

Hearts flutter, pulses quicken as romance novelist visits Valley

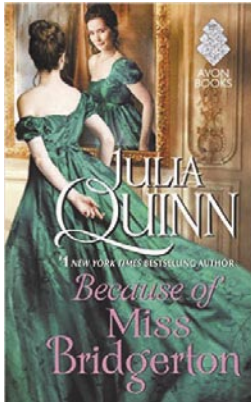
By **BRITTANY MCSHEA**
Showcase Editor

Christmas is coming way, way early for Valley booklovers with the arrival of New York Times bestselling author and titan of the historical romance genre, Julia Quinn who will meet with fans and sign copies of her latest book, “Because of Miss Bridgerton” at 2 p.m. on Saturday, April 23, at Barnes & Noble.

Readers should undoubtedly arrive early as the event is a banner day for a community that is frequently overlooked by national authors. For Quinn, however, this is just the kind of event she relishes.

“Oftentimes, the most successful books events, both in terms of enthusiasm and attendance, are the ones where you get readers that don’t get authors very often.”

Of course, it also helps enthusiasm when the author in question has single-handedly kept fans up late devouring her novels since her debut work, “Splendid,” was published in 1995. That book has given rise to over 30 books and novellas, including the massively popular Bridgerton series.



Set in the early part of the 19th century, the eight-book series follows each of the eight children of Edmund and Violet Bridgerton. The first of the series, “The Duke and I” was published in 2000 and hooked readers instantly. It enjoyed three weeks on the New York Times extended bestseller list and was named one of the top ten romances of 2000 by Amazon.

“I think people see themselves and people they know in them,” Quinn said on the popularity of the series. “The siblings really bicker with each other. The characters aren’t over the top. They aren’t epic characters, they’re relatable.”

Fans would get six years of witty repartee and happily ever afters before “On the Way to the Wedding” closed out the series in 2006.

Except for the release of a series of second epilogues in “The Bridgertons: Happily Ever After” in 2013, fans have had to more or less move on from this rowdy bunch of aristocrats. That is, until the debut of Sybilla Bridgerton in “Because of Miss Bridgerton.”

Featuring the older sister of Edmund, the book serves as a prequel of sorts to the Bridgerton series and arose — as is so often the case with devoted fans — in response to an overwhelming demand from readers.

“So many readers had asked for a book devoted to the Bridgerton parents, but I always said I wasn’t going to do it because the father dies young. It’s not a spoiler, it happens early on, but I always thought it would be a bit melancholy to have that hanging over the story.”

“Since I always thought that I’m not going to write a novel for them, I thought what if I write about his siblings, instead? And that’s how it turned out.”

Sybilla, or Billie as she prefers to be called, is more than up to the task of carrying on the family name. She’s free-spirited, outspoken, a little tomboyish and definitely ahead of her time.

“I wanted to make somebody who was different, who pushed the boundaries of what was considered acceptable at the time. But, I also wanted to make it historically accurate,” Quinn said. “So if she does these things and everybody just sort of accepts it as her right and is okay with it, that’s just not accurate. Plus, I think it’s much more interesting to consider



GET THEE TO THE BOOKSTORE

New York Times bestselling author Julia Quinn will be signing copies of her latest book, “Because of Miss Bridgerton” at 2 p.m. on Saturday, April 23, at Barnes & Noble Booksellers in Palmdale. Readers have been devouring Quinn’s books since the author appeared on the scene with her debut novel, “Splendid,” in 1995.

Contributed

(the question) what does being a person out of a time do to you.”

One person sure to have a few choice words regarding that question is George Rokesby, Billie’s longtime neighbor and adversary. Contradictory in both nature and temperament, the two have tried to keep their

distance from each other with varying degrees of luck.

That luck finally runs out when Billie finds herself trapped on a roof with George being the only help in sight.

Bridgerton fans will no doubt find “Because of Miss Bridgerton” a welcome homecoming to the series. Crackling with Quinn’s flowing dialogue and entertaining secondary characters, the book will just as easily hook readers new to Quinn as fans who have been there since book one.

“I think (my books) are not what non-romance readers expect. There’s still this image of romance as purple prose and being over the top and I’m not criticizing that, but it’s not what I do.

“People don’t expect to see humor, which is weird when you consider there are so many rom-coms. So why wouldn’t there be humor in books too?”

Readers will have plenty of time to mull that over as they patiently wait for the next installment in the Rokesby story, coming next year.

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If You Go

WHEN: 2 p.m. Saturday, April 23.

WHERE: Barnes & Noble Booksellers, The Marketplace at Palmdale, 39228 10th St. West.

DETAILS: (661) 272-9958, www.barnesandnoble.com, www.juliaquinn.com.

NOTE: Lines will formed on a first-come, first-served basis. Store hours are 9 a.m. to 11 p.m.

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