

Flight of the Wild Swan

Melissa Pritchard

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Melissa Pritchard follows the troubled life of the celebrated yet complex Florence Nightingale in her enthralling novel *Flight of the Wild Swan*.

Florence Nightingale would never have been happy in the life her mother wanted for her: a simple existence of wealth and leisure, married to a well-connected gentleman. Believing that God wants her to serve humanity in some way, Florence spends years in search of her true calling. When she finds it, she has to fight her insecurities, her own family, and naysayers to become a nurse and change both the profession and the world.

Told through snippets, letters, and lists, the novel traces the most dynamic years of Florence's life. It introduces her first as a willful, curious child fascinated by scientific pursuits, especially medicine; then as a depressed young adult who cannot stand her family's indolence and selfishness; as a steely professional who runs hospitals and commands nurses in the Crimea, where British soldiers languish in conditions more horrific than she could have imagined; and finally as an irascible old woman who still has the power to charm and intimidate all who meet her.

Driven by faith and idealism and repulsed by the notion of ever being "an ornament to a man," Florence languishes within the confines of her stultifying, proper existence. When allowed to fly at last, she sacrifices any chance of comfort, good health, or marriage to answer God's call. Revered by her patients and hated by the professionals who are supposed to help her help others, she becomes a reluctant legend in her own time, serving as the role model that she herself never had.

Flight of the Wild Swan is an inspiring novel about a woman whose single-minded determination comforted and inspired thousands.

EILEEN GONZALEZ (March / April 2024)

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