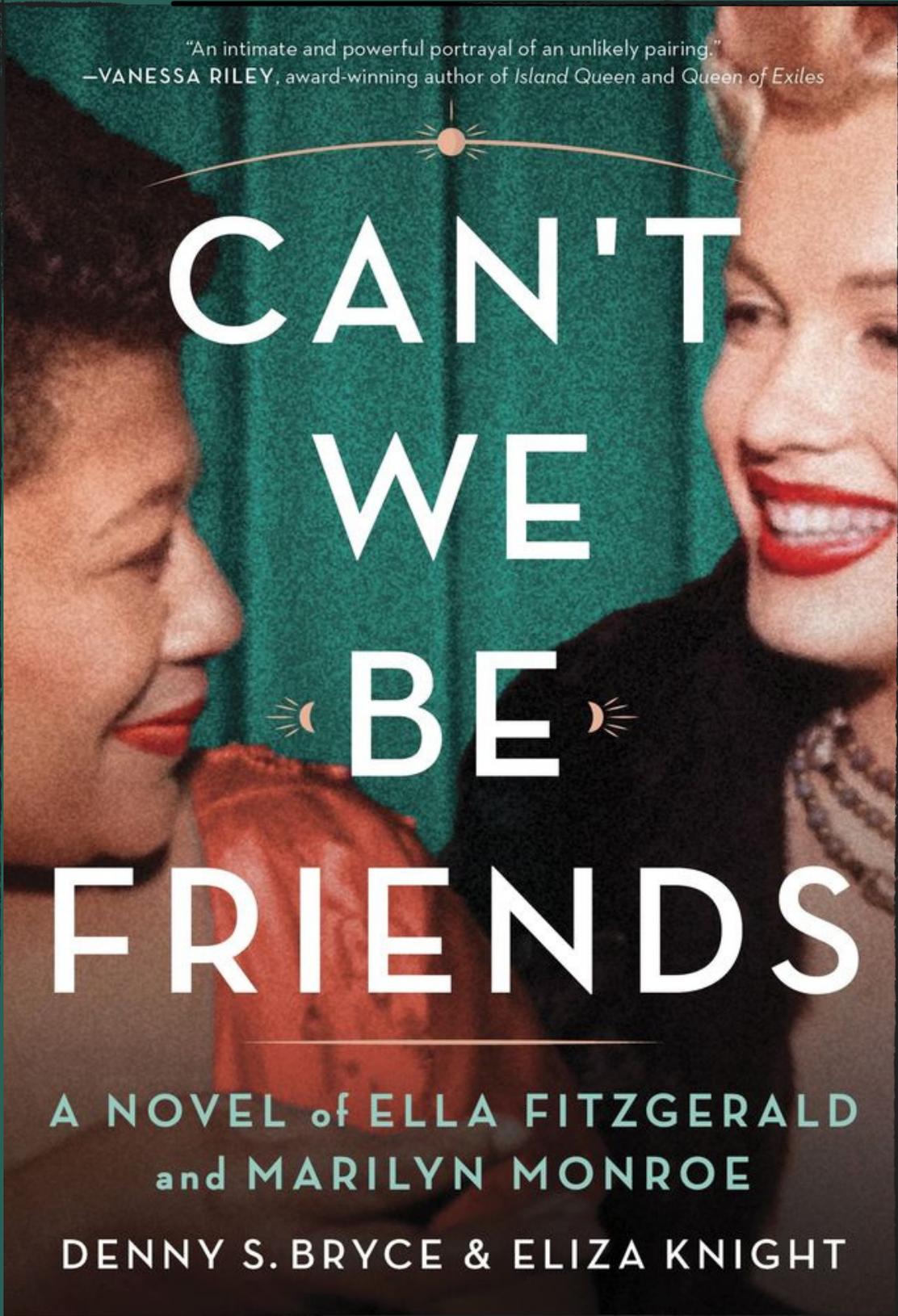


"An intimate and powerful portrayal of an unlikely pairing."
—VANESSA RILEY, award-winning author of *Island Queen* and *Queen of Exiles*



