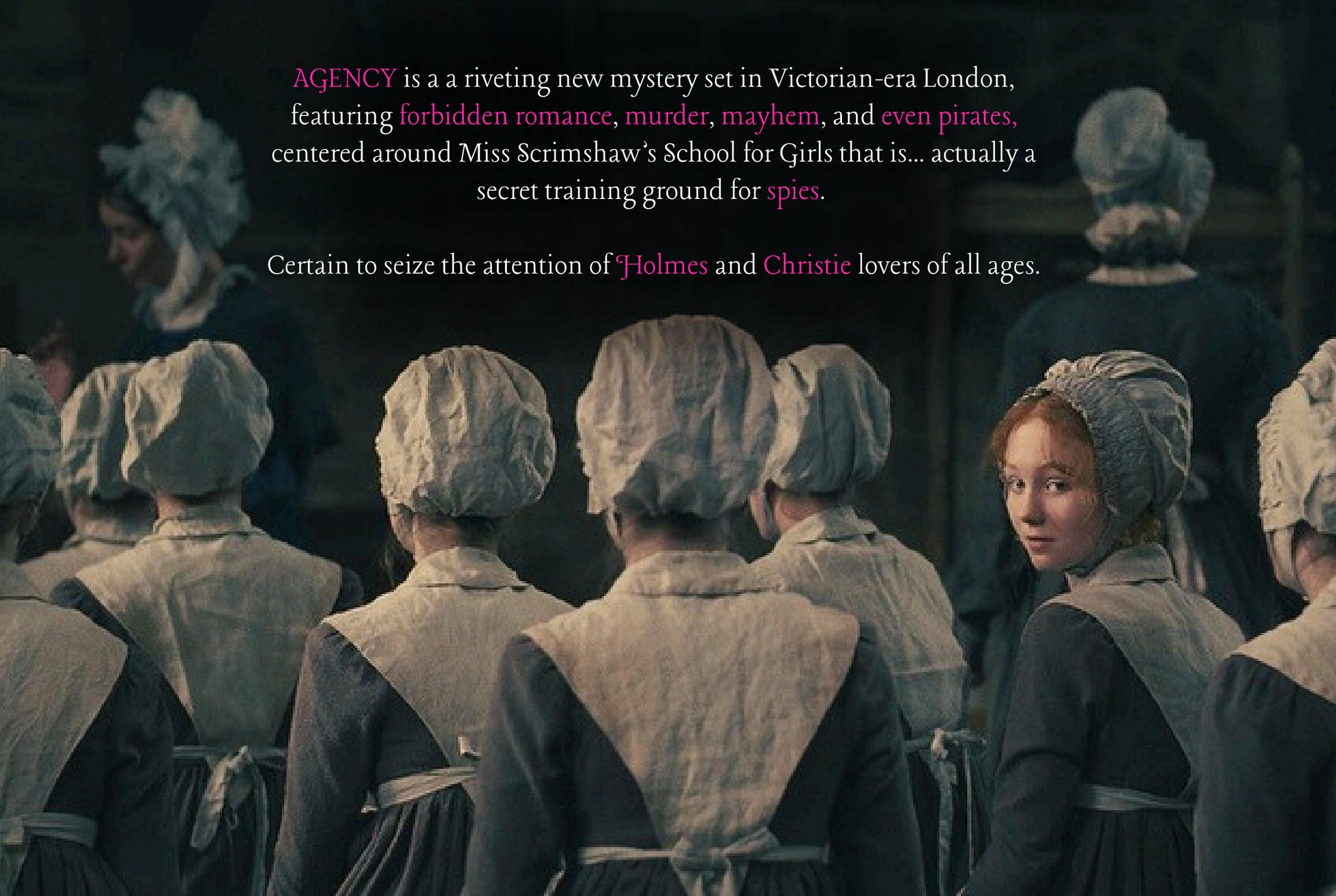


# AGENCY

(Murder)

