

The Wings of Poppy Pendleton

Melanie Dobson

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Melanie Dobson's multi-timeline novel *The Wings of Poppy Pendleton* is about the boundless beauty of a child's hope.

The night before her fifth birthday, Poppy, the heiress of the Pendleton fortune, vanishes from Koster Isle without a trace. Almost a century later, the questions keep coming, the current owner of Koster Isle, Chloe, has little time for speculation. She's concerned with keeping her late grandparents' candy store afloat. Then desperate, mysterious young Emma shows up on Chloe's shore. With the help of charming reporter Logan, Chloe begins to untangle Emma's past, soon realizing that it holds the key to the mystery of Poppy's disappearance.

Weaving between timelines to focus on different people's thoughts, the novel blends clues from Poppy's past with Chloe's present to lyrical effect. Poppy spends hours dreaming of flight in her mother, Amelia's, aviary; Emma clutches a scrapbook covered with birds. This flight motif runs throughout, representing the longings of characters who feel caged by cruelty.

The cast is extensive, but time stamps and named chapters make the narrative easy to follow. Each person plays into the book's overarching themes of courage, redemption, and love. Amelia, who is broken by Poppy's loss, finds new purpose as a nun. Logan pushes Chloe to face the truth about her grandparents while also protecting her. And Chloe confronts her fears of motherhood in order to care for Emma. The story also addresses heavy topics like human trafficking and drugs, but its ultimate message is one of triumph. Both Emma and Poppy endure terrible childhood abuse but maintain faith in the potential goodness of others.

Telling the stories of two women separated by a century but connected by past secrets, *The Wings of Poppy Pendleton* is an enthralling novel.

VIVIAN TURNBULL (September / October 2023)

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