



# The Museum of Extraordinary Things: A Novel

By Alice Hoffman

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The “spellbinding” (*People*, 4 stars), *New York Times* bestseller from the author of *The Dovekeepers*: an extraordinary novel about an electric and impassioned love affair—“an enchanting love story rich with history and a sense of place” (*USA TODAY*).

Coralie Sardie is the daughter of the sinister impresario behind The Museum of Extraordinary Things, a Coney Island freak show that thrills the masses. An exceptional swimmer, Coralie appears as the Mermaid in her father’s “museum,” alongside performers like the Wolfman and the Butterfly Girl. One night Coralie stumbles upon a striking young man taking pictures of moonlit trees in the woods off the Hudson River.

The dashing photographer is Eddie Cohen, a Russian immigrant who has run away from his community and his job as a tailor’s apprentice. When Eddie photographs the infamous Triangle Shirtwaist Factory fire, he becomes embroiled in the mystery behind a young woman’s disappearance. And he ignites the heart of Coralie.

Alice Hoffman weaves her trademark magic, romance, and masterful storytelling to unite Coralie and Eddie in a tender and moving story of young love in tumultuous times. *The Museum of Extraordinary Things* is, “a lavish tale about strange yet sympathetic people” (*The New York Times Book Review*).

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## The Museum of Extraordinary Things: A Novel By Alice Hoffman Bibliography

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## Editorial Review

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**\*Starred Review\*** After her imaginative foray into ancient Judaic history in *The Dovekeepers* (2011), Hoffman breathes fiery life into an enrapturing fairy tale and historical fiction mash-up. Professor Sardie, a fanatic with a secret past and a Dr. Frankenstein aura, runs the Museum of Extraordinary Things on Coney Island in 1911, showcasing “living wonders,” including his motherless daughter, web-fingered Coralie, who performs in a tank as the Mermaid. Ezekiel Cohen, a motherless Orthodox Jewish immigrant from Russia, abandons his tailor father and his faith, calls himself Eddie, and devotes himself to photography. As Coralie’s father puts her at grave risk to perpetuate what he hopes will be a profitable hoax, Eddie documents the shocking and tragic Triangle Shirtwaist Factory fire and tries to solve the mystery of a young woman’s disappearance. Both Coralie and Eddie end up experiencing unnerving epiphanies in the glorious and imperiled wilderness on the northern coast of Manhattan. With a Jewish mystic and a distinguished Wolfman, ravishing evocations of the rapidly transforming city and the tawdry yet profoundly human magnetism of Coney Island, dramatic perspectives on criminal greed and the coalescence of the labor movement, and keen appreciation for the new clarity photography fostered, Hoffman unveils both horror and magic in this transfixing tale of liberation and love in a metropolis of lies, yearning, and metamorphosis. **HIGH-DEMAND BACKSTORY:** Extensive promotion and an author tour will amplify the appeal of one of best-selling Hoffman’s most incandescent novels. --Donna Seaman

Unknown

“Hoffman’s book earns its legitimacy through an eye-opening plethora of period detailing, coupled with the author’s overarching outrage at urban workplace abuses....**You can’t help but admire the author’s fervor for telling stories** and the democratic manner in which she disseminates the love of reading.” (Jan Stuart *The Boston Globe*)

“A lavish tale about strange yet sympathetic people, haunted by the past and living in bizarre circumstances... Imaginative...Once Coralie and Eddie discover each other, their profound, mystical attraction and mutual obsession become forces of their own, driving the story forward.” (*The New York Times Book Review*)

“**Spellbinding**...Hoffman’s penchant for the magical is on full display in this world filled with rogues, strivers, corrupt politicians, Gilded Age riches and debilitating poverty. The chaos and grandeur of New York City at the time make it a character in its own right, as monstrous and intoxicating as the circus sideshow that traps Coralie and makes her a star.” (Andrea Walker *People*)

“Alice Hoffman employs her trademark alchemy of finding the magical amid the ordinary in her **mesmerizing** new novel....If you're looking for **an enchanting love story rich with history and a sense of place**, step right up to *The Museum of Extraordinary Things*.” (*USA Today*)