A Victorian ^ Mystery



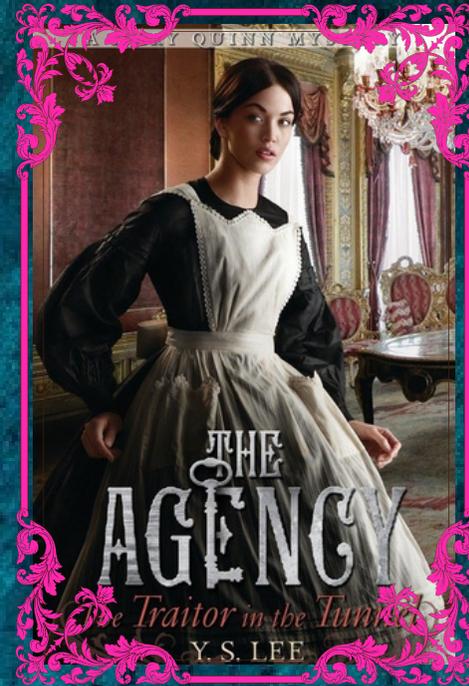
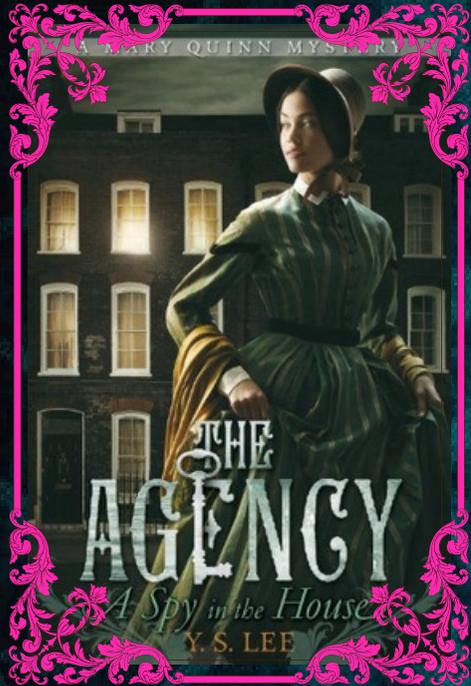


**AGENCY** is a riveting new mystery set in Victorian-era London, featuring **forbidden romance**, **murder**, **mayhem**, and **even pirates**, centered around Miss Scrimshaw's School for Girls that is... actually a secret training ground for **spies**.

Certain to seize the attention of **Holmes** and **Christie** lovers of all ages.

