

herself into all kinds of trouble. It wouldn't be a cozy without a few chuckles and lots of eccentric, well-meaning helpers to frustrate the law enforcement officers.

Amanda Flower's mysteries are often set in Amish country where she lives and works. The main characters have gentle personalities and are not very good at keeping secrets. Flower's lighthearted writing style enchants readers and has gained her a loyal following in Ohio and beyond.

The Amish Matchmaker Mystery series, beginning with *Matchmaking Can Be Murder*, overlaps with Flower's Amish Candy Shop Mysteries, which begins with *Assaulted Caramel*. Flower also writes under the name Isabella Alan, with a five-book Amish Quilt Shop Mystery series that begins with *Murder, Plain and Simple*.

REVIEWED BY MIRIAM KAHN, LIBRARIAN

Harper, Karen. *The Queen's Secret: A Novel of England's World War II Queen.*

William Morrow (New York, NY) 2020. PB \$16.99.

Ohio author Karen Harper brings us another engaging piece of historical fiction. This time she focuses on the Queen Mum, Elizabeth, wife of King George VI, who reigned from 1936-1952. Queen Elizabeth was born Lady Elizabeth Angela Marguerite Bowes-Lyon (August 4, 1900 – March 30, 2002). She and George, affectionately called "Bertie," never expected to rule, never planned to be in the public eye. They and their two daughters, Elizabeth and Margaret, anticipated a quiet life performing duties assigned to the royal family.



Told as a flashback from 2000 to the beginning of WWII (1939) and earlier, Elizabeth describes her life to her grandson, Charles, Prince of Wales. On the hundredth anniversary of her birth, she wants the prince to know what her life was like, seventy-five years in the public eye, and what she hid from all eyes.

Throughout this novel, Elizabeth struggles with her role as the wife of newly crowned King George VI, and with her former attraction to his brother Edward VIII, who abdicated to marry Mrs. Wallace Simpson. Elizabeth is haunted by her secrets, by her passions, and her love for her husband. Most of all, she fears that someone, anyone, might uncover her deeply held secret, revealed to the reader at the very end of this tale.

In Harper's latest tale, readers are immersed in life in the royal court. They experience the ups and downs of public life and of the queen's private fears. As always, Harper masterfully brings historical subjects to life through careful research and an innate sense of what draws readers to her fictionalized biographies. *The Queen's Secret* is no exception. Here we are treated to a memoir of public and private life of the royal family. The queen shares her thoughts which are filled with passion, fears, and the complicated role of international politics during WWII and in the peace that follows.

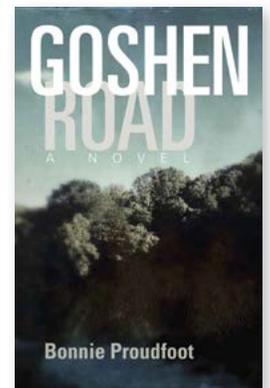
If you haven't read Karen Harper's historical fiction, *The Queen's Secret* is a great place to start. In each work, fiction or mystery, you'll learn about the past and what makes people tick.

REVIEWED BY MIRIAM KAHN, LIBRARIAN

Proudfoot, Bonnie. *Goshen Road.*

Swallow Press (Athens, Ohio) 2020. PB \$19.95.

Bonnie Proudfoot's debut novel invites the reader on a journey through the lives of two families, recounting the triumphs and struggles of their intertwined stories. The novel begins as seventeen-year-old Lux Cranfield loses an eye to a logging accident. The misfortune impels him to propose to sixteen-year-old Dessie Price, thus joining the families and their friends in a saga of the Appalachian mountain community of Fairchance, from 1967 to 1992. Readers familiar with the landscapes of Ohio and West Virginia will recognize the towns and homesites of the region Proudfoot describes with honesty and respect, as well as the deep faith that binds



the characters to the land and each other. When Lux escapes death, he recalls his mother's statement that "the Lord was keeping an eye on him" and resolves to turn his life in a new direction. It is this belief that sets the events in motion.

At times *Goshen Road* is more reminiscent of interconnected short stories than a novel. The narrative shifts from third to various first-person accounts as the protagonists advance the story from their distinct vantage points. We hear from Dessie and her sister Billie in alternating sections. We follow the men in the family as they experience setbacks and seek out the hard work that ages them before their time. The story progresses in a linear fashion, spooling through scene after scene. However, not all secrets are revealed until the final chapters, when Dessie speaks of episodes in her marriage previously kept hidden. While the men are alternately admirable or weak, the women of Fairchance remain the backbone of the story, their strength and endurance a constant.

An admirable first publication, *Goshen Road* resonates with those of us who know and love the people and the land where it is set. The title road is not well-maintained over the years. The rutted roadway winds up a mountain to a home site developed and abandoned multiple times over the years. When Lux and Dessie decide to build their home on this spot, they encounter difficulties that eventually cause them to return to the bottom of the hill. This symbolic desire to rise above only to be struck down again infuses the novel with the wider fate of the inhabitants of the region. Before she marries, Dessie expresses the aspirations of youth when she accepts Lux's invitation to skinny dip in a mountain pool. He demonstrates how to use a rope to swing out over the water, emphasizing the need to let go in time to avoid the rocks.

That is the secret that people who sit around and watch others do not know anything about. I know that I have been lucky sometimes, unlucky other times, and the Lord might have had something to do with that, although He works in mysterious ways and His lessons are not always clear. Don't tell me you love me so much you do not want me to jump. Show me what to do and give me the rope. (p. 80)

From this point, the novel chronicles the financial difficulties, the medical issues, the hidden abuse

between husbands and wives as that youthful enthusiasm falters beneath the weight of reality: lost or low-paying jobs, alcoholism, domestic abuse, death. There is no one cataclysmic disaster, only the slow drip of struggle against the odds. Proudfoot reveals the strength, nobility, and despair of those who want to climb out of the hollow yet find themselves at the bottom of a long, unkempt, winding road.

REVIEWED BY JANET E. IRVIN, CAREER EDUCATOR AND AUTHOR OF *THE HOPEWELL MYSTERY SERIES*

YOUNG ADULT & MIDDLE GRADE

Bundy, Tamara. *Pixie Pushes On*.

Nancy Paulsen Books (New York, NY) 2020. HC \$16.99.

I read *Pixie Pushes On* by Tamara Bundy from Cincinnati, Ohio. The book has 227 pages. It is historical fiction and takes place in the 1940s. The two main characters are Prudence, or for people that know her nickname, Pixie, and her big sissy, Charlotte.

Pixie has barely started feeling normal after moving to her grandparent's farm. Then her sissy gets polio, a disease that messes with your bones and spine. Charlotte has to go to a hospital far away from their new home. Pixie gets very sad. To her, life is totally horrible. Pixie has no friends except her sissy. Worse, she believes that she gave her best and perfect friend, her sister, the polio. Worst of all, none of the kids at school, like "Rotten" Ricky, will go near her because they think she will make them sick, too.

One day, Pixie gets a lamb to care for because he's a runt. She calls him Buster. This is a great name for the lamb. He is a big, big troublemaker. Jars of pickles, tomatoes, and peaches fly off the shelf after he headbutts it. He busts through the clothesline—no more fresh laundry. Wait until you see what happens when he meets Molly, the cow. Buster helps cheer Pixie up, but not quite. Farm life happens. Soon, she has to sell Buster at the market. That makes Pixie even sadder. So sad that she chases her grandfather as he drives away in his truck. She keeps up until she trips, and the truck rolls out of sight.