CAN'T
WE
BE
FRIENDS

A NOVEL of ELLA FITZGERALD
and MARILYN MONROE

DENNY S. BRYCE & ELIZA KNIGHT

Book
Club
Kit

2024

www.dennysbryce.com

www.elizaknight.com

About The Book

Award-winning author Denny S. Bryce and USA Today bestselling author Eliza Knight collaborate on a brilliant novel that uncovers the boundary-breaking, genuine friendship between Ella Fitzgerald, the Queen of Jazz, and iconic movie star Marilyn Monroe.

One woman was recognized as the premiere singer of her era with perfect pitch and tireless ambition.

One woman was the most glamorous star in Hollywood, a sex symbol who took the world by storm.

And their friendship was fast and firm...

1952: Ella Fitzgerald is a renowned jazz singer whose only roadblock to longevity is society's attitude toward women and race. Marilyn Monroe's star is rising despite ongoing battles with movie studio bigwigs and boyfriends. When she needs help with her singing, she wants only the best—and the best is the brilliant Ella Fitzgerald. But Ella isn't a singing teacher and declines—then the two women meet, and to everyone's surprise but their own, they become fast friends.

On the surface, what could they have in common? Yet each was underestimated by the men in their lives—husbands, managers, hangers-on. And both were determined to gain. Each fought for professional independence and personal agency in a time when women were expected to surrender control to those same men.

This novel reveals and celebrates their surprising bond over a decade and serves as a poignant reminder of how true friendship can cross differences to bolster and sustain us through haunting heartbreak and success.



Praise for “Can’t We Be Friends”

“Intimate and enthralling, *Can't We Be Friends* is an insightful portrait of the bond between Ella Fitzgerald and Marilyn Monroe, two women who, at first glance, would seem to have nothing in common. It was impossible to put down this compassionate and unflinching account of a unique friendship.” — **Janie Chang, *Globe and Mail* bestselling author of *The Porcelain Moon, The Library of Legends, and Dragon Springs Road***

"An intimate and powerful portrayal of an unlikely pairing, a bond that blossoms and thrives in quiet moments between gal-pals but isn't enough to save them from their demons. Bryce and Knight pen a jaunty ride that captures Ella Fitzgerald's zeal for life and Marilyn Monroe's passion for the moment...Readers will enjoy *Can't We Be Friends* and devour the special bond of a magical two-decades-long friendship of icons." — **Vanessa Riley, Award Winning Author of *Island Queen and Queen of Exiles***

“A stunning portrait of two extraordinary women and the captivating friendship that blossomed between them, *Can’t We Be Friends* is an incredible homage to the lives of Ella Fitzgerald and Marilyn Monroe. Denny S. Bryce and Eliza Knight offer an evocative, intimate view into the triumphs and tragedies of these two unforgettable legends. Wholly immersive, richly detailed, and emotionally resonant, *Can’t We Be Friends* is a must-read!” — **Chanel Cleeton, *New York Times* bestselling author of *The Cuban Heiress***

“In a story of two legends at the top of their game, Bryce and Knight brilliantly show the power of female friendship to bring out the best in us and make our stars shine even brighter. This deeply provocative, pitch-perfect novel reveals a connection between Ella and Marilyn that is not so much unexpected as it is transcendent.” — **Nancy Johnson, author of *The Kindest Lie***

“Researched meticulously, careful to honor the true history surrounding the women and their friendship, and honed to pay a gorgeous tribute to two extraordinary, trailblazing women, *Can’t We Be Friends* is charming, heartfelt, and above all celebratory. Book clubs and fans of history will love discussing this novel and the impact these two women had on each other.”