# BASED ON... *the rave-reviewed series by Y.S. Lee*

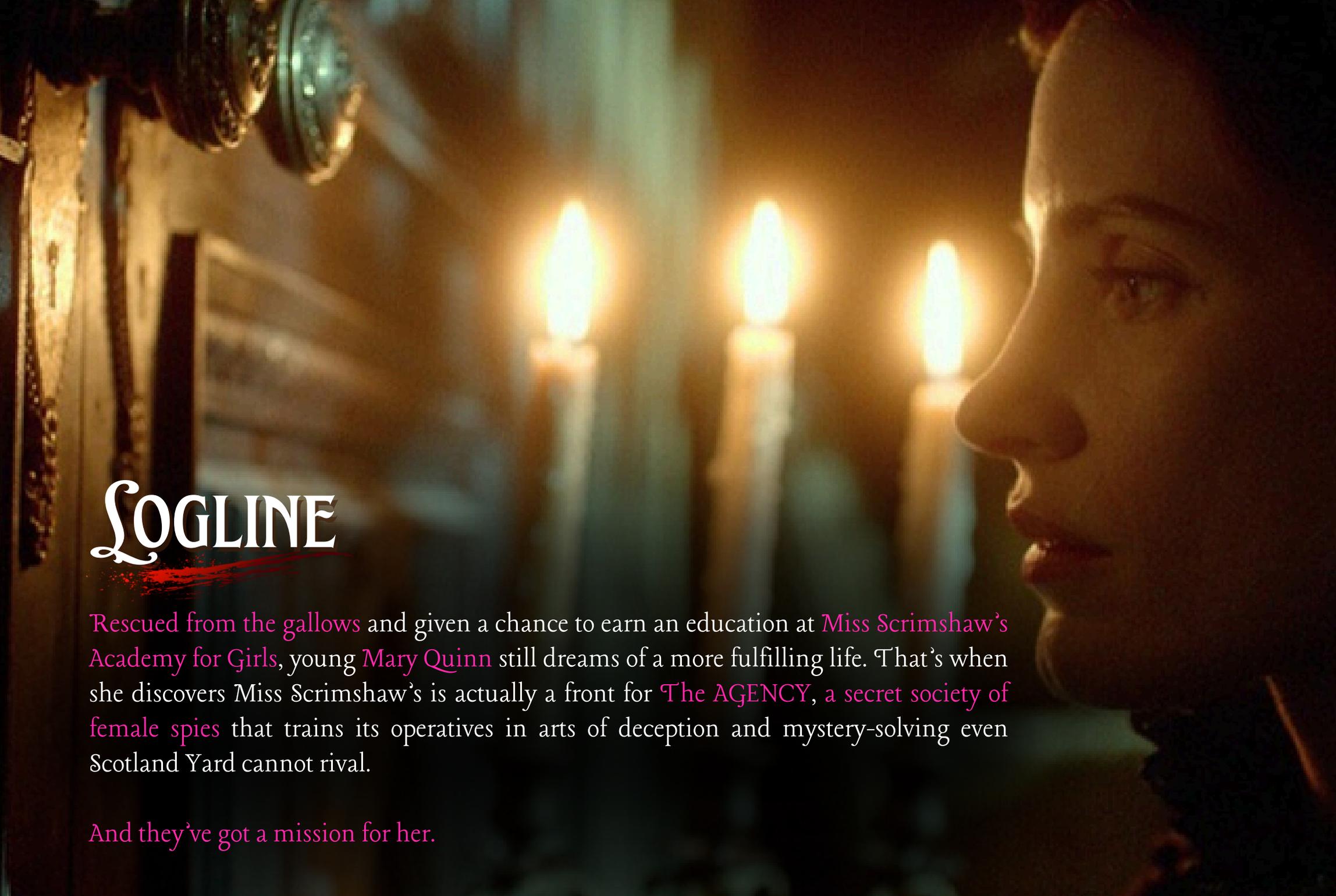
Continuously in print for 15 years, and translated into French, German, Italian, Spanish, Korean, and Turkish



“full of thrills and danger and wonderfully sharp writing” — BookPage

“pacing con brio and a perpetual sense of fun” — Sarah Weinman, B&N Review

“Dude, this book rocked my world in all sorts of ways. Asian-[Canadian] author? Bingo! Asian-ish character? Double bingo! Feisty main character with an even crackalicious chemistry between the two leads? JACKPOT.” — Krystle, GoodReads Pro-Reviewer

A close-up profile of a woman's face, looking towards the left. The background is a dimly lit room with several lit candles in the distance, creating a warm, golden glow. The woman's features are softly lit, and her expression is contemplative.

# LOGLINE

Rescued from the gallows and given a chance to earn an education at Miss Scrimshaw's Academy for Girls, young Mary Quinn still dreams of a more fulfilling life. That's when she discovers Miss Scrimshaw's is actually a front for The AGENCY, a secret society of female spies that trains its operatives in arts of deception and mystery-solving even Scotland Yard cannot rival.

And they've got a mission for her.



