

*A Sparrow Alone*. Mim Eichmann. Living Springs Publishers LLP, April 15, 2020, Trade Paperback and E-book, 374 pages.

Reviewed by Deanna Frances.

Mim Eichmann's debut novel, *A Sparrow Alone*, is a historical fiction tale rooted in the heart of late-nineteenth-century Colorado mining communities. The book depicts the story of a young girl, Hannah Owens, and the experiences she faces as a teenager of the lower working class during the mining boom of the 1890s.

After the death of her mother, Hannah's family is separated to ensure their survival, and she finds herself alone for the first time in her life. While her father and brother go off in search of work in the Colorado mines, Hannah finds herself working as domestic help for the family of Dr. Albert Hughes, a wealthy and well-respected man in Colorado Springs. Though working for the doctor's family allows Hannah to find friendship with his young daughter, Abigail, she soon learns that the doctor's family life is not at all what it seems to be.

While Mrs. Hughes parades herself and her daughter around town alongside the stable, wealthy wives of the community, Dr. Hughes spends his time out of town or visiting with the local seamstress, Mrs. Pearl DeVere. Hannah soon learns of Dr. Hughes' affair with Mrs. DeVere, and his plan to finance her new grand brothel in Cripple Creek called The Old Homestead. When Dr. Hughes declares bankruptcy and moves to Cripple Creek, away from his wife and daughter, Hannah realizes that all of their lives were about to change drastically.

After being caught trying to steal information from Mrs. Hughes, Hannah is brutally beaten and tossed out onto the street with a fellow worker named Zuma. Zuma quickly becomes a maternal light in Hannah's life, and she persuades Hannah to travel with her to Cripple Creek and seek employment there. When the two arrive, Dr. Hughes offers them the opportunity to work in the kitchen at Mrs. DeVere's new brothel. Despite Zuma's distaste for Mrs. DeVere's profession, the two find stability in their new employment, despite the troubles of the mines in the area. After befriending a few of the homestead's leading ladies, including Mrs. DeVere, Hannah finds herself encompassed within some of the most economic, political, and cultural upheavals of the era, which happen to include Cripple Creek's most well-known millionaire, Winfield Stratton.

As a fan of historical fiction, I was genuinely looking forward to reading *A Sparrow Alone*, and I am so glad that I was able to read it. Not only was Eichmann's novel a compelling fictional story, but it was also historically interesting and vastly educational. While I have found that some writers of historical fiction tend to veer much farther towards the fiction side of the genre, Eichmann's novel truly encompasses what life may have been like for a young woman living in the 1890s Colorado mining boom.

While reading this novel, I could tell that Eichmann had extensively researched the period and setting for her story, and I found myself wishing that I had known more about this part of the United States' history. Before reading *A Sparrow Alone*, I had never heard of men such as

Winfield Stratton. However, I was immediately captivated by Eichmann's characters, both fictional and non-fictional, and how effortlessly they all weaved into Hannah's story of loss, growth, friendship, and love.

I believe that I was most captivated by the women in Hannah's story, and how they all continued to come together, even in times of turmoil and uncertainty. I found that this novel had incredibly strong female characters, and I could feel the unity that these women experienced. Hannah's story is not only a wonderful historical coming-of-age tale, but also a novel about overcoming hardships, finding friendship, and female empowerment.

I truly enjoyed reading *A Sparrow Alone*, and I look forward to reading Mim Eichmann's second novel, *Muskrat Ramble*, the sequel to *A Sparrow Alone*, which is currently set to release in 2021.