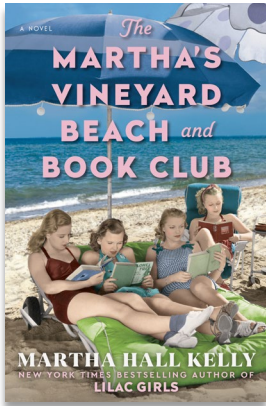


“This book is an ode to the human heart and the power of books to connect us—and no one writes about the sustaining cords of female friendships quite like Martha Hall Kelly.”

—Allison Pataki, *New York Times* bestselling author of *Finding Margaret Fuller*

Dear Editor/Producer:



*New York Times* bestselling author **Martha Hall Kelly** is beloved by fans all over the world for her immersive novels that transport readers to the past. Ever since her debut with *Lilac Girls*, which one critic praised as falling “squarely into the groundbreaking category of fiction that re-examines history from a fresh, female point of view,” Kelly has portrayed brave and determined women against real-life, meticulously researched historical backdrops.

Her fifth book, **THE MARTHA'S VINEYARD BEACH AND BOOK CLUB** (Ballantine hardcover; May 27, 2025) is her most personal work to date, as she based the narrative on many aspects of her mother's heritage. The novel discloses the true, little-known history of what took place on the island during the war—that German U-boats were cruising the surrounding waters and Nazi spies were sneaking ashore. At the novel's center are two sisters who start a book club that changes history, stoking a movement in their tight-knit community to hold strong against the German invaders.

The story unfurls via dual timelines to reveal a contemporary mystery that can only be solved by learning about the past. In 2016, grief-stricken by her mother's passing, Mari Starwood visits Martha's Vineyard to meet artist Elizabeth Devereaux and uncovers a surprising link to the Smith sisters—Cadence and Briar—whose lives were shaped by the war. In 1942, the sisters balance the challenges and rewards of running a farm and making ends meet, a wartime romance, and the growth of their book club, until a mysterious man arrives and changes the course of their lives.

“My mother's family settled on Martha's Vineyard and farmed there starting in 1891, and I've been going there regularly my entire life, so I have a strong emotional attachment to the island,” Martha shared. “And with my new book, I wanted to depict the authentic Martha's Vineyard that's not necessarily known by people who may consider it an elitist vacation destination. My Martha's Vineyard is a very down-to-earth, compassionate place, and the farmers and fishermen there have always been the backbone of the island.”

**THE MARTHA'S VINEYARD BEACH AND BOOK CLUB** is summer reading at its finest—a gorgeous, captivating novel with heart and substance that's a love letter to literature, to resilient women, and to a very special place. I urge you to make plans for review and feature coverage this summer, and Martha Hall Kelly is available for interview about the novel's real-life inspirations. I look forward to connecting with you about the possibilities.

Best wishes,



[MB Communications;](#)

(818) 678-6288 or [megan@meganbeatie.com](mailto:megan@meganbeatie.com)

### **ABOUT MARTHA HALL KELLY**

Martha Hall Kelly is the *New York Times* bestselling author of *Lilac Girls*, *Lost Roses*, *Sunflower Sisters*, and *The Golden Doves*. She was born and raised in Massachusetts, received Journalism degrees from both Syracuse and Northwestern Universities and worked as an advertising copywriter for many years before becoming a novelist. With more than two million copies of her books sold and translated in fifty countries, Martha lives in Litchfield, CT, Hobe Sound, FL, and New York City.

Visit her website at [www.marthahallkelly.com](http://www.marthahallkelly.com)

Instagram: [@marthahallkelly](https://www.instagram.com/marthahallkelly)

Facebook: [@marthahallkelly](https://www.facebook.com/marthahallkelly)



### **A Conversation with Martha Hall Kelly**

**Q: What are some of your family's true stories that you included in your book?**

A: So many! During the war my grandmother made her amazing donuts and sold them out front of their Vineyard farmhouse in order to make ends meet. Convoys of soldiers on their way to the Peaked Hill Army base would stop and buy the donuts, and my mother remembers "their boys" as being so handsome. She often told us how sad the whole island was when almost half of the soldiers never came home, since they were training on the Vineyard for Normandy since the coastlines are similar.