## NOT SEEN, NOT HEARD...

In 1850's London society, the perfect sleuth is not Sherlock, or a constable from Scotland Yard. It is the silent and nearly invisible...**housemaid**. The kitchen girl. The young ladies' paid companion. **Overlooked and under-considered**, female members of the household may listen and learn in ways no one else can. The Agency's specialty is taking this infuriating feature of the ruling patriarchy and turning it into their agents' greatest advantage. But Mary, bless her, has never been terribly good at staying within the **boundaries of polite society**.





# VIBE

London. 1858.

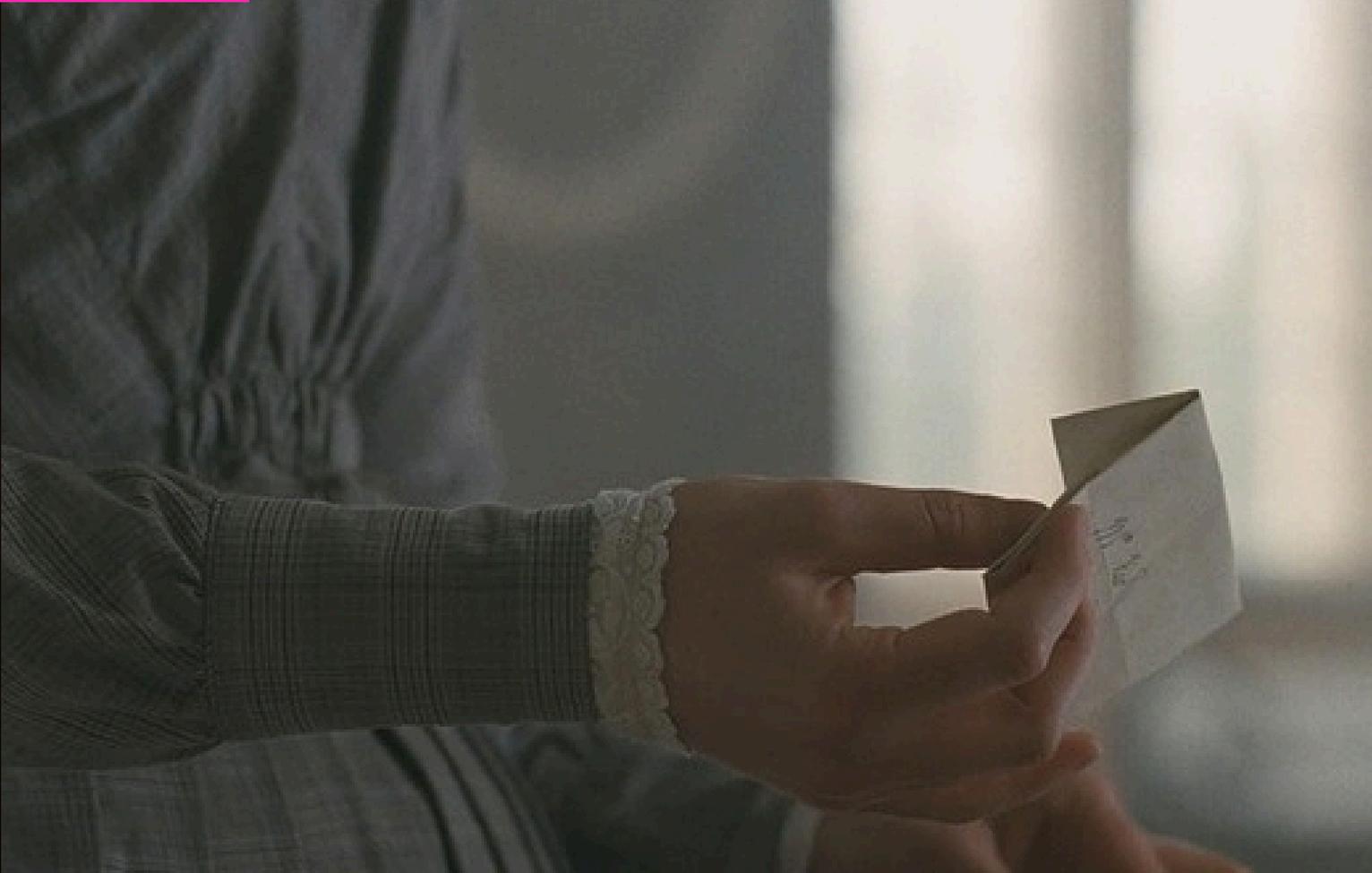
Five years ago, 17 year old Mary Quinn, **former child criminal**, was rescued from the gallows by the headmistress of Miss Scrimshaw's Academy for Girls. And today, she'll begin her first **undercover surveillance mission**.