— **Booklist**

"A beautiful tribute to a beautiful friendship, *Can't We Be Friends*, is an engrossing story of talented young stars forming an unlikely bond as they toil in an industry that underestimates women at every turn. A fascinating and intimate portrait of the price of Hollywood stardom, readers won't want to miss this author duo's dynamic collaboration." — **Heather Webb, *USA Today* bestselling author of *Queens of London***

QUESTIONS



In the opening pages of the book, we put a quote from Michelle Obama that reads: “Friendships between women, as any woman will tell you, are built of a thousand small kindnesses . . . swapped back and forth and over again.” How does this quote tie-into the themes of *Can't We Be Friends?*

Women’s friendships are so important and vital to our existence. One of the key themes of this book is the exploration of those tight bonds that get us through every moment of our lives. What are the top three most important elements of friendship to you?

Ella Fitzgerald and Marilyn Monroe were trailblazers in their industries. Persistent women with dreams and goals, and determination to see them through. While they struggled in their own era to be heard, how do you think their struggles and successes have impacted women today?

In the 1950s, what societal factors were the biggest barriers in the careers of Ella and Marilyn and goal-oriented women like them?

Which of the following themes stand out to you in the novel: Issues of fame, societal expectations, and the struggles faced by women in the entertainment industry? Or... Friendship, identity, race, celebrity, and the complexities of relationships in the 1950s, especially for women and African Americans?

Discuss the similarities between Ella and Marilyn’s personalities? How about the main differences?

Name and discuss some of your favorite Marilyn Monroe movies?

Discuss your favorite Ella Fitzgerald albums?

SOME KEY DATES IN HISTORY

JATP 12-City European Tour - March 30 Stockholm - April 12 Paris 4/12/52

Ella received inquiry about teaching Marilyn to sing 1952

Marilyn sings for the troops in South Korea (February 1954).

Ella has throat surgery 1954

Ella Back in Recording Studio Gordon Jenkins producing for Decca Records

3/24/54

Ella booked at Basin Street (celebrating 19th year in Show Biz) 1954

Ella Fitzgerald Sues Pan American World Airways for "Racial Charge" 1954

Tiffany Club Ella and Marilyn 11/19/54

Marilyn Studies Acting at Actor's Studio 1955

Ella's opening night at Mocambo Club 3/15/55

Ella arrested for Dice Game in Houston 10/7/55

Marilyn Monroe Marries Joe DiMaggio 10/31/55

Marilyn Marries Arthur Miller 6/29/56

Marilyn Meets Queen Elizabeth 10/29/56

Ella Fitzgerald Moves from New York to Los Angeles 1957

Miller Mentions Marilyn during Appeal to House Committee on Un-American

Activities 2/21/58

1st Annual Grammy Awards 5/4/59

Ella performs at Hollywood Bowl (Marilyn attends) 7/23/60

Marilyn's Last Will and Testament (Dated 1/14/61)

Democratic National Convention 5/19/62

FOX Dismisses Marilyn and files \$500,000 suit 6/9/62

Ella Meeting with *MS* magazine reporter 1972



ABOUT US



Denny S. Bryce is the bestselling, award-winning author of novels *THE OTHER PRINCESS*, *A FACE IN THE SUN*, and *WILD WOMEN AND THE BLUES*. Her new book (out March 5) is *CAN'T WE BE FRIENDS: A Novel of Ella Fitzgerald and Marilyn Monroe*, co-written with Eliza Knight. Additionally, she is an NPR book critic, an adjunct professor at Drexel University, and a freelance writer who has written for Harper's Bazaar and USA Today.

She is a member of the Historical Novel Society, Tall Poppy Writers, a women's author collective founded by Ann Garvin, and the Women's Fiction Writers Association, where she serves as the 2024 WFWA Guiding Scribe.

Denny is represented by Wendy Sherman at Wendy Sherman Associates Literary Management.

Eliza Knight is an award-winning and USA Today bestselling author. Her love of history began as a young girl when she traipsed the halls of Versailles and ran through the fields in Southern France. She can still remember standing before the great golden palace, and imagining what life must have been like. Join Eliza (sometimes as E.) on riveting historical journeys that cross landscapes around the world.