Also, my Uncle Sonny was a ball turret gunner during the war and was shot down over Italy and rescued by nuns. He inspired the character of Tom Smith. And my mother, who grew up on the Vineyard, always longed to leave, just like my character Cadence. Her best friends inspired Bess, and one, Shirley Kennedy is still alive today and fleshed out the stories my mom told me, and included some things my mother never did, like boyfriends my mother had and other stories.

**Q: What can you share about the research you did regarding Martha's Vineyard history?**

A: To research the mock invasions, I worked with the Cape Cod Military Museum in Falmouth, MA, The Martha's Vineyard Museum archives and Tom Dresser, who's a local Vineyard historian. His book, *Martha's Vineyard in WWII*, was incredibly helpful. I also gained access to some private letters and diaries that described the invasions first hand.

I'd grown up going to Lambert's Cove Beach where the invasions happened and hiking up to the former site of the Peaked Hill Army base, with no clue that so many soldiers used it as their base of operations on the island. When the top brass came from Washington to oversee the invasions, they stayed at the homes that surrounded the invasion area—places I passed regularly never knowing that so much history took place there, and that one day I'd write about it.

**Q: The Armed Services editions are an interesting part of the book—also based on a true story?**

A: Yes! They were miniature editions of books made just for the soldiers, which made some authors famous and I started acquiring them and now have a nice collection. These books made a whole generation of men into readers!

**Q: Your mother grew up on the Vineyard, and you mentioned you based Cadence on her. Can you talk about the similarities between her and your character?**

A: The biggest similarity is they both desperately wanted to get off the island and see the world. Martha's Vineyard is a lovely place to live, but for my mother (and Cadence too) it was limiting. When she met my father, who was in the Coast Guard, and he asked her to marry him, she jumped at the chance to leave the island.

**Q: The Martha's Vineyard Beach and Book Club—where did that idea come from?**

A: The club in the book was inspired by the real-life book club that my mother had with her friends. She was an incredibly prolific reader and over her lifetime on the Vineyard, she collected a vast library and a group of friends that loved reading as much as she did. In the summer they met on the beach and drank wine and played cards and talked books just like the book club in the book. She was generous with lending her books but put book plates in the front of them so they would always make their way back to her. Growing up my mother got most of her books at the local dump (which is famous today—even in France as “The Dumptique”) when the summer people would drop off the things they no longer needed as they left for the season. So she always prized new books. Every Christmas my father would bring her a stack of books from Bunch of Grapes Bookstore in Vineyard Haven.

**Q: There are 37 books mentioned in the novel. What are some of the books, and how did you choose them?**

I chose the novels the book club reads and discusses by checking the *New York Times* bestseller lists of the era. I also included many of my mother's favorites. Here's the full list of books mentioned in my book:

*The Valley of the Dolls*  
*The Song of Bernadette*  
*The Sound and the Fury*  
*The Grapes of Wrath*  
*Rebecca of Sunnybrook Farm*  
*War and Peace*  
*For Whom the Bell Tolls*  
*Frankenstein*  
*Sense and Sensibility*  
*The Day of the Locust*  
*The Robe*  
*The Moon is Down*  
*Ben-Hur*

*The Heart is a Lonely Hunter*  
*The Great Gatsby*  
*The Beautiful and Damned*  
*The Sun Also Rises*  
*Madeline*  
*Mrs. Dalloway*  
*Say Yes to Murder*  
*Robinson Crusoe*  
*Anna Karenina*  
*Zaynab*  
*Emerson's Essays*  
*Madame Bovary*  
*Jane Eyre*

*Joan of Arc*  
*Great Expectations*  
*National Velvet*  
*The Education of Hyman Kaplan*  
*The African Queen*  
*The Years*  
*The Good Earth*  
*Rebecca*  
*Ethan Frome*  
*Dracula*  
*Brideshead Revisited*

**Q: Readers will likely be surprised that Martha's Vineyard was so directly impacted by WWII, from the mock invasions by the US Army to the Nazi submarines in the surrounding waters. Not to mention the Nazi-sympathizing town in Yaphank, Long Island and the Nazi-leaning summer camps across the country. Why do you think these domestic aspects of WWII became buried in history?**

A: Things just get lost to time especially today with the quick news cycle. The mock invasions were kept secret by the government during the war, and locals saw the Nazi subs and some fishermen interacting with them. But when the war ended, people wanted to move on with life. The same is true with Yaphank (where the streets were named after Hitler and his ministers) and the summer camps that taught Nazi ideology. At the war's end, Americans wanted to sweep these sordid aspects under the rug. I was lucky I know plenty of locals who still remember that era on the island, and they filled me in.