As a **half-Chinese and half-Irish** woman passing for white in a world ruled by castes and classes, Mary is no stranger to hiding in plain sight. But entering an elite society of female spies while on the cusp of womanhood is its own flavor of tricky. It's even more troublesome when a simple case of fraud turns out to involve **piracy, smuggling, and even murder**. Add to that the extremely inconvenient friendship of a dashing and stubborn young businessman, **James Easton**. If Mary can't keep her wits about her, this first mission may well be her last.

The Agency has all the classic **mystery machinations** of an Agatha Christie story, the **intrigue and romance** of Bridgerton, and the **complex, cat and mouse, female leads** of Killing Eve. There is also an element of wry humour and wit, of honoring and upending these classic tropes, running through the series.

The Scrimshaw girls were tapping on a glass ceiling they weren't even expected to know about.





# LEAD DETECTIVE



## MARY LANG / QUINN

The orphaned daughter of an Irish seamstress and a Chinese sailor, Mary spent her youth surviving on the streets, learning to pick locks and pockets, often disguising herself as a boy to escape scrutiny. After spending her teenage years at Miss Scrimshaw's and learning all the possible useful skills for women, Mary is invited by head teachers Anne and Felicity to join "The Agency," a top secret group of female spies. Mary's first assignment should be simple, and, of course, is anything but. (Though, perhaps, Mary's impulsiveness and stubborn desire to excel create some of her own difficulties.) She's good at keeping secrets though, as she's been concealing her Chinese heritage for almost a decade.



## ANNE TRELEASEN

Angular, severe, and very intelligent, Anne is head teacher of Miss Scrimshaw's. Nothing gets by her, though she never says a word unless she needs to. A **master of disguise**, Anne often **passes as a man** in order to work cases or take on new business as "spokesman" of The Agency. Her **deepest kept secret** is her long term relationship with fellow head teacher, Felicity.



## FELICITY "FLICK" FRAME

The brilliant, **vivacious** other head teacher of Miss Scrimshaw's, and one of the only people who can make Anne laugh. Felicity is **also a woman of color**, but unlike Mary, she cannot 'pass' as caucasian, and instead holds her tenuous place in society through sheer force of will, class, and **cleverly disguised cunning**. The story of how she earned her position at the school (and **fell in love** with Anne) is one of the slowest threads to unravel.



## ANGELICA THOROLD



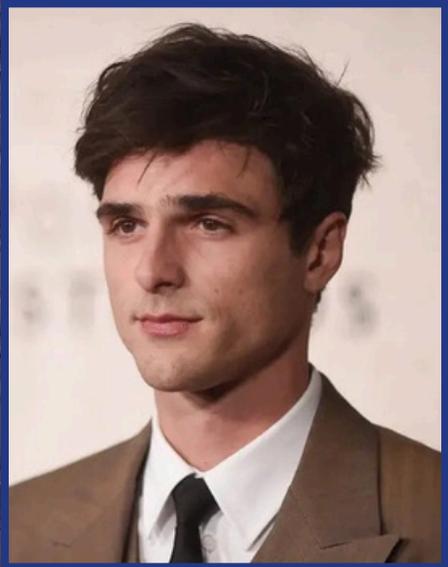
Blonde-haired, blue-eyed Angelica is **petulant** and often **cruel**, but it stems from a deep dissatisfaction with her limited life choices. An extremely gifted musician, Angelica has **her own secret dreams** and chafes against the life that is expected of her.

