISTERHOOD SONGS

<https://spoti.fi/3TEqRnb>



03

SONGS TO GET STRONGER

<https://spoti.fi/3zzxwHP>



Welcome to three specially curated song playlists just for you! Get ready to immerse yourself in a world of captivating songs and unforgettable emotions across these curated playlists!

RECIPE FUN

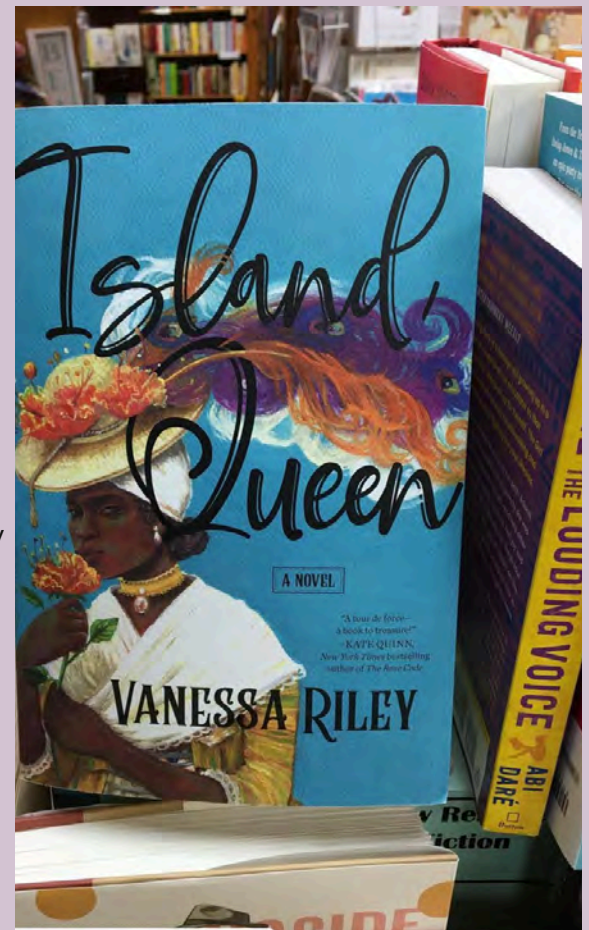
IN ISLAND QUEEN, BLACK CAKE IS MORE THAN JUST A DESSERT; IT'S A CULTURAL EMBLEM, A REFLECTION OF TRADITION PASSED DOWN THROUGH GENERATIONS.

Each slice tells a story, as unique as the hands that prepare it. The taste of Black Cake is a perfect blend of rich flavors—deep, dark notes of rum-soaked fruits, warm spices like nutmeg and cinnamon, and a hint of caramelized sweetness from molasses. The texture is dense yet moist, and is a testament to the quality of ingredients and the amount of aging. My grandmother buried hers for 3 months.

Every family's recipe varies, shaped by the nuances of their island or territory and the legacy of their ancestors. Enjoying a slice is not just indulging in a treat but savoring a piece of Caribbean history. Every bite whispers tales of love, resilience, and culinary artistry.

Ingredients:

- 1 pound mixed dried fruits (raisins, currants, prunes, cherries; no candied fruit)
- 1 cup rum
- 1 cup brandy
- 1 cup butter, softened
- 1 cup brown sugar
- 6 eggs
- 2 cups all-purpose flour
- 1 teaspoon baking powder
- 1 teaspoon ground nutmeg
- 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- 1/2 teaspoon ground cloves
- 1/2 teaspoon ground allspice
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1/2 cup breadcrumbs
- 1/4 cup molasses
- 1/4 cup browning sauce (optional, for color)



RECIPE FUN



INSTRUCTIONS:

1. CHOP THE MIXED DRIED FRUITS INTO SMALL PIECES. PLACE THE CHOPPED FRUITS IN A BOWL AND POUR RUM AND BRANDY OVER THEM. MIX WELL TO ENSURE ALL FRUITS ARE COATED. COVER WITH PLASTIC WRAP AND LET SOAK OVERNIGHT OR FOR AT LEAST 24 HOURS, STIRRING OCCASIONALLY.

PREHEAT YOUR OVEN TO 300°F (150°C). BUTTER A 9-INCH ROUND CAKE PAN OR RAMEKINS AND LINE WITH PARCHMENT PAPER.