“The year 1911 had an apocalyptic feel in New York City as fire devastated the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory in Greenwich Village and destroyed the amusement park Dreamland that rose above Coney Island. Manhattan wasn’t yet entirely tamed by concrete and people still believed in the fantastical. Alice **Hoffman, whose brand of magic realism really should have a patent pending, makes lovely work of the era** in her new city-centric novel, *The Museum of Extraordinary Things*.” (Sherryl Connelly *New York Daily News*)

“**Hoffman masterfully creates two characters of depth and emotion in Eddie and Coralie**....[She] does

not disappoint .” (Amanda St. Amand The St. Louis Post-Dispatch)

“*The Museum of Extraordinary Things*, like *Ragtime*, is **packed with history and mystery, an introspective and full-bodied fairy tale for adult readers.**” (Julie Bookman Atlanta Journal Constitution)

“**Alice Hoffman's storytelling magic is on abundant display in her new novel.**...Hoffman expertly weaves the future lovers' monologues with a third-person account moving through the spring of 1911 to create **a wonderfully rich narrative tapestry.** Her prose is as **lyrically beautiful** as ever, evoking the teeming complexity of New York ....The action-packed story line sweeps through labor strife, a missing Triangle worker eventually fished from the Hudson, the exposure of her murderer and a bravura plot twist that reveals the truth about Coralie's mother.” (Newsday)

“Fans of Hoffman will not be disappointed. Lush imagery, extensive use of period details, well-drawn, and vivid prose make this **a sumptuous read...a rich reading experience.**” (The Seattle Times)

"Part Ray Bradbury and part Steven Millhauser...the delicate balance between the everyday world and the extraordinary is balanced more in favor of the world we know, though not many writers describe that world as elegantly as Hoffman does....First-rate...Vividly drawn...**Hoffman gives us extraordinary things and extraordinary times. And more.**" (Ed Siegel The Artery, WBUR)

“[Hoffman is] a master of craft and a lover of language. Each sentence shows precision and deliberation....*The Museum of Extraordinary Things* lives up to the ‘extraordinary’ of its title, **a work of passion that celebrates a place and an era even while it explores a particularly dark moment in New York’s history.**” (Zach Powers The Savannah Morning News)

“Classic Hoffman: a **bewitching** world of time and place (in this case, Coney Island and its boardwalk freak show in the early 1900s) **suffused with magical moments, a mysterious disappearance and romance.**” (Darcy Jacobs Family Circle)

“**A mesmerizing new novel about the electric and impassioned love between two vastly different souls** during the volatile first decades of the 20th century.” (Publisher's Weekly)

“**Hoffman breathes fiery life into an enrapturing fairy tale** and historical fiction mash-up....Ravishing...Dramatic...Hoffman unveils both horror and magic in this transfixing tale of liberation and love in a metropolis of lies, yearning, and metamorphosis.” (Booklist (starred review))

“*The Museum of Extraordinary Things* is the mesmerizing new novel about the electric and impassioned love between two vastly different souls in New York during the volatile first decades of the twentieth century.” (Ann McDonald Red Carpet Crash)

“In *The Museum of Extraordinary Things*, Alice Hoffman mounts an arresting display: a New York City tale **rich with literary inspiration, history, and urban legend.** Readers often talk about being immersed in novels; this is a satisfying swim in tidal waters. Take the plunge.” (Gregory Maquire, author of *Wicked and Out of Oz* )

“**Alice Hoffman understands and delivers the ordinary and the extraordinary** in this contemporary novel of the past. As always, her powerful, elegant prose embraces tremendous passion with constant, clear-eyed compassion.” (Amy Bloom, author of *Away* )

"As always, Alice Hoffman amazes me with her ability to use words the way other master artists use watercolors, painting the dreamlike world of a girl who grows up in a hall of wonders only to learn that something as ordinary as love is the greatest marvel of all. Many novels these days are called 'stunning' but this one truly IS: part love story, part mystery, part history, and all beauty." (Jodi Picoult, author of *The Storyteller* and *Lone Wolf* )

## Review

'Hoffman is a master of evocatively described places ... This captivating novel transports the reader to a sensual world of lush tropical landscapes, colonial opulence and conflicted passions' *The Lady on The Marriage of Opposites* 'Alice Hoffman's fictionalised biography of Rachel Pizarro's life is an evocative, sensitive and historically rich portrayal of a woman living ahead of her time' *The Observer on The Marriage of Opposites*

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