## MRS. THOROLD



The **matriarch** of the Thorold family is an enigma hidden behind a seemingly endless array of maladies. At times too tired to even join in a conversation, but never once missing her outings to various doctors and specialists throughout the city...**is the old bird fooling everyone?**





## JAMES EASTON

More at home behind a **drafting table** than engaging in polite society, James & his brother George run Easton Engineering. **Sensible, practical**, and with a bit too rigid a sense of right & wrong, James becomes entangled with Mary when he tries to make sure his besotted brother doesn't accidentally marry into a family of thieves. **He's also, inconveniently, quite dashing.**



## MR. CHEN

A sweet and shrewd ex-sailor, Mr. Chen was forced into "retirement" when he **lost half an arm** in a sailing accident. Thanks to his language and logistical skills, he now oversees a home for displaced Asian sailors, and is **the first to see Mary** for who she is...because **he may have known her father.**



# THE FIRST CASE

## Book One: A Spy In The House

Mary's first assignment is to serve as a paid companion for **spoiled and rich Angelica Thorold**, daughter to wealthy shipping merchant Mr. Henry Thorold, and exceedingly frail Mrs. Thorold. The Agency has been employed to investigate Mr. Thorold and his **very suspicious** insurance claims and **potential smuggling** of Indian artifacts. People have been asking questions for years, but no one has been able to make anything stick, and this is where the subtle expertise of The Agency's operatives comes in. In a role where she will be **all but invisible**, Mary is supposed to watch and observe in case any crooked business is discussed in the house.

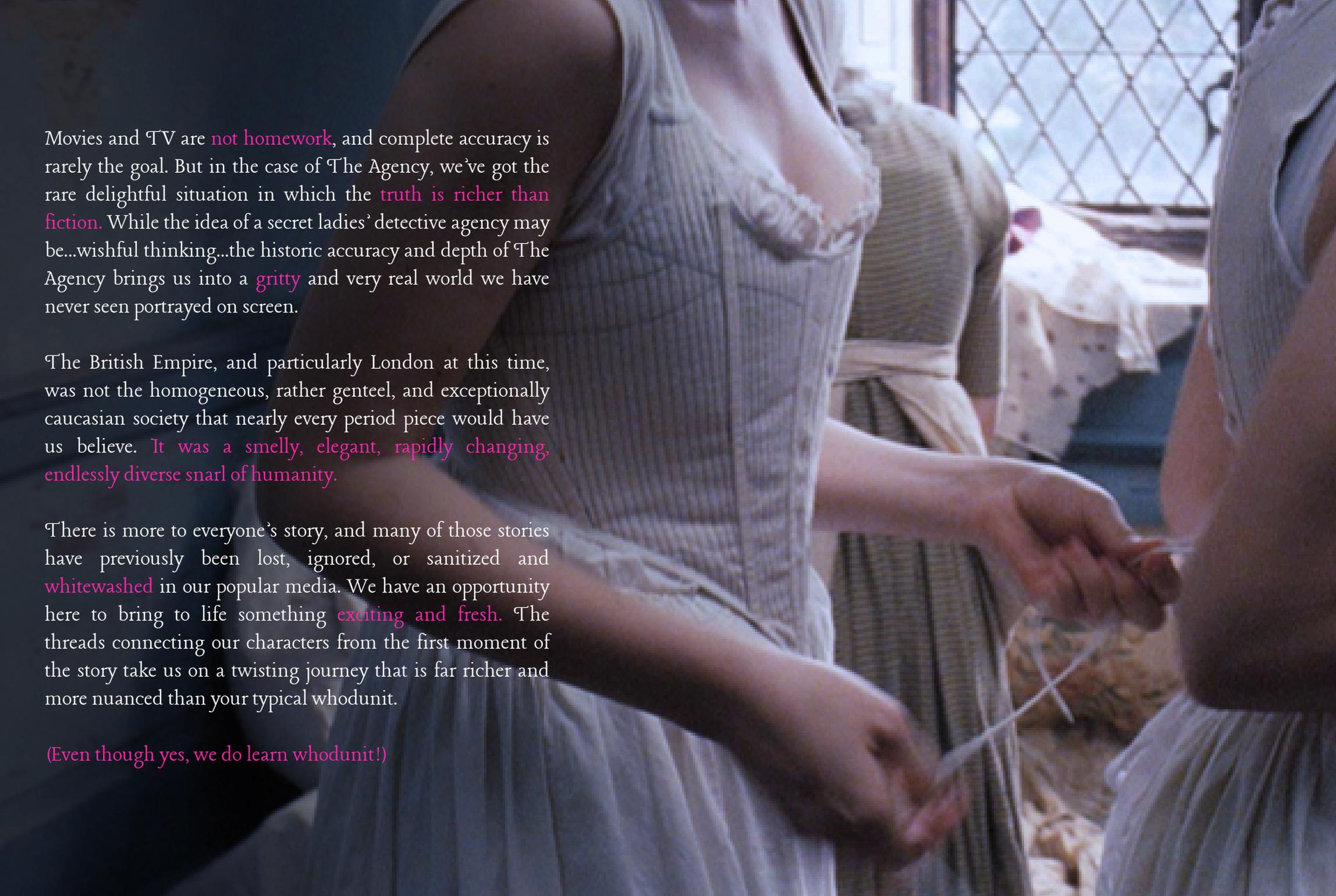
The straightforward case soon becomes more complicated though, as Mary discovers she is **not the only one** investigating the Thorolds. (Enter amateur sleuth and inconveniently magnetic **James Easton**. Who Mary is **absolutelystillfalling** for and who is **absolutelystillfalling** for Mary.) It also turns out that Mr. Thorold's curious business dealings are by no means the only secret being kept under this roof. And at least some of these **secrets** seem to revolve around the **Lascar House**, a charity home for displaced Asian sailors, that Mary is both yearning to understand and afraid to be seen anywhere near.