While not reading, writing or researching for her latest book, she chases after her three children. In her spare time (if there is such a thing...) she likes daydreaming, wine-tasting, traveling, hiking, staring at the stars, watching movies, shopping and visiting with family and friends.

She is the creator of the popular historical blog, *History Undressed* and a co-host on the *History, Books and Wine* podcast.

THE CAN'T WE BE FRIENDS PLAYLIST ON
SPOTIFY
BY DENNY S. BRYCE & ELIZA KNIGHT

52%



'Can't We Be Friends: A Novel' Playlist

Award-winning, best-selling authors Denny S. Bryce & Eliza Knight have co-written the biographical historical fiction: CAN'T WE BE FRIENDS: A Novel of Ella Fitzgerald and Marilyn Monroe. "Intimate...

Denny S. Bryce

4 saves • 1h 11m



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ELLA FITZGERALD
MARILYN MONROE

BY DENNY S. BRYCE & ELIZA KNIGHT

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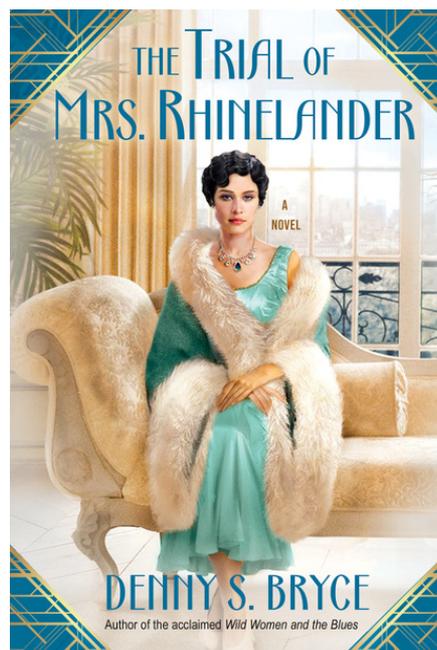
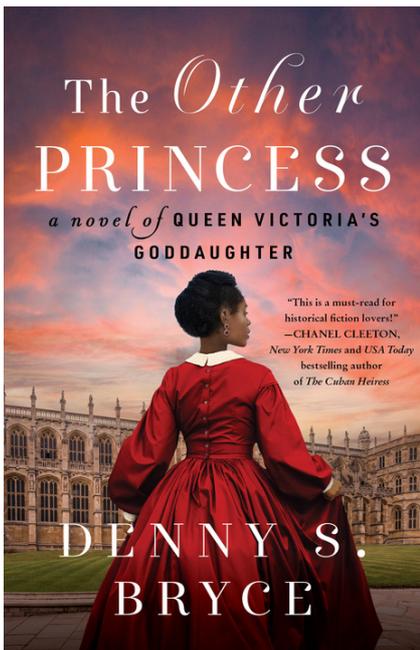
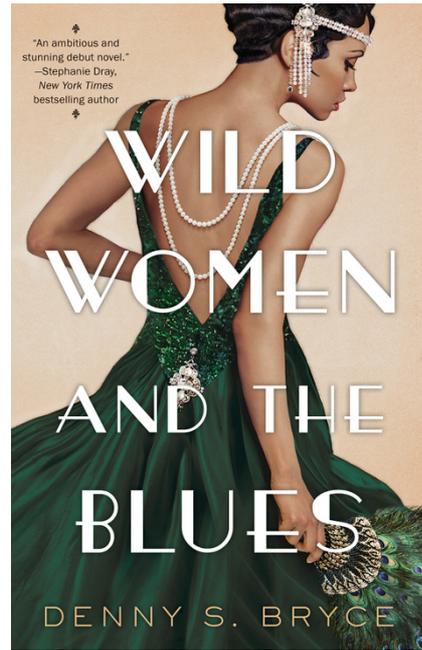
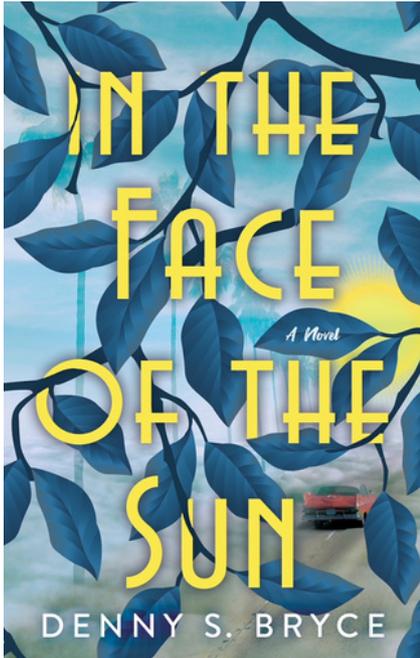
AVAILABLE FOR VIRTUAL OR IN-PERSON DISCUSSIONS