**Q: What can you share about the literary community on Martha's Vineyard?**

A: The literary community on the island is one of the most vibrant I've come across. With two fabulous bookstores and seven libraries on an eighty-seven-square mile island, it's easy to always have a good book in hand. As a kid, I practically lived in my mother's favorite bookstore—Bunch of Grapes in Vineyard Haven. The beloved bookshop is a phoenix—even after a terrible, tragic fire there years ago, the store owners picked up and moved and carried on. There was no way the community would lose the island's more than forty-year-old literary institution.

The Vineyard also hosts an incredible number of events celebrating books—the MV Book Festival and Author Series, the Martha's Vineyard Black Book Festival and Islanders Write. Of the seven island libraries, I spent the most time at the Vineyard Haven Library, since it was walking distance from my parents' house, and my sister still works there today. That library has invited me to do an event with them at the Katharine Cornell Theatre on July 9<sup>th</sup>, and on July 8<sup>th</sup> we're celebrating The Vineyard launch with Edgartown's Vineyard Preservation Trust at the Grange Hall in West Tisbury. That's a location from the book and is walking distance to the Smith farm that inspired the story. Another MV iconic shop, Edgartown Books, will be the bookseller.

### **ADVANCE PRAISE for THE MARTHA'S VINEYARD BEACH AND BOOK CLUB**

"Leave it to Hall Kelly to write a dreamy beach book that also sizzles with tension. Set during World War II, as German U-boats circle Martha's Vineyard, the Smith sisters struggle to keep their farm going and deal with love and loss over the course of one summer. Add to the mix the threat of spies and a couple of mysterious deaths, not to mention a tear-jerker of an ending, and I'm done for. Another winner by one of the best historical fiction writers around."—**Fiona Davis, *New York Times* bestselling author of *The Stolen Queen***

"I learned something new about the impact of World War II on American families from this bittersweet page-turner. A captivating story about the ripple effect of one family's actions on a small island amid wartime intrigue. A heart-in-your-mouth tale of family, friendship and romance as a small American island finds itself on a potential frontline of World War II."—**Charmaine Wilkerson, *New York Times* bestselling author of *Black Cake***

"*The Martha's Vineyard Beach and Book Club* is the glorious Martha Hall Kelly's most personal novel yet. It will inspire readers everywhere."—**Adriana Trigiani, author of *The View from Lake Como***

"I adore Martha Hall Kelly's books, and I loved *The Martha's Vineyard Beach and Book Club*! Her characters are so beautifully crafted—I can feel them in the room, ready to discuss their loves, family secrets, intrigues, adventures, and more. I am predicting that this book will be one of your top 2025 reads. It's definitely one of mine!"—**Genevieve Graham, nationally bestselling author of *The Secret Keeper***

"A prime example of Martha Hall Kelly's knack for bringing the emotional investment of historical women to the forefront, elevating the facts of what we *think* we know and evoking our deepest empathy . . . a heartwarming novel of audacious women inspiring hope with a dash of heartbreak. I thoroughly enjoyed every page!"—**Sarah McCoy, *New York Times* bestselling author of *The Baker's Daughter***

"Full of thoughtful and detailed prose, endearing characters, swoony romance, and thriller-worthy intrigue, *The Martha's Vineyard Beach and Book Club* is a gift to fans of stories rooted in fascinating history and the bravery of the human heart."—**Natalie Jenner, #1 nationally bestselling author of *The Jane Austen Society***

"Full of danger, heartbreak, and redemption and set to the backdrop of war, *The Martha's Vineyard Beach and Book Club* celebrates the magic of books, family, and truth as several women—bound by blood and friendship—discover their destinies on the scenic island just off the Massachusetts coast."—**Kristin Harmel, *New York Times* bestselling author of *The Paris Daughter***

"Martha Hall Kelly's tale of the home front is simply irresistible. Coming of age in dangerous times, the Smith girls find strength in dreams, family, the land, and in the life-changing power of books. This story drew me in, then swept me away!"—**Lisa Wingate, #1 *New York Times* bestselling author of *Shelterwood***

# **THE MARTHA'S VINEYARD BEACH AND BOOK CLUB**

**by Martha Hall Kelly**

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