IN A LARGE BOWL, CREAM TOGETHER THE SOFTENED BUTTER AND BROWN SUGAR UNTIL LIGHT AND FLUFFY. ADD EGGS ONE AT A TIME, BEATING WELL AFTER EACH ADDITION.

IN ANOTHER BOWL, SIFT TOGETHER THE FLOUR, BAKING POWDER, NUTMEG, CINNAMON, CLOVES, ALLSPICE, AND SALT.

GRADUALLY ADD THE FLOUR MIXTURE TO THE CREAMED BUTTER AND SUGAR, MIXING WELL AFTER EACH ADDITION.

STIR IN THE BREADCRUMBS, MOLASSES, AND BROWNING SAUCE (IF USING) UNTIL WELL COMBINED.

OLD IN THE SOAKED DRIED FRUITS AND ANY REMAINING LIQUID UNTIL EVENLY DISTRIBUTED THROUGHOUT THE BATTER.

POUR THE BATTER INTO THE PREPARED CAKE PAN, SPREADING IT EVENLY. BAKE IN THE PREHEATED OVEN FOR 2 TO 2.5 HOURS, OR UNTIL A TOOTHPICK INSERTED INTO THE CENTER OF THE CAKE COMES OUT CLEAN.

ALLOW THE CAKE TO COOL IN THE PAN FOR ABOUT 10 MINUTES, THEN TRANSFER IT TO A WIRE RACK TO COOL COMPLETELY.

AGING (OPTIONAL): FOR BEST FLAVOR, WRAP THE COOLED CAKE IN PARCHMENT PAPER AND THEN FOIL. STORE IN AN AIRTIGHT CONTAINER IN A COOL, DARK PLACE FOR SEVERAL DAYS OR UP TO A MONTH. THIS ALLOWS THE FLAVORS TO MELD AND INTENSIFY.

SLICE AND SERVE THE CARIBBEAN BLACK CAKE AT ROOM TEMPERATURE. IT CAN BE ENJOYED PLAIN OR WITH A DOLLOP OF WHIPPED CREAM OR A SCOOP OF VANILLA ICE CREAM.

RECIPE FUN



Here is something the Entertainment Ladies would approve.
Here is an easy guide to making a delicious charcuterie board.

Ingredients:

- Fancy Charcuterie Board or Big Cutting Board
- **Meats:**
 - Jerk Chicken Slices: Tender, spicy chicken marinated in jerk seasoning.
 - Jerk Pork: Slow-cooked pork marinated in jerk spices, sliced thin.
 - Pepperoni or Spicy Sausages: For a Caribbean twist, choose sausages with spicy flavors.
- **Cheeses:**
 - Jamaican Jerk Cheese: Cheese infused with jerk seasoning for a spicy kick.
 - Coconut Gouda: Creamy Gouda cheese with coconut flakes for a tropical touch.
 - Manchego: A versatile cheese that complements the flavors of the Caribbean.
- **Fruits:**
 - Pineapple: Fresh chunks of pineapple for a sweet and tangy contrast.
 - Mango Slices: Juicy mango slices add tropical sweetness.
 - Papaya: Another exotic fruit that pairs well with savory flavors.
- **Dips and Spreads:**
 - Mango Salsa: A mix of mango, red onion, and lime juice. (Optional add cilantro)
 - Guacamole: Avocado dip. (Optional add jalapeños or scotch bonnet peppers for heat)
- **Breads and Crackers:**
 - Hawaiian Rolls or Potato Rolls
 - Plantain Chips: Crispy chips made from thinly sliced plantains..
 - Cassava Bread: Traditional Caribbean bread made from cassava flour.
- **Accompaniments:**
 - Hot Pepper Jelly: Spicy-sweet jelly made with scotch bonnet peppers.
 - Chutneys: Mango or tamarind chutneys add a sweet and tangy element.
 - Pickled Vegetables: Spicy pickled vegetables like cucumbers or carrots.
 - Plantains: Fried Plantains
- **Garnishes:**
 - - Fresh Herbs: Sprigs of parsley for garnish and added flavor.
 - - Edible Flowers: Bright, tropical flowers for a decorative touch.