We love book clubs! If your group of 10 or more members are interested in a Zoom Chat with Denny or Eliza, please email: denny@dennysbryce.com or authorelizaknight@gmail.com. (or both)

These 30 to 45-minute ZOOM conversations (or other virtual format) are complimentary and scheduled per our availability.

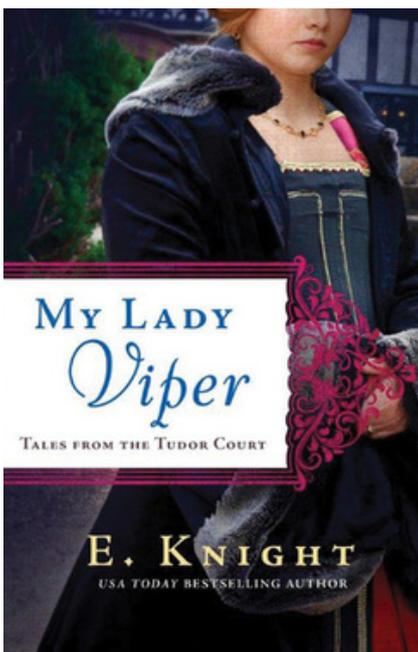
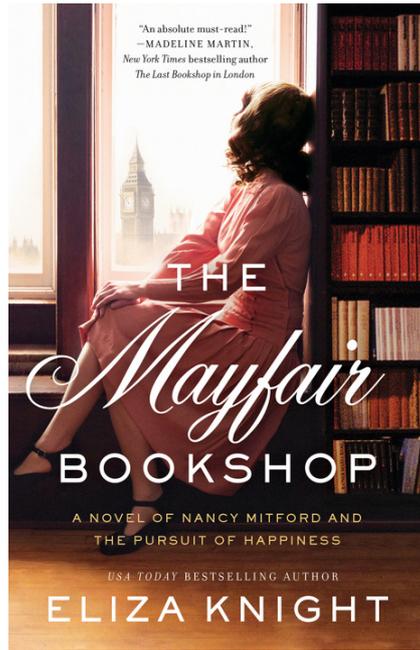
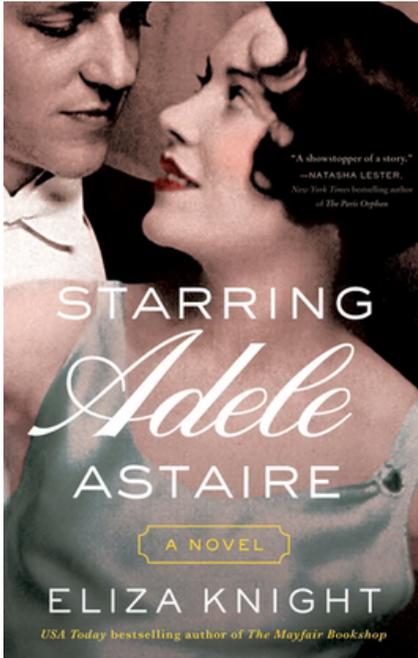
For in-person events, please email either of us (at above email addresses) to discuss honorariums and travel and hotel accommodations, if applicable.

Other novels by Denny S. Bryce



July 23, 2024

Other novels by Eliza Knight



June 11, 2024