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Beautiful Sheila McGee seeks to escape the small mill town where she was raised in Northern Ireland, but the advent of World War II interferes with her plans

The Linen Queen Details

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From Reader Review The Linen Queen for online ebook

Lori Twichell says

As a fan of The Yellow House, Falvey's previous novel, I was ready for The Linen Queen. This did not disappoint. Falvey does not coddle her characters nor does she try to whitewash life for her readers. As disappointing, harsh and painful as life is, she paints it with panache and style so gritty that we can easily imagine ourselves in her shoes.

With most heroines in a love story, we like them and we want them to succeed. With Sheila, it's not always so black and white. She does things that most of us wouldn't agree with, she doesn't care who she fights in order to win, and she plays nasty sometimes. When she met Joel, the book turned upside down for me. I wasn't sure how I felt about her plight or what I hoped for her. When Joel became her knight in shining armor, I got worried. I didn't want him to get hurt and I knew that Sheila's plan would involve hurt feelings.

But Falvey managed to take her incredibly deep storylines and plot points and bring her characters all to a point of redemption and amazing change.

I loved this story. Once Joel showed up on the scene, I found myself completely immersed in Falvey's world. The tones of Ireland show through the tale, bringing such a rich and beautiful depth to the story that as you're reading, you feel as if you're a part of the small village as well.

Patricia Falvey's talent shines as brightly in this second outing as it did in the first. If you've read The Yellow House, you'll enjoy this one. And if you like historical tales full of real and vivid characters and plotlines that will have you holding your breath, give The Linen Queen a try.

Review copy provided by publisher.

Johanna Markson says

The Linen Queen, Patricia Falvey

The second novel about Ireland I've read and greatly enjoyed by this talented writer. Flavey draws on her Northern Ireland roots to describe pieces of that county's history through genuine and touching stories.

At the beginning of WWII, in a small mill city outside Belfast, 18 year old beauty and smart party girl Sheila McGee toils away day in and day out in bare feet at a linen factory, where she has been working since she was 14. She and her mother live in a depressing mill house with her religious zealot aunt and drunk uncle. It is a dark and unwelcoming place.

Sheila has a bad girl reputation, that may not be justified, and she can't wait to find a way to escape her small and limited life. When she wins the title, crown and \$200 prize money as the 1941 Linen Queen, she thinks that she has found her way out of the life she hates. Yet her needy mother prevents her from escaping to London and possibly America.

Then, when the Yanks are stationed nearby, a second chance at escape seems possible. It's only when she starts to fall in love with the officer she thought she'd use to get to America, that things get more complicated.

With Free Ireland and the IRA to the south causing problems and promoting Hitler, and with the war lingering on and on, circumstances cause Sheila to examine just what kind of person she really wants to be. The novel has an unexpected depth to it that makes it more than a simple love story and ode to the beauty

that is Northern Ireland.

I recommend both books if you have an interest in Irish history and the troubles. It's clear this author loves her subject matter deeply and she expresses that love tenderly and well.

Lydia Presley says

It feels kind of strange, but this book reminded me quite a bit of two classics - Emma by Jane Austen and Gone with the Wind by Margaret Mitchell. So what do all these books have in common, you might ask? Well... I don't know about you, but Emma, Scarlett and Sheila are not very easy characters to like ... at first.

In The Linen Queen, Sheila struggles with some pretty hard knocks. Her dad is gone, her mom is crazy, her aunt super pious and her uncle a pervert. She works hard, yet sees no real benefit to all the work and she really, really wants to leave Ireland.

But Sheila is living and working toward leaving Ireland in 1941, and war is on the horizon. And, much like Scarlett in Gone with the Wind, war has a way of bringing out the grit in a pretty girl - and so it was with Sheila.

I really, really enjoyed The Linen Queen. I found Sheila to be petty and self-centered, but as I read, as I really thought about the choices she was making and watched her growth I came to love her and wish her well.

In addition to getting to know Sheila, I also got to know a part of WWII geography I really hadn't been familiar with. Belfast and the northern part of Ireland was involved in the war at a time the southern area was not. I think Patricia Falvey did a fantastic job of capturing the tension not only between the two factions of the Irish people, but also by adding the "Yanks" into the mix, and even a Jewish one at that.

For WWII novel fans, this book is a must read. Just.. be patient, give Sheila a little time and remember, all those that are young need time to grow.

Pearl says

A young woman working in an Irish cloth factory in the early days of WWII sees a chance of escaping her stifling life by becoming the "Linen Queen," basically a beauty queen for Irish mill girls. She wins, but because of the war she can't just move to a major city like she wanted to, she's still trapped in the small town, with little opportunities and fewer differing opinions. When the American soldiers come into town she meets the man she thinks can take her out of there; he also happens to be the first Jew she's ever met so she gets some cultural studies along the way. The strongest points of this novel are definitely the heartpulling emotional scenes courtesy of a bipolar mother, rape, and overall misogyny.