RECIPE FUN

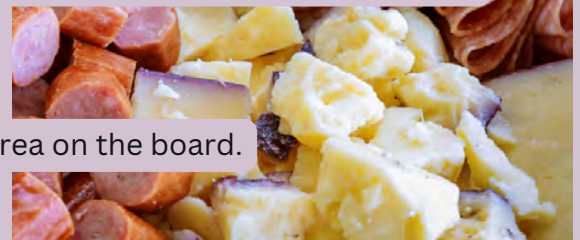


Instructions:

1. Prepare the Cheeses:

- Arrange the cheeses on a large wooden board or serving platter. Cut some into bite-sized cubes or slices and leave others whole for variety.

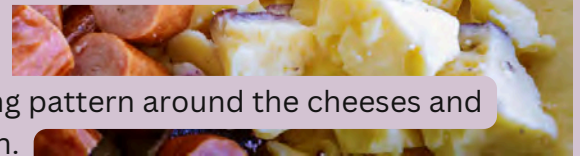
2. Add Meats:



- Place meats in between the cheese sections or in a separate area on the board.

3. Arrange Crackers and Bread:

- Place the crackers and slices of baguette in a visually appealing pattern around the cheeses and meats. You can stack some crackers vertically for height variation.



4. Set Accompaniments, Dips, and Spreads:

- Spoon the jellies, etc. into small bowls or jars and position them strategically on the board. If using pickled vegetables, place it in a separate dish with a small spoon for serving.

5. Include Fruits:

- Scatter fruits around the board, filling in any gaps. They add color and texture to complement the cheeses and meats.

6. Garnish and Serve:

- Finally, garnish the charcuterie board with fresh herbs and flowers for an aromatic touch.

Serving Tips:

- Temperature: Take the cheeses out of the fridge about 30 minutes before serving to allow them to come to room temperature for better flavor.

- Pairing: Serve with a chilled glass of white wine, coconut water or a rum punch (A fruity cocktail with rum, tropical juices, and grenadine) for a perfect accompaniment.

- Enjoy: Invite your guests to explore the flavors by combining different cheeses with jellies, and experimenting with different combinations of meats and nuts.

This combination will create a vibrant and flavorful charcuterie board that captures the essence of Caribbean cuisine and culture.

HOW TO HELP

Dive into the remarkable saga of Dorothy "Doll" Kirwan Thomas in *Island Queen*, a powerful Black woman who rose from enslavement to become a wealthy entrepreneur and advocate for women's generational wealth in Guyana. #IslandQueen #HistoricalFiction

Step into the vibrant world of Vanessa Riley's *Island Queen*, a gripping tale of resilience and ambition centered on Dorothy Kirwan Thomas, who defied odds to secure generational wealth for women in Guyana. #NewRelease #HistoricalNovel

Discover the untold story of Dorothy Kirwan Thomas in *Island Queen* by Vanessa Riley, a compelling narrative of triumph and empowerment that resonates through history. #MustRead #BiographicalFiction

Join the journey of Dorothy Kirwan Thomas in *Island Queen* by Vanessa Riley, as she defies odds and challenges society to leave an indelible mark on Caribbean history. #BookClubPick #HistoricalBiography

Delve into the rich tapestry of Dorothy Kirwan Thomas's life in *Island Queen* by Vanessa Riley, a testament to courage, ambition, and the pursuit of freedom in the Caribbean. #BookRecommendation #WomenInHistory



VANESSA IN KINGSTON VIEWING THE SITES.

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SOICAL MEDIA & MORE



Connect with me and join the conversation:

Website: <https://vanessariley.com>

Instagram:

<https://www.instagram.com/vanessarileyauthor/>



TikTok: <https://www.tiktok.com/@vanessarileyauthor>

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<https://www.facebook.com/VanessaRileyAuthor>

Twitter or X: <https://www.twitter.com/VanessaRiley>



Pinterest: <http://pinterest.com/regencymaid>

Feel free to reach out and share your thoughts! You can send me questions directly or even request a book club Zoom with Vanessa if time permits at <https://bit.ly/contactVanessaRiley>.



A full list of Vanessa's books can be found at

<https://bit.ly/VRbooks>.

Let's connect and dive deeper into the world of books together.