With the clock ticking and Scotland Yard trying to set its trap for Mr. Thorold, Mary is **desperate to unravel** all the threads of this mystery in time, and to impress Anne and Felicity, who have placed so much trust in her.





*A NOTE ON HISTORICAL ACCURACY...*

A woman in a white, textured dress is shown from the side, working on a garment. She is in a workshop or factory setting, with a diamond-patterned metal mesh in the background. The lighting is soft and natural, highlighting the texture of the fabric and the woman's hands as she works.

Movies and TV are **not homework**, and complete accuracy is rarely the goal. But in the case of *The Agency*, we've got the rare delightful situation in which the **truth is richer than fiction**. While the idea of a secret ladies' detective agency may be...wishful thinking...the historic accuracy and depth of *The Agency* brings us into a **gritty** and very real world we have never seen portrayed on screen.

The British Empire, and particularly London at this time, was not the homogeneous, rather genteel, and exceptionally caucasian society that nearly every period piece would have us believe. **It was a smelly, elegant, rapidly changing, endlessly diverse snarl of humanity.**

There is more to everyone's story, and many of those stories have previously been lost, ignored, or sanitized and **whitewashed** in our popular media. We have an opportunity here to bring to life something **exciting and fresh**. The threads connecting our characters from the first moment of the story take us on a twisting journey that is far richer and more nuanced than your typical whodunit.

**(Even though yes, we do learn whodunit!)**



# PRODUCERS' STATEMENT

As creators, we are passionate about bringing to life the kind of storytelling on display in 'The Agency' book series, and we also see it as an incredible foundation for a screen adaptation. This world is ripe with opportunity, excitement, and a deep relevance. The true beauty of Mary's story (and those of her compatriots) is how it **relates to our current cultural zeitgeist** on so many urgent levels, and as women who are no strangers to redefining ourselves and our careers on constantly shifting sands, we cannot wait to bring this story to life.

