



Heather Morris

(AUTHOR)

Sisters Under the Rising Sun

(BOOK TITLE)

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RISING SUN

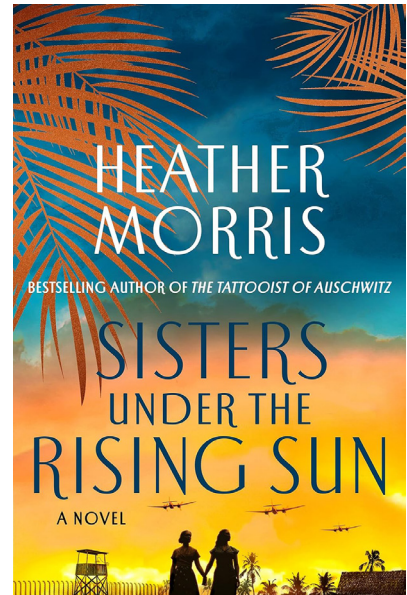
A NOVEL



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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Native of New Zealand now resident in Australia, working in a large public hospital in Melbourne. For several years she studied and wrote screenplays, one of which was optioned by an academy award winning Screenwriter in the U.S.

In 2003, Heather was introduced to an elderly gentleman who 'might just have a story worth telling'. The day she met Lale Sokolov changed both their lives. Heather originally wrote Lale's story as a screenplay – which ranked high in international competitions – before reshaping it into her debut novel, *The Tattooist of Auschwitz*.

BOOK OVERVIEW

In the midst of World War II, an English musician, Norah Chambers, places her eight-year-old daughter Sally on a ship leaving Singapore, desperate to keep her safe from the Japanese army as they move down through the Pacific. Norah remains to care for her husband and elderly parents, knowing she may never see her child again.

Sister Nesta James, a Welsh Australian nurse, has enlisted to tend to Allied troops. But as Singapore falls to the Japanese she joins the terrified cargo of people, including the heartbroken Norah, crammed aboard the *Vyner Brooke* merchant ship. Only two days later, they are bombarded from the air off the coast of Indonesia, and in a matter of hours, the *Vyner Brooke* lies broken on the seabed.

After surviving a brutal 24 hours in the sea, Nesta and Norah reach the beaches of a remote island, only to be captured by the Japanese and held in one of their notorious POW camps. The camps are places of starvation and brutality, where disease runs rampant. Sisters in arms, Norah and Nesta fight side by side every day, helping whoever

they can, and discovering in themselves and each other extraordinary reserves of courage, resourcefulness and determination.

SETTING

- Singapore, Malaya (Malaya/Malaysia became a separate country in 1965)
 - Where everyone started and fled from
 - HMS Vyner Brooke - shipwrecked with Norah and nurses
 - HMS Mata Hari - not shipwrecked so those prisoners have belongings
 - Banka Strait, boat departed and sank
 - Where the nurses and captives were returned to
- Indonesia
 - Muntok
 - Village where they went to after reaching shore
 - Camp 1
 - Radji Beach
 - Where the massacre Vivian was in happened
 - Irenelaan, Palembang, Sumatra
 - Camp 2
 - Camp 3
 - Camp 4
 - Belalau
 - Camp 5
 - Site of liberation
- Belfast, Ireland
 - Where Sally was living

CHARACTERS

- Norah Chambers - main character, led the women's orchestra and choir
- Sally Chambers - Norah and John's daughter
- John Chambers - Norah's husband
- Ena Murray - Norah's Sister
- Ken Murray - Ena's husband
- June Bourhill - little girl that Ena temporarily adopted from Vyner Brooke
- Nesta James - main character, nurse
- Vivian Bullwinkel - nurse, witnessed the massacre
- Audrey Owen - civilian prisoner, became friends with Norah, made the grave crosses with her
- Jean Ashton - nurse, lead the other nurse team with Nesta
- Betty Jeffrey - nurse, ran the gossip column in their newspaper
- Margaret Dryburgh - missionary who helped with choir and morale in general

- Mrs Hinch (Gertrude) - spokeswoman with camp commanders
- Sister Catherina - Dutch nun who helped with a lot of camp tasks
- Mother Superior Laurentia - oversaw all the Dutch nuns, gave Nesta money for nurses to buy food
- Dr. McDowell (Jean) - female doctor at the hospital at each camp
- Japanese Camp Captors
 - Ah Fat - Translator
 - Captain Miachi - Camp 2
 - Sergeant Major Kato - Camp 2, Camp 3
 - Captain Seki - Camp 3, Camp 4, Camp 5