INFORMATION ON SICKLE CELL ANEMIA



Sickle Cell Anemia Awareness: A Cause Worth Supporting

Sickle Cell Anemia is a genetic disorder that has deeply impacted my family and close friends. Much like Tay-Sachs, it's a recessive genetic disorder that predominantly affects Black communities globally. The statistics are staggering; the American Sickle Cell Anemia Association reports that 1 in 365 African American babies are born with the disease, and 1 in 12 carry the trait. These numbers highlight the urgent need for awareness and support.

Join me in honoring those battling Sickle Cell Anemia every day. Here are three organizations leading the charge in research and support:

1. American Sickle Cell Anemia Association
2. St. Jude Children's Research Hospital - Sickle Cell Disease Treatment
3. Sickle Cell Disease Association of America, Inc.

Let's come together to raise awareness and work towards eradicating this ancient disease.

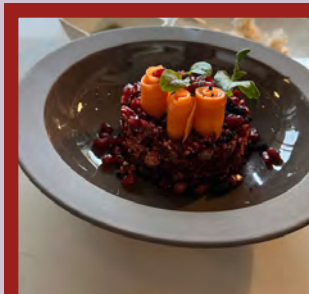
VANESSA'S QUOTE FOR TODAY

STAY FOCUSED AND CELEBRATE YOUR JOURNEY! YOU ARE

WORTHY!



BOOKSTORE FUN



COOKING & PORCH FUN

OPENING CREDITS & CAMEO IN
SENSE AND SENSIBILITY

Other Books By Vanessa Riley

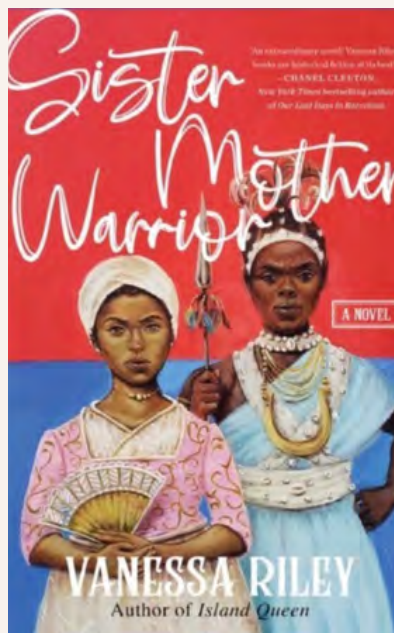
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Entertainment