Mary Quinn (formerly Mary Lang, but you have to change your name when you mysteriously escape prison at the age of 12) is half Chinese, and is **passing in society as a white woman**. She is terrified of anyone discovering her secret, and that fear has also caused her to run from her heritage--and herself. In the first book, Mary discovers truths about her father (and why he may not have been 'accidentally' lost at sea as she thought) that bring her back to reckon with a life, culture, and a people she thought she would never be part of again.

These concerns over how we'll be perceived or received, because we are in some (or many) ways 'other,' are just as heartbreakingly relevant today as they were in 1850s London. Indeed, a founding principle of 'The Agency' is that women make better spies, not just for their clear-headedness, but because they are often invisible in 'important' situations. From a young age, women in this time were trained to be nothing more than an obedient servant or an ornament to society. They lacked any real rights and autonomy. But some, if they were smart and more than a little lucky, could learn a **trade that might change their fate, and give them some small control over their lives**. (Excuse us, but this screams parallels with Gen Z pursuing careers as influencers to gain control of their financial futures in a depressingly capitalist landscape.)

Through 'The Agency,' we can explore not only an early view of feminism and equality, but questions of identity, place, and one's innate right to pursue one's own fulfillment. **Plus...a little mystery and forbidden love never hurt anyone!**

# ABOUT THE AUTHOR

*Y.S. Lee*



Lee's books include the critically acclaimed young adult mystery series *The Agency* from Candlewick Press. It has been translated into six languages. Her fiction has won and been shortlisted for various prizes including the Canadian Children's Book Centre's inaugural John Spray Mystery Award, the Ontario Library Association's Red Maple Award, and the Arthur Ellis Award. Ying's poetry has won Arc Poetry Magazine's July 2020 Award of Awesomeness and been shortlisted for Australia's 2021 Peter Porter Poetry Prize. She has strong feelings about Sherlock Holmes.

# TEAM



*Lila Claghorn*



*Susie Talbot*

producers

**PUFF PIECE PRODUCTIONS** is a female-led, bi-coastal entertainment company dedicated to developing narrative and nonfiction projects that spark conversations and challenge perspectives. We specialize in discovering fresh, underrepresented voices and nurturing their bold, provocative visions through creativity and collaboration. As devoted partners with a keen understanding of the global marketplace, we strategically position projects to find their ideal home and resonate with audiences worldwide. Artist-focused, we are working with a Sundance Director's & Writer's Lab winner, a Nicholl Fellowship "Next 100" nominee, a Film Independent Project Cohort Honoree, and graduates of the Stowe Story Labs. Currently in development on television projects based on award-winning IP with Peacock, Universal Television, Condé Nast, Maven Screen Media, Endgame Entertainment and Impact Partners.



*Celey Schumer*

writer / producer

A writer, actor, comedian, and lifelong history nerd. Notable writing projects include half hour fertility drug trade dramedy *INCONCEIVABLE*, in development with Ley Line Entertainment (*Everything, Everywhere, All At Once*), Queer Christmas romcom *A MILLION WAYS* with Verve and Daniella Eisman (*First Wives Club*, *Sex Lives Of College Girls*) set to direct, women's hockey feature *BEAUTIES* also with Puff Piece; and romcom feature *HASHTAG PROPOSAL* produced by Reel One Entertainment in 2023. She attended Middlebury College and the University of Washington for an unused degree in Structural Engineering ("Money well spent!" -her dad), and now lives in Los Angeles with her girlfriend and their very fluffy/ mischevious Australian Shepherd.

A close-up photograph of a person's legs from the knee down, wearing white ribbed socks and black Mary Jane shoes. The person is standing on a wooden floor. In the background, a blurred room is visible, featuring a white chair and a framed picture on the wall.

THANK YOU!

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*puffpiece*