Overall the book started out very well. I wanted to give it 4 stars, but in the end it didn't live up to its initial promise. While the Irish WWII setting was very interesting, it soon became more Lifetime movie than good historical fiction. The story becomes another romance novel in the end, dropping the darkness of the book for something more cheesy yellow.

J.S. Dunn says

As is the case with the prior, debut novel *The Yellow House*, this tale suffered a hard edit ---- possibly from a nun at a convent school. It does have more authentic language including cursing, and at times has the hint of a narrative voice that rings true and entices one to keep plodding along.

But no, by the concluding pages, overall one feels duped. This novel turned out to be a romance after all, and it's been edited with an iron fist [steamroller?] to suit the narrow tastes of the bourgeoisie who read that subgenre. The salient historical details of the Troubles have been mostly omitted as well. God forbid the reader should get a different perspective than what US-based mass media understands about it. The reader is thrown a few crumbs about the linen industry, some wallpaper if you will, since the main character works in a linen mill. It's only in the last few pages that we get any real pathos developing never mind that the backdrop other the linen mill is:

World --- feckin' ----WAR II! But don't bring up the War unless you must, this is a romance!!!!

Anita Johnson says

Beautiful, 18-year-old Sheila McGee works in a linen mill in Northern Ireland where she lives with her manic mother, her drunken uncle and sanctimonious aunt. Her only desire in life is to flee the country as soon as humanly possible. World War II breaks out and everything changes for her, most importantly her own character and values. While the story is set in a dreary Irish mill town controlled by the British Crown and occupied by some pretty horrible characters, the landscape is beautiful and Sheila's story is both heartbreakingly tragic and triumphant.

Corinne Edwards says

Scraping by on a linen worker's wages is not the kind of life that Sheila plans on living for much longer. Her grandest wish is to escape from Ireland as soon as possible, away from her demanding and unappreciative mother and the ghost of the father that left when she was a child. Her story begins on the cusp of the second World War in a small village in Northern Ireland. Confident and aware of her good looks, she hopes to be chosen as the Linen Queen so she can get her chance on the prize money - her ticket out of town.

If only those Yankee soldiers didn't come to town to complicate things - or if her childhood friend Gavin could just keep their relationship the way it's always been. And then when a refugee from Belfast ends up at her house, it seems as though she may never get away without some serious determination and no small amount of selfishness.

Sheila has a lot to learn about herself and what she wants to stand for at this really challenging point in Irish history (does Irish history have a point that's NOT really challenging?). Of course there is still that rumbling of Irish history and pride - as Northern Irish they are on England's side of the war, but Free Ireland to the south has to be on the side of whomever is fighting the devil British, there is no small amount of political talk in this book. It is, however, woven throughout this interesting and romantic story, with enough twists to

compensate for the fairly predictable conclusion.

If you like Irish historical fiction, this is as authentic as anything else I've read and certainly as good, if not better, than Falvey's first novel *The Yellow House*.

Meg says

I didn't expect too much from this book, as *The Yellow House* was not my favorite. I had already gotten it out at the library however, and thought I'd give it a try.

Characters...they are important to me. I have to find a redeeming quality. I just have to! Or else it isn't worth it. They don't have to be perfect, or even good, just redeemable in some way. The characters in the *Linen Queen* were selfish and unlikable. I mean come on! If you're going to be unlikeable, at least be funny or charming while you are doing it...alas no. They were not either of these things. Just mean, bitter and unlikable.

When I first started the book I thought to myself, "This reads more like a cheap romance novel than historical fiction." As I got more into the book however, I realized that there wasn't even romance! Come on!!!! Just selfish people living their lives, who once in awhile did something nice that would shock even themselves. Nobody really liked anybody else, and the hatred just jumped off the page.

In the end I feel it was mildly entertaining if you like books that take place in Ireland, and you don't have the need as I do to somewhat like the characters in a story.

Heather McCubbin says

I was very excited to read this one after *The Yellow House* but from the first few chapters, I knew it was going to be drastically different. The similarities between the books are the location, the occupation of the main character (Sheila) and the fact that Eileen, from the previous book, makes an appearance.

I didn't like the main character. At all. She was vain, stuck up, self centered and self righteous. I rarely have read books where that is the main character throughout the entire book. Here, it was. The men she crossed paths with were well written, came to life vividly and I enjoyed reading the book when they were around. As this book takes place a few years before DDay to a few years after, I found the the transitions between the scenes could be very jarring. All of a sudden, the main character talks about "it was two years since I was last up here with..." and I wonder where those two years went. No one seemed to mature or age when the years passed by, so sometimes I had to remind myself that it had been awhile since she had done or seen so-and-so.