CNN

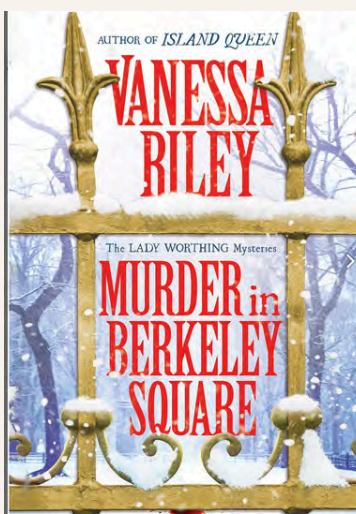
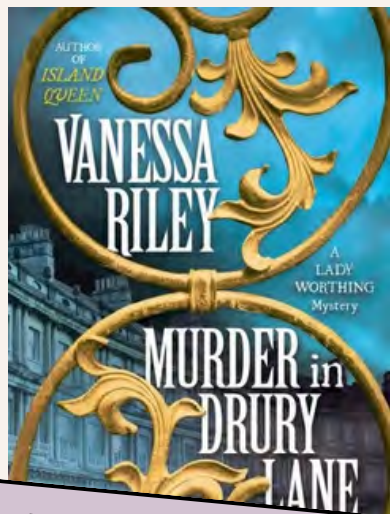
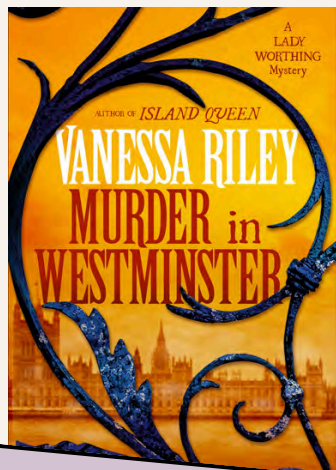
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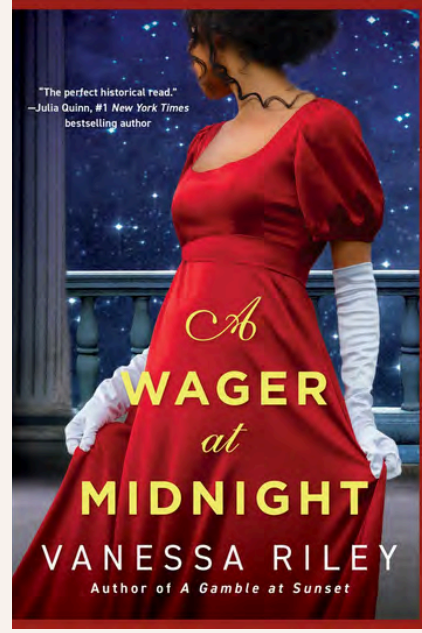
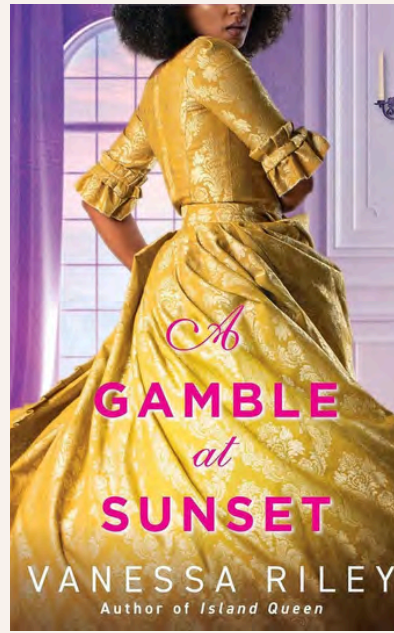
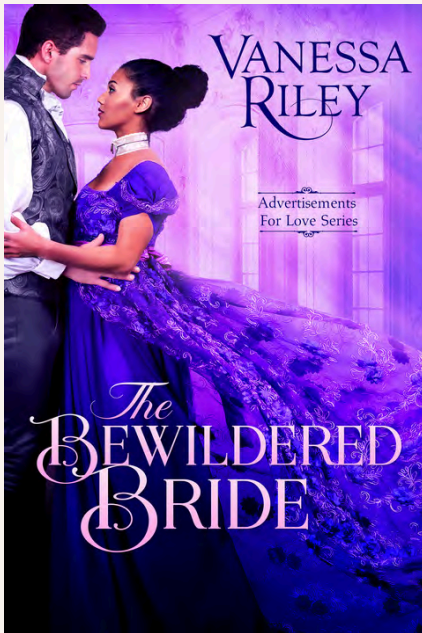
HISTORICAL ROMANCE

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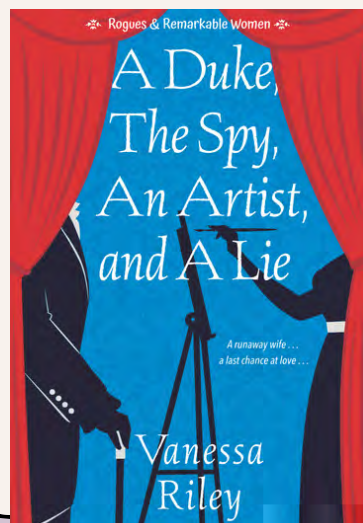
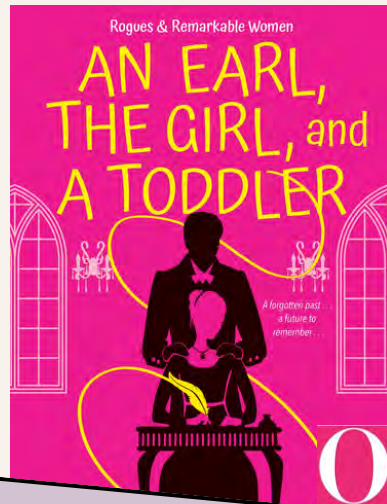
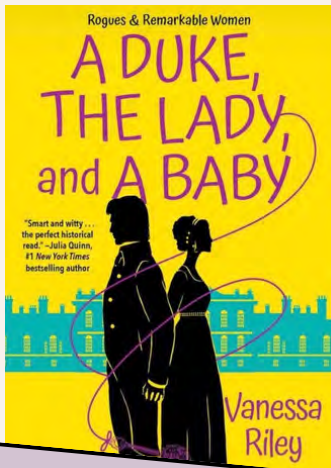


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