THINGS I LOVED ABOUT THIS BOOK

- Female friendship
- Women overcoming the most horrific circumstances
- The power of music

QUESTIONS TO DISCUSS/FAVORITE MOMENTS IN THE BOOK

- Who was a favorite character?
 - Nora (wrote the music), Margaret the missionary who helped with the choir, Nesta, the tiny nurse leader, Sister Catherina, leader of the Dutch nuns.
- How did you feel when the 4 nurses finally volunteers to bring “comfort” to the Japanese soldiers?
- First concert
- I cried 4 times with this book:
 - The first concert
 - When the nurses came home
 - When I tried to tell my husband about the first concert
 - When you read the authors note in the audio book and you got choked up

MEMORABLE SCENES

- Norah and John send Sally away on a boat to escape Singapore (pg 1)
- Norah, Ena, and John escape Singapore leaving behind Ena and Norah’s parents and Ken. (pg 9)
- Norah, Ena, and John’s shipwreck and Ena taking care of June who lost her mother (pg 24)
- Norah, Ena, June, and John, as well as Nesta and many of the nurses being captured (pg 42)
- John being separated from Nora and Ena (pg 46)
- Vivian survives the massacre on the beach along with a british soldier (pg 67)

- Nurses are told they have to be “hostesses” (pg 97)
- The 4 Nurses volunteer to entertain officers to save the rest of the women (pg 112)
- The trader came to sell and barter but the nurses didn’t have anything. Margaret advocates for them because of their free service as nurses (pg 173)
- The women singing for the male captives who were working in the fields (pg 149)
- The men in the fields giving their Christmas food to the women’s camp (pg 154)
- Women start a choir, first concert (pg 127), soldiers attended (pg 132)
- Norah starting the voice orchestra after Margaret gets sick (pg 211)
- Norah is punished by standing out in the sun after she refused to sing Japanese music (pg 254)
- The Mother Superior giving Nesta money the second time a vendor comes and they have no money to buy any food (pg 282)
- Norah asks one of the soldier’s entertaining women, Tante Peuk, for help, trades wedding ring. (pg 304). Later helps Tante Peuk when she’s sick (pg 310)
- Margaret dies (pg 317)
- Camp is told they are “free” (pg 328)
- Norah and John are reunited (pg 332)
- Paratroopers come into camp and find out there were Australian Nurses there, Australian soldiers come in and liberate women (pg 336)
- Ena and Ken are reunited (pg 354)
- June being reunited with her dad (pg 356)
- Norah and John are reunited with Sally (pg 358)

MEMORABLE QUOTES

“Father in captivity We would lift our prayer to Thee, Keep us ever in Thy Love. Grant that daily we may prove Those who place their trust in Thee, More than conquerors may be.” (*Captive’s Song*) (pg 123)

I want you just to see the sky, the tops of the trees, the birds. Soon the clouds will be gone, and the sun will come out. There is more than the mud and squalor beneath your feet.”....but this beauty is still all around us. We just have to look up.”... “Your ‘look up.’ I think those two little words might just be what make a difference around here. Thank you.” “Why are you thanking me?” “For showing us another way to live, to endure, to get through these blasted days. (pg 95)

“But he is also very angry, he can’t understand why you women want to sing when

there is a war on, and you are starving, and you are sick.” “That is precisely why we are singing. (pg 267)

“We will carry on looking up even when all around us is squalor and sickness. That is her greatest gift to us all,” she says, her eyes shining. (pg 323)

This morning the cooks on HMAS Warrego and HMAS Manoora fought off their entire crews who attempted to enter the mess and take part in the cooking of this small token of our gratitude, respect, and love for the brave women and children who have survived in the jungles of Sumatra. (pg 340)

“Sister James, you don’t get to thank me, I thank you.” (pg 344)

“You mean this godforsaken place, don’t you, Sister?” “Not words I would use; in fact, I would say God’s presence was here in the form of your wife.” (pg 348)

They have been tested, they have failed, they have succeeded. (pg 350)

You left Australia to do your duty, you return having achieved far beyond what could ever be reasonably expected of you, as heroes. (pg 353)

“The morale of the women at the time of their liberation was much higher than that of the men in their camps. Perhaps the women were more adaptable or had greater inner resources than the men, because they seemed to withstand the rigors of imprisonment more stoically.” (pg 367)