However, with all this said...there was enough angst, character development and history within this book that towards the end, I could see this becoming a movie. I did, finally, begin to like Sheila because she finally grew up/matured. But that didn't happen until the last 1/4 of the book.

Linda says

Sheila is a beautiful girl living in poverty in her village in Northern Ireland. She dreams of escaping to a

better life away from her Ma and her slavish job in the linen mill. Even though Sheila has a good heart and is innocent in many ways, she has earned a bad reputation, mainly because she is a beauty.

All her life she has been friends with Gavin, their fathers both had been sailors and friends and so it seemed natural that they would be companions. Things were just going along until the war and Belfast was bombed. Children were evacuated to Sheila's village and her Ma took in Graine, a teenaged girl.

Many of the village girls were happy to become friends with the US soldiers that were stationed in their village.

This story gave us some insight into what was happening in Ireland during the war. I didn't know that southern Ireland were neutral and didn't fight along with England although Northern Ireland did stand up for England.

A very good read.

Kathleen Winikates says

Could have been an interesting historical fiction book about Northern Ireland during WWII, particularly with the dynamic of one of the main characters living in the Free State and involved with the IRA, but the brief touch of that was too little, too late. Unfortunately the characters from the Linen Queen herself, to the Jewish Army captain, to the minor characters who worked in the mill, never really came to life.

Denise says

This story takes place in the same area of Northern Ireland as the author's first novel, *The Yellow House*. The heroine, Sheila McGee is an unhappy teen, working in the linen mill and living with her ungrateful, unstable mother and her rather unlikeable uncle and aunt. The backdrop is the early years of World War II. Northern Ireland, which is part of Great Britain, is deeply involved in the war. The Free State, is a neutral country and with anti-British passions and bitterness running extremely high, more sympathetic to the axis powers than the cause of the Allies. American troops arrive in town in preparation for the invasion of Europe following Pearl Harbor. Emotions and excitement run high.

Early in the book, Sheila wins a beauty contest. As the "Linen Queen", she is called on to represent the Linen mill at various events to present to visiting dignitaries. This is the only role Sheila finds fulfilling and she dreams unrealistically about finding a better life outside of Ireland.

Things get complicated when a young evacuee from the red light district of Belfast is taken in at their home as a ward. Sheila, who dreams of leaving without a backward glance, begins to feel some responsibility for this tragic young girl who is angry, withdrawn and defensive.

I enjoyed this coming of age story and although I never really liked Sheila much, I was happy to see her begin to appreciate her new role as care giver and accept her place in life in a more realistic way.

Wendy Hines says

The Linen Queen is a historical fiction novel with much going for it. The background of Ireland is beautifully rendered, as well as the rough living in that timeframe. You want to cheer for Shelia when she wins the pageant, because now she can escape her desolute life, but really, when there is a war, is any particular place better than the other?

When the soldiers set up camp in her village, Sheila is determined to snag an officer -- she sees it as her ticket out of that place. She sets her sights on Joel Solomon, much to the chagrin of her childhood friend, Gavin O'Rourke. But Joel is a Jewish American soldier, and Hitler's reach is vast. Putting her dream of leaving Ireland on hold, Sheila works with the people in their fight against Germany, even though it pushes her and Gavin further and further apart. Shelia will need all of her strength, God, and faith to create her new future - one she didn't realize she wanted.

The saying "There's No Place Like Home" comes to mind when I read this novel. Of course, it's also said not to look further than your own backyard. And that is possibly true, but to me, home is family, love, God, all of the things that help make your life complete. Ms. Falvey writes in a beautiful fashion, with the pages turning quickly. Great character development and beautiful scenery. The Linen Queen is compelling, heartbreakng and will also warm your heart. A very good read!

Erin says

Sadly, this story just didn't live up to the author's "The Yellow House." So many characters were just down right nasty to the main protagonist, Sheila. Although I could understand why(because she was a selfish and naive person when we first meet her), I felt I became rather irritated by the continued attack on her character.

Patricia Doyle says

Sheila McGee, so beautiful, had a hard life. Sheila worked in the linen mill after having left school early to support herself and her mother. The mother was a manic depressive woman who didn't have a kind word to say to her daughter.

For about the first two-thirds of the book, Sheila is self centered and all-about-me. She excelled at the art of manipulation and didn't care whom she stepped on. How she got to be the Linen Queen was shaky at best. But I suspected she would be 'coming around', and I hung in there. I'm glad I did.

I enjoyed everything about this book, including the story itself, the character development , the love interests that were real and not hokey, the conditions of the working women at the time, and the ending that was not at all predictable. It was an entertaining, pleasant read.
