



# The Bereaved: A Novel

**Based on the author's research into her grandfather's past as an adopted child, and the surprising discovery of his family of origin and how he came to be adopted, Julia Park Tracey has created a mesmerizing work of historical fiction illuminating the darkest side of the Orphan Train.**

In 1859, women have few rights, even to their own children. When her husband dies and her children become wards of a predator, Martha—bereaved and scared—flees their beloved country home taking the children with her to squalor of New York City. She manages to find them shelter in a tenement packed with other down-on-their-luck families and then endeavors to find work as a seamstress. But as a naive woman alone, preyed on by male employers, she soon finds herself nearly destitute. Her children are hungry with no coal for their fire. Illness lays them low and Martha begins to lose hope.

The Home for the Friendless, an aid society, offers free food, clothing, and schooling to New York's street kids. When a cutpurse takes the last of their money, Martha reluctantly places her two boys in the Home, keeping daughter Sarah to help with the baby. Martha takes roommates into her one room, rotating her and Sarah's bed in shifts with other struggling women. Finally, faced with prostitution and homelessness herself, Martha takes Sarah and baby Homer to the Home for what she thinks is short-term care. When her quarterly visit to her children is blocked, Martha discovers that the Society has indentured her two eldest out to work in New York and Illinois via the Orphan Train, and has placed her two youngest for permanent adoption in Ohio. Stunned at their loss, Martha begs for her children back, but the Society refuses. Rather than succumb—the Civil War erupting around her—Martha sets out to reclaim each of them.

## ***The Bereaved:* A Novel**

BY JULIA PARK TRACEY

HISTORICAL FICTION

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Author Julia Park Tracey's ancestors and their stories have given her a trail to follow from New York and New England to the deep south and the Pacific Coast. Park Tracey has three counties in California who claim her for their own: Sonoma County where she was raised; Alameda County where she was a columnist, journalist, and Poet Laureate; and Nevada County where she currently resides. She is the author or editor of six books, including two collected diaries of her aunt, a teen flapper in the Roaring Twenties. She has written for *Redbook*, *HuffPost*, *The Sun*, *Salon*, and *Babble*. She is also a partner and the Executive Editor at Sibylline Books.



In *The Bereaved*, Julia Park Tracey reopens America's wounds in prose that is propulsive and resonant. Martha's struggles are the stuff of classic literature. Theodore Dreiser comes to mind but so too the fine contemporary novels of Jo Baker and Maggie O'Farrell.

—Christian Kiefer, author of *Phantoms*



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